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## CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK IN CHINA

# Manufacturers feel the sting

ZYMA ISLAM

It's not wise to put all your eggs in one basket, goes the age-old saying. And this saying could not be more pertinent given the jittery state of global supply chain following the outbreak of coronavirus in China.

China's comparative advantage in manufacturing relatively simple, low-value products like clothing and plastic goods to more advanced and lucrative pursuits like smartphones, computers and auto parts is peerless.

Which is why, it has gone on to become the world's largest manufacturer, accounting for roughly one-sixth of global economic output.

Almost all the nations have become excessively reliant -- and sometimes exclusively -- on it for their material needs. And Bangladesh is no different.

The country imports the most from China, starting from the simplest needle to high-tech capital machinery, industrial raw materials to finished consumer goods and foodstuff.

Last fiscal year, about 26 percent of Bangladesh's imports worth \$52.19 billion

Because of the coronavirus pandemic that has left large swathes of China's factories as desolate as a ghost town, Bangladesh's manufacturers, especially those of the export-oriented garment sectors, are left playing a nervous waiting game: will normal service resume anytime soon?

came from China, according to the central bank's country and commodity wise import data. A year earlier, the share of imports from China was 23.8 percent.

But now, because of the coronavirus pandemic that has left large swathes of China's factories as desolate as a ghost town, Bangladesh's manufacturers, especially those of the export-oriented garment sectors, are left playing a nervous waiting game: will normal service resume anytime soon?

"Nobody is saying that there will be no

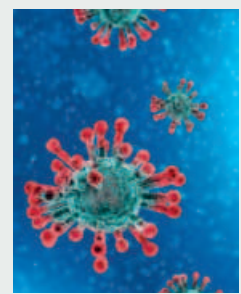
SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Clad in yellow saris, two children applying coloured powder on each other's face during Basanta Utsab at the Bakultala on the premises of Dhaka University's fine arts faculty yesterday. Jatiya Boshonto Utsab Udjapan Parishad organised the yearly event on the first day of the Bengali month of Falgun to welcome the spring.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## COVID-19 UPDATE



### 1,383 DEATHS

### 64,421 confirmed cases

### 63,851 confirmed cases in mainland China

### Worst hit Chinese region Hubei 51,986 cases

### The virus spread to at least 25 countries

### At least 570 confirmed cases outside China

## 1,700 Chinese medics infected

Six killed; economy slowly begins to limp back to life

REUTERS, Beijing

The new coronavirus has infected 1,700 Chinese health workers and killed six, authorities said yesterday, as businesses struggled to balance containment measures with a return from an extended post-holiday break.

Authorities reported 5,090 new cases in mainland China, including more than 120 deaths, taking the total number of infected to 63,851, and the number of deaths from the disease, now labelled Covid-19, to 1,380.

"The duties of medical workers at the front are indeed extremely heavy; their working and resting circumstances are limited, the psychological pressures are great, and the risk of infection is high," Zeng Yixin, vice minister of the National Health Commission, told a news conference.

China's factories and offices are only slowly creaking back into life after Lunar New Year holidays that were extended by 10 days in the struggle to rein in the virus, which emerged in December in Wuhan, capital of the central province of Hubei.

The problem is reviving the world's second-largest economy when a staggering 500 million people are currently affected by movement and travel restrictions to contain the new virus - 2019-nCoV.

The new national infection figures give no sign that the outbreak is nearing a peak, said Adam Kamradt-Scott, an infectious diseases expert at the Centre for International Security Studies at the University of Sydney.

In cities such as Beijing, the capital, and the business hub of Shanghai, streets and subways remain largely

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## Five tourists drown in Kaptai Lake

Child dies as boat sinks in Karnaphuli

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Five women drowned as an overcrowded tourist boat overturned in Rangamati's Kaptai Lake yesterday noon.

In a separate incident, divers recovered the body of a child from Karnaphuli river while two other children were still missing after a tourist boat capsized yesterday.

None of the boats had enough life jackets for passengers, said police, adding that all the deceased were from different areas in Chattogram.

Deceased in the Kaptai Lake incident are Rina Akhter, 32, Shila Akhter, 27, Asma, 22 and Afroza, 14 and Lima Akhter, 25, said Khan Nurul Islam, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Kotwali Police Station in Rangamati.

The incident took place around noon when the motor vessel with a capacity of carrying 20 passengers was heading

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

## BNP, family push for Khaleda's release

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP and Khaleda Zia's family members have launched a fresh move to get her released from imprisonment, saying that her health is rapidly deteriorating.

Khaleda Zia's younger brother has written to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University authorities, requesting them to recommend that she needed better treatment abroad.

Shameem Iskander wrote the letter to BSMMU VC Kanak Kanti Barua on February 10, said sources familiar with the development.

Khaleda's sister Selima Islam also urged the government on Tuesday to release Khaleda on humanitarian grounds so that she could get access to advanced treatment.

The immediate family members' public involvement in the effort comes two years after the former prime minister landed in jail on February 8, 2018. The BNP's efforts to get her released have so far been in vain.

"As Khaleda Zia's health is deteriorating quickly, the treatment in a foreign hospital with modern equipment is needed to avert any irreparable loss," read Shameem's letter.

The hospital authorities' assistance is needed for this and the family

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



## Interest rates halved for postal savings

The move aimed at bringing down bank interest rates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has slashed interest rates on postal savings by half as part of its efforts to reduce interest rates on bank loans and deposits, and promote investment in private sector.

The Internal Resources Division of the Ministry of Finance on Thursday issued a circular regarding this with immediate effect.

The interest rate on one-year savings was reduced to 5 percent from 10.20 percent.

For two-year schemes, interest rate was cut to 5.50 percent from 10.70 percent while it was slashed to 6 percent from 11.28 percent for three-year schemes.

The depositors can withdraw profits

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Workers extract stone from Shah Arefin Tila in Sylhet's Companiganj upazila, putting themselves in harm's way. Digging huge trenches in hillocks often leads to landslides, causing deaths to workers. Such extraction of stone is damaging the environment, arable land, and homes in the area. The photo was taken on Monday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## দেখা যাচ্ছে না বলে নেই নাকি?

পানিতে থাকা আয়রন, সীসা সহ নতুন যুগের দূষণ দেখাও যায় না ফুটালেও যায় না। তাই পিওরইট

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# Trafficking racket of 3 Bangladeshis busted in Kuwait

*They took Tk 1,396cr from 20,000 Bangladeshis to take them there, reports Arab Times*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three Bangladeshis are running a human trafficking racket in Kuwait and one of them have been arrested, English-language daily Arab Times reported on Wednesday.

The report, which was citing Arabic-language daily Al-Qabas, also said that one of the three is a ‘member in the Bangladeshi parliament’, but The Daily Star has not independently verified this claim.

The trio occupied “sensitive positions” in three major companies that brought more than 20,000 Bangladeshi menial workers into the country in exchange for large sums of money believed to be more than Tk 1,391.6 crore, the report said.

The Kuwait Ministry of Interior has nabbed a member of the racket for money laundering and trafficking in humans and visas, the report said.

The two other Bangladeshis have left the Gulf country after sensing trouble, the report said. The report, however, did not mention when the workers were brought into the Gulf country.

According to the data of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, some 12,299 Bangladeshi workers went to Kuwait for work in 2019. The previous year, 27,637 workers went to the country.

According to the Arab Times report, Kuwait’s Criminal Investigation Department (CID) have concluded

through investigations that the three men have a large network of Bangladeshi employees working for them and are involved in visa trafficking.

The man the report claims is a member of parliament was said to have shuttled between Kuwait and Bangladesh and that his stay in Kuwait was no more than 48 hours. The report added that as soon as he found out that he would be investigated, he left Kuwait “a week ago”.

The other accused is said to have gone to Europe from Kuwait, taking advantage of the company he works for, the report added.

He alone is said to have brought about 7,000 workers into Kuwait on cleaning contracts.

Quoting sources, Arab Times said the file of the company managed by the suspect was suspended after discovering the workers were not paid their salaries for more than five months.

Moreover, the report said that the workers who were brought in on government cleaning contracts by the company discovered that they were victims of visa traders because their salaries were lower than that stipulated in their contracts.

In another report published on Thursday, Arab Times said CID personnel were in the process of summoning those company officials for interrogation after completing the legal procedures.



**A human haulier flipped on its side after it was rammed by a bus on Dhaka-Khulna highway in Pona bus stand area of Gopalganj’s Kashiani upazila yesterday. The accident left five people dead and seven injured.** PHOTO: COLLECTED

# 48 Rohingyas detained off Myanmar coast

AFP, Pathein

Nearly 50 Rohingyas have been detained at sea by Myanmar’s navy, a local official said yesterday, the latest from the persecuted minority to be caught trying to flee camps in Bangladesh and Myanmar’s restive Rakhine state.

It was not immediately clear where the group started their boat journey but they were likely aiming for Malaysia or Indonesia, predominantly Muslim countries with large Rohingya diasporas.

Thousands of Rohingya have taken to the sea over the years in high-risk attempts to escape sprawling refugee camps in Bangladesh and oppressive conditions in Rakhine.

Village administrator Myint Thein told AFP by phone the navy had picked up 48 Rohingya men, women and children, as well as five “traffickers”, at sea on Wednesday evening.

An AFP reporter saw the group arrive yesterday morning at Pathein township police station.

“We don’t know how authorities in Pathein town will proceed,” Myint Thein said.

Some 740,000 Rohingyas fled

Myanmar’s Rakhine to Bangladesh to escape a brutal military crackdown in 2017 and now languish in sprawling refugee camps.

Hundreds of thousands more remain in Rakhine, living under tight restrictions with little access to healthcare, education or livelihoods in conditions Amnesty International brands as ‘apartheid’.

The group detained at sea this week is just the latest in a series of arrests in recent months as seasonal calmer waters tempt more Rohingya to put their lives in the hands of traffickers.

On Tuesday, at least 15 Rohingya refugees drowned when an overloaded boat carrying mostly women and children sank as it tried to reach Malaysia from Bangladesh.

The minority garner little sympathy within Myanmar, where many people buy the official line they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, even though many trace their roots in the country back generations.

Amnesty’s Laura Haigh said Rohingya will continue to undertake such risky journeys unless their rights are restored and full accountability for military atrocities is assured.

# BNP, family push

FROM PAGE 1

will bear all the medical costs, the letter added.

Meanwhile, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday told a press conference at AL’s Dhanomondi office that BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir called him and talked to him about whether Khaleda could be released on parole.

Asked about the comment, Fakhrul said, “He [Quader] is the one who can answer this question. Our only concern is Khaleda Zia’s deteriorating health, and she should be sent abroad for treatment.”

Khaleda’s sister Selima and several other family members visited her at the BSMMU on Tuesday.

After meeting her, Selima told reporters on BSMMU premises, “I call upon the government to... consider her physical condition, respiratory problems and age. She should either be released or given bail on humanitarian grounds.”

Selima said her sister could not eat, suffered from fever, and her diabetes had worsened beyond control.

Something bad will happen if she is not immediately provided with advanced treatment, she added.

Fakhrul also said, “We think that she should be released right now on humanitarian grounds.”

Contacted, BSMMU VC Kanak said he had received Khaleda’s brother Shameem’s letter and asked the seven-member medical board treating Khaleda to review the situation and make recommendations.

“The medical board earlier told the court that her treatment was possible here if she agreed to take treatment. Doctors are visiting her daily... We expect that we will get a report from the board next week,” he said.

BNP leader Khandakar Mahbub Hossain told reporters that they would apply for Khaleda’s bail next week.

“We hope that we will get justice

and she will get bail,” the lawyer told reporters yesterday.

Many BNP leaders believe that it is not possible to get her released through legal means because the government is “influencing” the judicial process.

The leaders also think that the party does not have the strength to take to the streets and mount pressure on the government to release her.

BNP standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday, “She would have been released long ago, but due to the government’s interference in the legal process, she is not getting bail. But we will gradually wage a movement to release her.”

Khaleda has been receiving treatment at the BSMMU since April 1 last year.

She was convicted in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. She was convicted in another corruption case later in 2018. The BNP maintains that both cases are politically motivated.

# Austria blocking EU naval mission for Libya

AFP, Brussels

Austria is blocking attempts by other EU members to revive a Mediterranean naval operation to enforce an arms embargo on war-torn Libya, diplomats said yesterday.

Europe’s Operation Sophia was set up in 2015 to fight human trafficking but has been without ships since early last year after Italy refused to accept rescued migrants in its ports.

Brussels and some member states would like to revive it to focus on enforcing the UN arms embargo on Libya -- where several foreign powers are arming both sides in a civil war.

# Manufacturers feel the sting

FROM PAGE 1

deliveries, but nobody is saying when they will be either,” said MA Jabbar, managing director of DBL Group, a major garment exporter.

Given the tight deadlines that garment exporters work with, Jabbar’s firm went on a mad dash to manage sourcing alternatives as news emerged towards the end of last month of the lethal, pneumonia-like virus spreading like wildfire across China, the world’s most populous nation, and at least two dozen other countries.

So uncontrollable the novel virus has become that Xi Jinping’s government extended the bank holidays for Lunar New Year, the most important festival of the year in China, by nine days to February 9 in a bid to keep people home and halt its spread.

The fear of the virus, which has already claimed more lives than the lethal Sars epidemic that tore through more than two dozen countries including China between November 2002 and April 2003, is so widespread and intense that many workers are likely to remain away from factory towns for weeks.

At the time of writing, the overall death toll from COVID-19, as the disease has been named, crossed 1,300.

For an order DBL Group is currently working on, it is bringing in the fibre from Austria by paying more, and chemicals and dyes from India.

But the final flourish on the products in the work order is a specific trim that can only be procured from China.

“The trims were developed in consultation with us by Chinese factories,” Jabbar said, adding that he is hopeful that his supplier in China would be shipping it within a fortnight or two.

DBL Group’s predicament is emblematic of the integral role China has carved for itself in the global economy in this millennium, producing components needed by auto factories in the American Midwest and Mexico to apparel plants in Bangladesh and Turkey.

Moniruzzaman, director of Bonian Knit Fashions, is less calm than Jabbar.

The fabric for the order worth \$60,000 that his factory in Kashimpur, Gazipur is working on was supposed to arrive from a textile mill in China’s Zhejiang province on April 20.

But that textile mill has been a vacuum since the Lunar New Year on January 24, so he is worrying that the

fabric will not show up on time.

Chinese factories take 15-20 days to manufacture the fabric once they get the order. After that, it takes a fortnight by ship for the fabric to arrive in Bangladesh. Once in Bangladesh territory, it takes another week for the consignment to get customs clearance, according to Moniruzzaman.

“I don’t know yet whether the European buyer will give me an extension. But I am negotiating,” he said.

What’s more frustrating is that the local textile sector is not ready to jump in and seize the day.

Not only is it unable to churn out the sheer volume of textiles needed by the country’s apparel sector, which is now the world’s second largest supplier of garment, it is also incapable of manufacturing the diversity of fabrics needed.

For instance, fabrics like the ones used in sportswear cannot be sourced from the local factories, according to Anjan Shekhar Das, managing director of Apollo Sewing and Garments. For that, factories need to reach out to China, which is the biggest source of synthetic fabrics.

“We can only supply up to a third of their demand,” said Monsoor Ahmed, secretary of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association.

Even though this is a golden opportunity, the sector does not have the capacity to take advantage of it, he added.

“There is absolutely no form of import from China right now, not by plane, nor by ship,” said Zafar Iqbal, managing director of AYZ Express Services, a logistics provider for the garment industry.

The airlines most used to ship goods -- China Eastern and China Southern -- have discontinued flights until further notice.

The most optimistic timeline then for resumption of normal services would be February 17, according to Zafar.

MA Salam, first vice-president of the Bangladesh Gament Manufacturers and Exporters Association, is looking at a similar timeline.

“All import-export activities in China have been closed from January 20 until February 10 and it has gotten extended by ten more days in some areas,” he said.

It could be weeks or months before production can be back to full speed, reported the New York Times.

# 1,700 Chinese medics infected

FROM PAGE 1

deserted with many shops and restaurants empty or shut.

Government employee Jin Yang, 28, made it in to his Beijing office but found it “anything but normal”.

Canteen lunches are banned in favour of boxed meals eaten at desks. Meetings are held online, instead of in person. Employees must wear masks all day - and report their temperature twice a day.

Wuhan, the city of 11 million people at the centre of the outbreak, has the most acute problem - and an impressive unofficial response.

With all public transport, taxis and ride-hailing services shut down in the city, volunteer drivers are responding to requests on ad hoc messaging groups to ferry medical staff and others in vital jobs to and from work, putting their own health on the line in the process.

Others work around the clock to find accommodation for medical workers in hotels that have volunteered their rooms.

Many of the drivers keep their identities secret to avoid objections from family and friends.

“Everyone in our group has such a strong sense of mission,” said 53-year-old Wuhan resident Chen Hui, who runs one of the ad hoc ride services.

But there is little sign that the tide has yet turned against a virus killing around 2% of those it infects - but able to spread much faster than other respiratory viruses that have emerged

this century.

“While the Chinese authorities are doing their best to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, the fairly drastic measures they have implemented to date would appear to have been too little, too late,” Kamradt-Scott said.

WHO official Simeon Bennett said: “We see no significant change in the trajectory of the outbreak.”

Economists polled by Reuters said China’s economic downturn would be short-lived if the outbreak was contained, but expected that this quarter would show China’s slowest growth rate since the global financial crisis.

The Chinese carmakers’ association said auto sales in China, the world’s largest market, were likely to slide more than 10% in the first half of the year due to the epidemic, and Germany’s Volkswagen said its sales to China had fallen 11% in January.

While the vast majority of infections and deaths have been in China, in particular Hubei, there have been nearly 450 cases in some 24 countries and territories outside mainland China, and three deaths.

Japan confirmed its first coronavirus death on Thursday - a woman in her 80s living in Kanagawa, near Tokyo. One person has died in Hong Kong and one in the Philippines.

Vietnam has imposed 20 days’ quarantine on Son Loi, a 10,000-strong rural community 44 km (27 miles) from the capital Hanoi, that is home to 11 of the 16 coronavirus cases reported in the country, two local officials told

Many factory owners are keen to restart their assembly lines, but the stringent health and safety rules put up local authorities are making it difficult.

Before businesses in big manufacturing hubs like Shanghai, Shenzhen, Suzhou or Nanjing can reopen, they must now verify the travel history and health of every employee over the past two weeks.

They must have frequent temperature checks of employees, hand-washing procedures and a plan to isolate and refer to hospitals anyone showing even fevers as low as 99.1 degrees Fahrenheit.

Most difficult of all, businesses cannot reopen without approval of their health plans by municipal officials -- and larger operations also have to wait for a site visit from a health official, the Times added.

For those whose goods were already shipped off before the factories broke up for the Lunar New Year also got caught up in the deadlock.

“We are not able to track where our goods are,” said Syed Ershad Ahmed, country manager of Expeditors, a global logistics company headquartered in Seattle, Washington.

In short, the frightening epidemic in China stands to halt production in Bangladesh’s factories, which can go on to affect the workers, who tend to live off hand to mouth.

“The factories might fail to pay their salaries on time,” said AM Chowdhury Selim, vice-president of BGMEA and managing director of Al Amin Garments.

The worst-case scenario might be a drastic reduction in exports and the factory owners unable to pay the workers’ salaries, said Mohammad Nasir, managing director of Masud Apparel.

According to a conservative forecast from Oxford Economics that is based on the impact of the virus so far, global economic growth this year is likely to be 0.2 percent lower at 2.3 percent -- the slowest pace since the global financial crisis a decade ago.

JPMorgan economists now think China’s economy will grow at a pace of just 1 percent in the first quarter, well down from an initial forecast that anticipated a peppy 6.3 percent rate.

“We will all suffer if production remains stopped for another week or two,” said Ershad of Expeditors.

Perhaps, this unfortunate incident could be the catalyst needed to lower the dependency on China.

# Five killed in Gopalganj road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Five construction workers were killed and seven others injured as a bus hit a human haulier in Gopalganj’s Kashiani upazila yesterday morning.

The dead are Sumon Munshi, 20, Bodiar Mollah, 30, Mizan Fakir, 50, Layek Fakir, 50, and Sirazul Islam Mollah, 30, said police.

The dead and the injured are residents of Tita village in Kashiani upazila. They were passengers of the human haulier, locally known as nasimon.

Quoting locals, Ataur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Bhanga Highway Police Station, said the accident took place on Dhaka-Khulna highway when the Dhaka-bound bus rammed the nasimon near Pona bus stand around 7:30am.

One died on the spot and 11 others were wounded. Two of them died at Kashiani Upazila Health Complex and two others on the way to Faridpur Medical College Hospital and Gopalganj Sadar Hospital.

The injured are undergoing treatment at Faridpur Medical College Hospital, the OC said.

Police seized the bus, but its driver managed to flee the spot, he added.

# Five tourists

FROM PAGE 1

towards Shubholong waterfall from Parjatan Ghat area in Rangamati town with around 30 passengers on board.

The boat suddenly tilted and turned upside down when it was crossing the DC bungalow area, said Sufi Ullah, additional superintendent of Rangamati police, adding that five people drowned in the incident while the others managed to swim ashore.

Divers of Bangladesh Navy recovered the bodies around 2:00pm and sent them to Rangamati General Hospital.

Muhammad Abdur Rashid, one of the members of the tourist team, said around 50 of them came from Chattogram for sightseeing.

**ONE DIED, TWO MISSING IN KAPTAI**

Meanwhile, divers recovered the body of a minor girl from Karnaphuli river and were scouring the river for two other children till filing of the report last evening.

The deceased was identified as Debleela Majumder, 10, while the missing children are three-year-old Tumpa, and five-year-old Binoy.

The three went missing after a picnic boat capsized in the mid-rives around 12:30pm yesterday, said Muhammad Shaful Ajom, inspector of Chandraghona Police Station.

Anwar Islam Baby, chairman of Kaptai Union Parishad, said the boat was carrying more passengers than its capacity.

Deputy Commissioner of Rangamati AKM Mamunur Rashid yesterday said “From tomorrow, no boats will be allowed to sail without ensuring life jackets for every passenger.”

Boats without fitness would not be allowed either, the DC told reporters during an emergency meeting at his office.

# Interest rates

FROM PAGE 1

from their postal savings after six months. In such case, interest rate would be 4 percent for one-year schemes, 4.50 percent for two-year schemes and 5 percent for three-year schemes, according to the circular.

Previously, the rates were 9 percent, 9.50 percent and 10 percent respectively.

The majority of banks have already implemented the decision to offer 6 percent interest rate on their Fixed Deposit Receipts (FDRs).

The banks are also expected to provide loans at 9 percent interest rate within a couple of months.

Last year, private banks agreed to set single-digit interest rate on their deposit and loan schemes.

On January 28 this year, the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh -- a forum of managing directors of banks -- decided to provide not more than 6 percent interest on FDRs from February 1.

Meanwhile, a finance ministry official said the government wanted to promote investment in private sector, and bring down interest rates on both FDRs and bank loans.

As the banks have already cut interest rates on FDRs, people would have rushed to open postal savings accounts if the government had not slashed the interest rate on the savings, the official added.

However, those who opened postal savings account before February 13 would get their profits based on previous interest rates, he added.

From the current fiscal year, the government has tightened the rules for savings instruments.

For example, the depositors will have to have tax identification number (TIN) and bank accounts for opening postal savings accounts. Besides, the government has slapped additional 5 percent tax on their profits.

These measures have led to a decline in the sale of government savings instruments.

People bought savings instruments worth Tk 5,433 crore between July and December in fiscal 2019-20. The amount was Tk 24,993 crore during the same period in fiscal 2018-19.

However, the 12 percent interest rate on savings certificates for more than three years and less than five years remained unchanged.



# A day of red and yellow

MATHEWS CHIRAN and HASSAN MUNHAMANNA

Dhaka is known for its festivities. Be it Eid, Puja, or Pahela Baishakh celebrations, there's at least a few occasions that are celebrated en masse every month.

And yet yesterday stood out.

As two days --- Valentine's Day and Pahela Falgun -- converged into one, it seemed it was not just the people who dressed up yesterday, but the entire city of Dhaka wore a different outlook.

Everywhere one looked, the city was painted in Valentine's red and Falgun's yellow.

It was also a day for the youth. While people from all ages came out to celebrate, it was young couples who took over the streets. Clad in yellow and red, they could be seen visiting and hanging out everywhere, as if to make sure they were the most noticeable demographic of the day.

Dating destinations were aplenty too. While some chose to go to the month-long book fair, some others chose restaurants and eateries. There were also such options as Valentine's or Falgun events or concerts, city landmarks, parks and shopping malls, or just travelling by rickshaw or seeing the day out chatting on the boulevard.

For example, newly-engaged couple Md Rafsan and Ipshita spent their time strolling at a park in Gulshan. "It's a special day, with two 'days' coinciding on the same day. But it's more special for us as we've just gotten engaged this year. Getting to go out on this beautiful day is going to be memorable," Rafsan said, smiling at his significant other. The couple were perhaps more in the spirit of Falgun than Valentine's Day as they wore matching outfits in yellow.

"We are a couple now, so we've come out wearing matching dresses. This is not new for us though, we have been doing this since our university days," Ipshita said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Ekushey book fair witnessed one of its highest turnouts yesterday, as people flooded Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan, marking both Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day. Inset, families were seen donning red and yellow attires on this special day.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# Two celebrations add spark

SAYED MOHMUD ULLAH

There's a book for almost everything, whether it be showing affection to a special someone, or celebrating one's tradition. But what happens if you need a book that can express both? Yesterday was such an occasion, because it welcomed the first day of spring while love was in the air, and there's no book on that as of yet.

Marking Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day, the two venues of Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela - Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan - and their adjacent areas, including Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University (DU), were flooded with enthusiastic book lovers dressed in red and yellow, as both occasions were celebrated together for the first time.

In the evening, couples wearing saris and panjabis, with flowers in their hands, flocked to the fair grounds. Many were seen gifting books to their loved ones.

"Books are the epitome of knowledge, and that's why we buy each other books on special days," said Nilima Jahan, a third-year student of DU's theatre and performance department.

Nilima and her boyfriend Sanwarul Haque Sony, who graduated from the same department, came to the fair after enjoying a gala concert at TSC in the afternoon.

Sales of romantic novels and poetry titles by popular writers - including Humayun Ahmed, Syed Shamsul Haque and Nirmalendu Goon, among others - were booming on the day, said respective publishers.

"Seeing these youngsters engrossed in books on special



## MIGRANT WORKERS IN SAUDI ARABIA 102 more sent back home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saudi Arabia sent back another 102 Bangladeshi migrant workers on Thursday night amid a deportation spree.

The Gulf country has sent back 183 migrant workers including 20 female workers in two separate flights on Wednesday night and Thursday early hours.

The latest deportees arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka in a Saudi Airlines flight around 11:20pm on Thursday, according to Brac Migration Programme.

After their arrival, Brac with the help of Prabashi Kalyan Desk set up by the expatriates' welfare ministry at the airport provided them with immediate support.

With them, some 4,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers including 175 female workers have returned from the Gulf country this year, Brac said.

Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration

Programme, said on an average about 50,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers are deported by different countries each year.

Many of the workers returned home "empty-handed", said Shariful.

He urged recruiting agencies to be more mindful while sending workers abroad so that they do not have to return home in this manner.

On the latest Saudi deportees, Shariful said the authorities concerned should collect the workers' accounts and find out the reason behind their deportation.

He also called upon the government and Bangladesh mission authorities in the Kingdom to identify the reasons.

Chalking out a work plan to support the returning migrant workers is necessary, he said, adding that Brac has initiatives to provide such deported workers with counselling, skill training and financial support.

## Bringing discipline in media a must Says info minister

AGENCIES

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday stressed the need for bringing discipline in the media as the country saw an exponential growth in the sector in last 10 years.

"Today, media does not mean newspaper only. It includes newspapers, televisions, radios and online news portals... the canvas has changed in last 10 years," he told a meeting, reports BSS. Bangladesh Press Council (BPC) arranged the event at its office, marking Press Council Day.

Speaking as chief guest, the minister said many challenges are now added to media as it has seen a rapid growth. He also observed that if any fake news is published, it may cause harm to the society and state.

The minister said social media is an unedited platform and it is not a medium even though many consider it as such. Some also start to introduce themselves as journalists through showing cards of online portals but they are not actual journalists, he added.

Hasan, also the Awami League joint general secretary,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## 'It's a matter of court' Quader about releasing Khaleda on parole

AGENCIES

Releasing BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on parole is a matter of the court, said Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday.

"It's a matter of the court. She [Khaleda] is in jail in corruption cases. The government would have considered releasing her if it was a political case," he told reporters at Awami League president's political office in Dhanmondi, reports UNB.

Parole is a conditional release of an inmate before completion of the sentence.

Quader said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhruul Islam Alamgir asked him over phone to inform Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina about Khaleda's release on parole.

"He [Fakhru] called me and requested to place the issue before the prime minister. I've discussed it with the home and law ministers. They didn't receive any

application in this regard," Quader said.

The minister also urged BNP to shun negativity and avoid politics of conflict, violence and revenge. If they do so, Quader said, public support for BNP will increase, reports BSS.

Replying to a query, he said the graft case against the BNP chief was filed during the caretaker government. So, the case is not political and the government has nothing to do with it.

He, however, told journalist that the government is providing better treatment to Begum Zia as they are quite sincere about it.

Quader said the statement made by BNP leaders about Khaleda's health condition did not match the report provided by physicians.

Khaleda Zia, a former prime minister, has been in jail since February 8, 2018. She was convicted in two corruption cases. Her

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

### DHAKA TODAY

#### LECTURE

From Bangabandhu to  
Viswabandhu: Towards Global  
Liberation Through Public  
Reasoning  
Organiser: Bangladesh  
Economic Association  
Venue: National Academy for  
Planning and Development,  
Kataban  
Time: 3:30pm

#### AWARD CEREMONY

Six teachers will be honoured and  
recognised for their contributions  
towards society.  
Organiser: Ethics Club of  
Bangladesh  
Venue: Bangladesh National  
Museum  
Time: 4pm

#### SEMINAR

Career in Animation and Digital

Marketing  
Venue: EndingScene  
Studio, Banani  
Time: 10am

#### MUSIC

With Bay of Bengal  
Venue: EMK Center  
Time: 5:30pm

#### EXHIBITION

Whiny Women  
Organiser: Women in Arts  
Venue: SAVVA, Gulshan-2  
Time: 12pm

#### WORKSHOP

Zine With Us  
The event will centre around  
self-publishing and magazines.  
Organiser: Goethe-Institut and  
HerStory Foundation,  
Venue: Goethe-Institut  
Bangladesh  
Time: 10am

## NID reg for expats in UK, Ireland begins

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh High Commission in London has started the formal registration of Bangladeshi expatriates in the UK and Ireland to provide them with the national identity (NID) cards.

The inaugural event was held at the high commission in London on Wednesday in presence of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) KM Nural Huda, the High Commission said in a statement yesterday.

The UK is the first among western countries from where Bangladeshi expatriates can have their registration done online to get NID cards.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to UK and Ireland Saida Muna Tasneem thanked the CEC and the Election Commission for their support to bring this service to the doorsteps of the Bangladeshi expatriates in the UK.

CEC Huda said Bangladeshi-British nationals can now be registered online for NID cards from their homes. Upon verification of their information, the applicants will be advised to come to the help desk at the high commission or embassy to provide their finger prints.

Subsequently, NID cards will be given to eligible applicants through the help desk of their respective country, which will be opened in due course.

Tasneem said in London they will be observing a "Mujib Borsho Special Consular Week" from March 23 when they are planning to handover the first batch of NID cards.

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# Justice Obaidul’s book on Liberation War launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A book written by a justice on the country’s Liberation War is a matter of pride, said Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain. He made the comment while addressing as chief guest an event, organised at the Supreme Court Judges Corner to launch a book titled “Oborononio Nirmomotar Chitro: Buddhijibi Hottakando O Onnanya” written by Justice Obaidul Hassan, a judge of the High Court Division of the SC, on Thursday.

The chief justice said Justice Obaidul has witnessed the Liberation War. Besides, he was a judge of the International Crimes Tribunal, which inspired and encouraged him to write the book, he added.

Untold atrocities and killing of intellectuals have been focused in his seasoned writing, which will touch readers, the chief justice said. This book will also help youths know about the brutality unleashed by the Pakistani army and their collaborators.

Justice M Enayetur Rahim, a judge of the High Court Division, conducted the event where Attorney General Mahbubey Alam; Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, chief coordinator of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s Birth Centenary Celebration National Implementation Committee; and Mofidul Haque, a trustee of Liberation War Museum, among others, spoke at the event.

# Patient ‘tortured to death’

FROM PAGE 5

College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

“We are trying to arrest Jewel, one of the owners of the centre, who is has been on the run since the incident,” said SI Moniruzzaman. Filing of a murder case with the police station is underway.

During a visit to the rehabilitation centre, this correspondent found only two people -- Labib (22) and Arif (35) -- working there. They, however, said they used to be patients at the centre before.

About Jahangir’s death, Labib said he might have died on Thursday night. He said he did not know further details.

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Strong interpersonal skills and ability to work with young adults is essential. Experience of undertaking similar previous assignments would be beneficial.

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- **Mathematics** – Lecturer
- **Civil Engineering** - Assistant Professor and Lecturer
- **Computer Science and Engineering** – Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor

- **Electrical & Electronics Engineering** - Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor
- **English** – Associate Professor, Assistant Professor and Lecturer
- **Law and Human Rights** – Assistant Professor
- **Pharmacy** –Lecturer

**Qualifications for the post of Professor:** Ph.D. in relevant discipline with minimum 11 years of teaching experience including 8 years as Assistant Professor or above, of which 3 years must be as Associate Professor, and at least 10 publications. Experience may be relaxed in case of applicant with excellent publication records.

**Qualifications for the post of Associate Professor:** Ph.D. in relevant discipline with minimum 8 years of teaching experience of which 5 years as Assistant Professor, and at least 5 publications. Experience may be relaxed in case of applicant with excellent publication records.

**Qualifications for the post of Assistant Professor:** (a) Ph.D. in relevant field or (b) Master’s degree with 1st Class in Bachelors level in relevant discipline and minimum 3 years of teaching experience with at least 1 publication. Experience may be relaxed in case of applicant with excellent publication records.

**Qualifications for the post of Lecturer:** (i) *Engineering Departments* - 1st Class in Bachelor degree in relevant discipline, (ii) *Other Departments:* 1st Class in both Bachelor & Master’s Degrees in relevant discipline.

Applications along with UAP CV format (*CV format available at UAP website [www.uap-bd.edu/vacancy/Vacancies.php](http://www.uap-bd.edu/vacancy/Vacancies.php)*), 2 copies of passport-sized photograph, copies of relevant certificates and mark sheets/transcripts, NID/Birth Certificate and other relevant documents should reach at the Office of the undersigned (either by e-mail to [jobs@uap-bd.edu](mailto:jobs@uap-bd.edu) or by post) by **26<sup>th</sup> February 2020**. All information mentioned must be backed by documents. If not, then application will not be considered. Incomplete applications are not acceptable. Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview.

Registrar



# Two

FROM PAGE 3

days like Pahela Falgun, Valentine’s Day and Ekushey February makes me so happy,” said Raihana Sathi, Chandrabindu’s stall attendant.

“Sales of books are satisfactory so far,” said Ahmedul Kabir, a salesperson at Agamee Prakashani.

Stall attendants of Kureghor Prakashoni, Somoy Prakashon, Pearl Publications and Anyaprokash also echoed Kabir as books were flying off the shelves.

Earlier in the morning, the celebration of “Basanta Baran” at DU’s arts and fine arts faculties drew a huge number of people.

As it was a Friday, the fair gates opened around 11am yesterday, the starting time for holidays.

Hundreds of little ones enjoyed their time with Sisimpur’s Halum, Ikri and Tuktuki, marking the third Shishu Prohor (special hours dedicated to children) at the children’s corner on Shurawardy Udayan.

Stalls at the corner were also busy selling a variety of books on Bangla cartoons, ghost stories and rhymes, among other topics.

The fair gates will open at 11am today as well, said organisers.

# Confce on language, culture begins at DIU

CITY DESK

Two-day international conference titled “Postcolonial Perspectives: Language, Literature and Culture and the Global South” began at Daffodil International University (DIU) in its 71 Milonayoton yesterday, says a press release.

Bill Ashcroft, professor emeritus of the University of New South Wales in Australia, inaugurated it as chief guest. Prof Fakrul Alam delivered the keynote presentation at the inaugural session.

Prof Himadri Lahiri from Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata joined the conference as a plenary speaker.

DIU Vice Chancellor Prof Yousuf M Islam presided over the ceremony while pro-VC Prof SM Mahabub-Ul-Haque Majumder was present as the guest of honor. The university’s English department head Md Rakibur Rahman Khan delivered the welcome address.

Notable Bangladeshi academics -- Prof AMM Hamidur Rahman, Prof Niaz Zaman and Prof Kaiser Haq -- are scheduled to attend the conference.

# Bringing discipline

FROM PAGE 3

urged BPC to prepare a work plan to bring discipline in the sector and ensure objective journalism. He said media is now enjoying absolute freedom but it should function in such a way that freedom of others is not hampered. He also said media freedom is needed for equity-based society, reports UNB.

Information Secretary Kamrun Nahar said, “Yellow journalism should be avoided.”

Editor of The Daily Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said a database of journalists will be created to bring discipline in the media.

BPC Chairman Justice Md Mamta Uddin Ahmed chaired the programme where Editor of Bangladesh Protidin Naem Nizam was present, among others.

# Pedalling for charity

FROM PAGE 5

Kern met with Lal Sobuj Society, a group of cyclists in Barishal, and roamed around the city with them on bicycles.

Tahasannuddin, a member of the group, said they highly appreciate the message Hannah is conveying through her happiness project.

Kern began her journey towards the Sundarbans through Bagerhat on Thursday. According to her website, she will visit Nepal and Pakistan in the subcontinent as well. She aims to raise 50,000 British pounds for the charities -- Crisis, Friends of the Earth, Doctors Without Borders and War Child UK.

# It’s a matter of court

FROM PAGE 3

party insists that the cases are politically motivated but the government denies the charges. Quader said that if BNP decides to apply for parole, they should mention why they are seeking it.

AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim, Organising Secretaries SM Kamal Hossen and Afzal Hossen, Publicity Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap, Office Secretary Barrister Biplob Barua and Deputy Office Secretary Sayem Khan, among others, attended the conference.

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# A day of red

FROM PAGE 3

Speaking of universities, yesterday was a busy day for universities with campuses in the city. Dhaka University alone saw a handful of events, hosting alongside the book fair a Falgun concert at Kalabhaban, a concert at TSC, a photowalk at Charukala department, and a “Bashanta Baran Utshab” at the same department.

The concert at Kalabhaban was organised by Samageet, a cultural activism group. Titled “Samageet Bashanta Utshab 1426”, the daylong concert featured such artists as The Ghaashphoring Choir, Samageet, Shohojia, Krishnakali and Leela.

The concert at TSC was the second day of “Bangalink Vibe Day”. While the first day was marked by concerts at Independent University, Bangladesh and Daffodil International University, the second day at DU featured bands such as Chirkutt, Cryptic Fate, Bay of Bengal, Arjan, and more.

For some, the day was beyond just red and yellow though. For example, for the audience at Samageet’s concert at DU’s Kalabhaban, it was more about celebrating the day expressing their own identities than it was about any colours. They came to the concert premises in attires of their choice, some in black, some in blue, and some in chequered designs. They flouted the traditional panjabi/saree binary as well, choosing to wear what fit their mood or what expressed their personalities best.

Beyond university campuses, regular leisure spots of the city also teemed with young couples yesterday. Hatirjheel, a year-long hangout zone, was filled to the brim

by visitors. The highlight of the area was its water boats, as young couples preferred to ride the boats to spend the day wafting through the lake.

Other than couples, friends also came out in groups to celebrate the day together. At every hangout spot, they could be seen taking selfies and gossiping with each other. Couple dates among friend circles was a notable group activity.

“Apart from me and my significant other, friends from both sides came to hangout with their partners. Since we are busy for most of the week, we don’t really get to see each other all that often. This is why we’re making the best out of this day by meeting up,” said Istiaque Ahmed, in the middle of taking selfies with his friends.

Apart from dress codes and roaming around, flowers were one of the main attractions of the day. People were seen gifting each other with colourful and aromatic flowers, some packed together in bouquets. Tiaras were a smash hit.

Centring the day, flower businesses thrived. Some hawkers put their regular business on hold to ferry flower for some quick cash. They sold the flowers at a higher price than normal, but it didn’t seem to bother some of the buyers, who were in too benevolent a mood for the day.

“Selling flowers is highly profitable on this day. I’ve switched from my regular business to hawking flowers for today. I’ve bought flowers worth Tk 10,000. I’m looking forward to earn around double that amount,” said Mohammad Hossain, who usually sells clothes at Gulshan.

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**Exam Venue : Faculty of Business Studies, DU**

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TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Trees with interlocked roots, Sundarban.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Secrets of Trees

Recently I started reading *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben, a German forester who spent several decades managing old trees in European forests. The book has many startling observations and claims: for example, trees communicate with each other, they raise alarms and work cooperatively, and they single out certain weak trees for special attention and care.

Perhaps many of the findings of the book are well-known to botanists, but for the layman used to looking at trees as mostly static and dumb, they are revealing.

One reason we miss events in the lives of other beings in our world is that they occupy a different time scale than humans. On one extreme are creatures whose lives go by very fast. For example, birds such as bee-eaters can snatch, flip and swallow a flying insect so swiftly that, for more people, it is impossible to discern this action with naked eye. Only with a very fast sequence taken with a high-speed camera can you see the truth.

Trees fall on the other extreme. Many of their actions are so slow compared to our familiar time scale we are accustomed to that we miss them.

Wohlleben's contribution is to interpret these slow events showing the deliberate actions of the trees. Reading the book, I was reminded of behaviour patterns I had encountered in trees.

Sundarban came to mind for several reasons. Trees of Sundarban – which must surely form many communities of trees as described in the book – have to cope with an environment made adverse by saline water, submersion by tides and storms blowing in from the Bay.

Take, for example, the photograph above. I took it in Sundarban in 2018. Unable to understand what is happening there, I asked Dr.

Mahmood Hussain, a professor of Botany at Khulna University, who explained it to me. These trees have shallow roots and easily toppled by storms. In order to help each other withstand storms, roots of nearby trees have interlocked so they gain strength from each other.

When I was in the Amazon forest, I noticed that the canopy was so thick that sunlight hardly penetrated into the forest ground. How do saplings grow then, I asked my guide. He said that upon reaching a height of five or six feet, they stay put, simply waiting their turn – perhaps for decades. Eventually and inevitably a nearby adult tree falls because of lightning, disease, storm or old age, opening up sunlight to the patient juvenile. At that point it starts growing again.

But you don't have to go to Amazonia to witness the wisdom of trees. The Candle Bush (*Dad Mordon*), which grows in abundance on our roadsides and disturbed ground, is an example. Certain caterpillars eat its leaves. To discourage them, the plant produces nectar in its yellow, candle-shaped flowers, attracting ants. These ants, in turn, attack the caterpillars and keep them away. If you see such a bush next to the road, take a closer look – you are likely to see a line of ants in its yellow flowers.

Wohlleben's observations go well beyond the adaptations that trees make to survive. He presents trees as beings with memory, emotions and intelligence. But he also points out that the kinds of sophisticated behaviour he observed are seen in forests where trees have grown naturally. When trees are planted in a forest, their roots are already irreversibly damaged, and they are less likely to show interesting behaviour.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabar on Instagram



PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL, TITU DAS, SHEIKH NASIR

Colours bloomed across the country yesterday to mark the twin celebrations of Valentine's Day and Pahela Falgun. Clockwise from left, in Tangail, a mother affectionately looks at her daughter, all dolled up for the day. A group of friends freestyle dancing at Barishal Government Women's College. What's a celebration without a group selfie? Youngsters pose for a photo at a programme in Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar premise.



Patient 'tortured to death' at Savar rehab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A patient of a drug rehabilitation centre in Savar died after he had been tortured there, alleged the victim's family.

Jahangir Mia (30) from Savar's Bank Colony was admitted to nearby "New Ador" on Thursday, his brother Manik told The Daily Star.

"Around noon today [yesterday], the rehab centre managing director Ariful Islam Jewel told me that my brother was taken to Enam Medical College Hospital following sickness," said Manik.

"When we arrived at the hospital, we heard that Zahangir died," he added.

Dr Merazur Rehan, emergency medical officer of the hospital, said Zahangir was brought dead.

Manik said, "We found multiple injury marks on the body."

Jahangir was beaten to death hours after he was admitted to the rehabilitation centre, alleged Manik. "I will file a murder case against the rehab centre officials," he said.

The body bore injury marks on different parts including face, head and neck, said Moniruzzaman, sub-inspector of Savar Model Police Station. "He [Jahangir] might have died at night," said the SI.

"Primarily we suspect he was tortured to death," said Officer-in-Charge AFM Sayeed of the police station.

Police sent the body to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

For the love of birds

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Love has many definitions; it can be expressed in many ways, it can be felt for many things. This is why Valentine's Day, the day of love, is celebrated in so many different ways.

For a group of Sylhet Agriculture University (SAU) youths, expressing their love for birds was the way to celebrate the day.

With the slogan, "Pakhi Bachao, Paribesh Bachao (Save Birds, Save the Environment)", the youths dedicated the day facilitating living spaces for birds at the university campus and surrounding areas. They did this by setting clay pots on trees where birds can build nests with ease.

The event, titled "Love for Birds", was organised by Pradhikar, an animal rights organisation of the university.

According to Pradhikar, rapid

urbanisation around the university area has put severe pressure on avian habitats. As concrete encroaches, birds of all species are left with little inhabitable space.

The organisation has been hosting the event for the last couple of years. Along with birds, the programme also expresses Pradhikar's affection for all living animals of the planet.

Ahmed Rafi, president of Pradhikar, said, "Deforestation has become a major threat to all living animals of the planet. Birds are directly affected by it. It is our responsibility to help birds survive in nature for the betterment of our ecosystem."

"This event is a symbolic gesture to raise awareness among people so that our avian friends don't face extinction as a result of our wrongdoings," he added.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Pedalling for charity

Cyclist, on a solo bike ride from Vietnam to UK, passes through Bangladesh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Hannah Kern, a 25-year-old woman from England, is on a solo charity bike ride from Hanoi to London to raise awareness and funds for four charities.

Titled "Hannah's Happiness Project", the bike ride started on April 2019 in Vietnam, and it recently took her through Bangladesh.

Kern entered Bangladesh through Tamabil border in Sylhet on February 3. On a Facebook post detailing her time in the country, she mentions, "When planning my route through Bangladesh, many people told me that the rivers throughout the country have a wonderful and impressive travel network that I must experience. This helped me to decide on a route where I would cross the Meghna River from Chandpur to Barisal, the home

of a great cyclist community."

She explained why she is a "happiness activist". "I believe that the best and most powerful strength of an individual is the ability to make someone smile. I also believe that we must start asking why there are issues in our world related to animal rights, human rights, climate change etc," she said.

Speaking with this correspondent on Thursday, she said she hopes to encourage people to join this happiness movement.

She has already passed through Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar and India, crossing 8,000 kilometres. "The people of this country have been helpful and kind. Everywhere, they have given me shelter, advice, and support," she said.

"I hope my journey through Bangladesh inspires others to visit this beautiful country," Kern added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Hanna Kern, who's on a solo bike trip to raise funds for charity, with Lal Sobuj Society, a group of local cyclists, roam across Barishal on their trusted mode of transport. This photo was taken from Charaicha in the district's Sadar upazila on Wednesday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

RU professor sues colleague over assault

RU CORRESPONDENT

A Rajshahi University teacher filed an attempted murder case on Thursday night against his colleague after the latter allegedly assaulted him.

Prof Ali Asgar of RU's crop science and technology department filed the case with Motihar Police Station against Prof Khairul Islam of the same department, said SM Masud Parvez, officer-in-charge of the police station.

"I was standing beside the dean's office when Prof Khairul came and hit me without saying anything. As a result, I fell on the floor and fainted," said Prof Ali.

However, Prof Khairul denied the allegation, claiming that he did not even touch him.

Both teachers had filed two general diaries against each other over another dispute with the police station in November last year.

THREE CONSTITUENCIES

Seven collect BNP forms for by-polls

UNB, Dhaka

Seven aspirants yesterday collected BNP's nomination forms to contest the upcoming by-polls to three constituencies.

Party leaders Rabiul Islam Robi collected the form for contesting the Dhaka-10 by-election, while Kazi Muniruzzaman, Monirul Haque, Kazi Khairuzzaman Shipon for Bagerhat-4 and Mainul Hasan Sadik, Rafiqul Islam and Mizanur Rahman Sarker for Gaibandha-3 by-polls.

The by-elections will be held on March 21 as per the schedule announced by the Election Commission on February 6.



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FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2020, FALGUN 2, 1426 BS

# ACC’s prudent move to save our rivers

Directing the DCs to go tough on grabbing

WE are heartened by the Anti-Corruption Commission’s (ACC) request to the cabinet secretary to give directives to district deputy commissioners (DCCs) to save rivers from encroachers by taking legal action against them. The move demonstrates how serious the ACC considers this issue, echoing the sentiments of the public and the High Court which has defined rivers as “living beings” and killing them through river grabbing and waste dumping as “collective suicide”.

This paper, as part of its commitment to saving our rivers, has published innumerable reports on how different rivers have been virtually killed due to illegal grabbing or indiscriminate dumping of untreated industrial effluents and solid waste. On February 07, our supplement titled “Save Rivers, Save Sonar Bangla” highlighted the grim condition of our country’s rivers and the immediate need to take action to reverse the killing of our rivers as part of the commemoration of “Mujib Barsha”, the birth centenary of Bangabandhu. The supplement has cited the recent report of the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC), which gives a clear picture of the precarious condition the lifelines of our country are in. The NRCC has found that the number of rivers has come down from 700 (in pre-independence times) to 405 at present, with many of them under threat due to illegal encroachment. The statistics the report cites are in fact, quite staggering: 139 rivers in 64 districts are encroached upon, 29 rivers are severely polluted, with all four surrounding Dhaka declared biologically dead.

It is frustrating that, despite continuous reports in the media, innumerable directives given by the courts and most importantly, despite the Prime Minister’s asking her government to take action against river grabbers as well as many government projects worth several hundred crores of taka to revive the rivers, we are still witnessing regular grabbing of rivers and their painful demise. It is obvious that the collusion between river grabbers and corrupt officials is a major obstacle that must be removed forever if we are to save our rivers.

We are hopeful that the ACC’s request to the cabinet secretary will be taken positively and will result in a vigorous initiative by our district deputy commissioners in each district to evict the illegal encroachers of rivers and take legal action against them. Here, we appeal again to our Prime Minister to directly intervene to save our rivers.

# Justice continues to elude road crash victims

Culture of impunity is behind the increase in road accidents

IT is most unfortunate that despite the enactment of the Road Transport Act 2018, the 17-point directive given by the Prime Minister’s Office, and the several “traffic weeks” observed by the police, the government could neither bring discipline on our roads nor could they ensure that road crash victims get justice. In a recently held press conference, organised by road safety campaigners, some of the victims’ family members expressed their frustration at the indifference of the authorities concerned in ensuring justice for their loved ones.

According to one victim’s father, all his efforts to seek justice for his son’s death—he wrote to the inspector general of police and the commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, and even wrote to the prime minister as well as several other ministers seeking justice—have failed to get the desired response from the authorities. His son Tashin was killed by a speeding bus last year while he was crossing a street using a zebra crossing. What was most disturbing in this case was the fact that the police didn’t even help the victim’s father to file a case against the killer bus driver, although now they (the police) are saying that they themselves have filed a case against the driver. In another instance, when a case had been filed against the accused driver, his associates threatened the victim’s family to stop the legal battle. Moreover, in many other cases, although the accused drivers had been arrested, they were released in no time.

Needless to say, the culture of impunity enjoyed by the guilty drivers as well as the transport workers only emboldens others to disobey traffic rules, and is one of the major reasons behind the increase in road accidents. According to a report by Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, in January alone, at least 547 people, including 146 students, were killed and 1,141 others injured in 531 road accidents across the country. Such a high number of deaths in a single month is appalling and calls for immediate attention of the authorities. Under the circumstances, we expect proactive measures from the government in ensuring justice and compensation for the road crash victims as well as implementing the recently enacted Road Transport Act 2018.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Ban use of guidebooks

In March 2008, a High Court bench delivered a verdict prohibiting the printing, sale and marketing of notebooks and guidebooks. Sadly enough, the verdict has not materialised yet.

Students in most of our schools are now fully dependent on notebooks and guidebooks. It is very sad that even most teachers follow these and don’t encourage students to think creatively. Notebooks and guidebooks are totally contrary to the objectives of the creative method of education, since they focus only on exams rather than student development.

If the objectives of education are to be achieved, notebooks and guidebooks have to be banned immediately. Failing this, our students will continue to memorise information from these notebooks and fail to get the best of what education has to offer them.

Pushpan Chowdhury, Chattogram

# A timely decision on higher education



FINALLY, a breath of fresh air—winds blowing through the higher stratosphere are causing some thought clouds to loosen up and shower good news on higher education. Public universities have been asked to introduce uniform admission tests and to stop weekend courses. They have also been asked to accommodate international students. This is a clarion call for universities to wake up to lived realities and shape up to be at par with international standards.

At a convocation ceremony in December, the chancellor of a university launched a scathing attack on certain university teachers for abusing the existing system to mint money by offering evening or weekend courses. Soon afterwards, the University Grants Commission (UGC) sent a 13-point directive to all public universities asking them to stop weekend courses, as well as to maintain financial transparency. The Prime Minister too has expressed her dissatisfaction over the monetary obsession of some university teachers. She, however, upheld the autonomy of the universities by mentioning that the UGC and universities should deal with the issue and there was no need for the parliament to intervene. Her soft signal was a hint for those reviewing the UGC decision. University of Dhaka (DU) has already suspended its weekend programmes; others are likely to follow.

This may not come as good news for many of my colleagues who have some legitimate arguments in favour of the weekend or evening courses. After all, this system has given them some financial flexibility to do things that were previously unheard of. An attempt by the English Department at DU to introduce such courses, however, was foiled by agitating students. The students felt that there would be discrimination as teachers might prefer higher paying students. Education would become a commodity, and the meritocracy would be compromised. I joined the department in 2011. By then, the storm was over, but an uneasy calm still persisted, affecting the teacher-student relationship. My previous department at Jahangirnagar by then had started weekend programmes, and I started hearing stories of some of my colleagues teaching as many as nine courses over the weekends. The department that I chaired reportedly became like private universities, both in outlook and orientation. Even at DU, the departments that opted for parallel programmes started showing signs of material growth—air-conditioned class rooms, well-furnished office rooms, conference rooms, well equipped libraries or workstations. Many of the departments could finally afford to procure some decent furniture, acquire bare minimum facilities or buy basic logistical equipment such as a photo-copier machine, thanks largely to the extra revenue made through this parallel system. At the same time, it stopped many teachers from “moonlighting”, as they could be generously compensated for their weekend engagements in their own departments. This turned out to be a win-win situation for those teachers who did not want to teach outside and those students who did not previously get a chance to study at prestigious public universities. Currently, there are 7,000 regular Master’s students across DU, and the number is matched across the 12 degrees offering evening MA programmes. The tuition fee for regular students per semester is BDT 500, while during the weekend, it is almost ten-fold.

As a concept, especially in a country where opportunities are scarce, weekend courses sound logical. The problem arises when greed sets in and makes education a product to profit from. It creates disparity among teachers and departments, and discourages them from engaging in research or publications.

University admission tests are the other instance where teachers have been accused of abusing the system for their own financial gain. A decision to implement an

integrated university admission test has been stalled for over a decade. The UGC annual report 2016, for instance, termed the existing admission system as questionable and expensive. A study done by the UGC in 2013 found that an admission-seeker on average was spending BDT 43,100 on coaching and other related expenditures, including travel. One can only assume that by now, the cost has doubled. University teachers earned bad press for their supposed involvement in resisting the uniform test. For their invigilation during the admission season, teachers in certain universities receive more than BDT one lakh. And the prolonged exam schedule often makes candidates miss out on tests at other universities.

The 45 functional public universities that currently exist can offer a total of 4,65,675 seats (2018 estimate). Using last year’s number of 13.5 lakh HSC candidates as our benchmark, it can be ascertained that almost half the successful candidates will not find a place in the state subsidised education system. Their options will be to either get admitted in the private universities or to go abroad. Not all public universities have come of age or have the same prestige factors. Students are more likely to consider better institutions or disciplines, or proximity to their hometowns in prioritising their choices. A unified test will at least give everyone a fair chance.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Vice chancellors of almost all universities met last week and decided on the standardised test. Some big players however, mentioned that their formal bodies would take the ultimate decision. In all probability, we are going to have a uniform test from this year. The challenge for the proposed admission process is to maintain fairness, diversity and professionalism in selecting candidates who have the necessary skills and knowledge for higher education. Given the novelty of the system, sample test papers should be made available in advance so that the time spent by test-takers in preparing for the tests help them develop skills directly beneficial for their future academic studies. Meanwhile, engineering universities can follow the unified model of the medical colleges.

For general subjects that rely on critical and analytical abilities and creative expressions, admission tests must provide a snapshot of a student’s ability at the time of their application to university study. The knowledge and skills that are being tested must be familiar to applicants. Often, questions are made more difficult, considering elimination as the only criteria. The difficulty level of questions should be at par with what students have studied at the HSC level. And there should be

fear of question leakage, which may suck the air out of any bubble of success.

The good thing is, the government and UGC are taking higher education seriously. They do not want its quality to be compromised. The renewed focus on regular academic activities, while suspending the diversion of energies from the weekend programmes, is a commendable initiative. The attempt to stop inhumane shutting of admission-seekers from one corner of the country to another in search of a seat that benefitted mostly a section of teachers is equally laudable. With the proposed changes, the universities will be pitted against each other and there will be healthy competition to excel and attract better candidates. The other move to encourage international students will further challenge the universities to improve their infrastructure, update their curricula, increase their faculty portfolios, and yield research with recognisable impacts.

Our universities played a crucial role in the birth of the country. With the right impetus and strategies, universities can once again help us leap into the future, shaking off whatever mid-life crisis that we are having at fifty!

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Shamsad Mortuza is the Pro VC, and the Head of the Department of English and Humanities at University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh.

# Using the right to information to improve the country

The American example

SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

HOW has the global use of Right to Information (RTI) laws brought about important new developments and catalysed change? The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) regime in the US is the perfect example to illustrate this story.

The US—the “leader of the free world”—did not enact the FOIA until 1966, a full two centuries after the first such law was enacted in Sweden in 1766. This lag speaks volumes about the general fear of authorities of the law’s inherent power to expose government misdeeds and abuse of power.

After the Second World War, when the US and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers, one outcome was increased government secrecy. So in the early 1950s, when President Eisenhower fired several thousand federal employees suspected of being communists, demands for records associated with the dismissals arose. In response, the administration claimed official secrecy. Proponents of transparency argued that such a “trend toward government secrecy could end in a dictatorship”.

The public debate that followed for over a decade led to the adoption of the FOIA in 1966 by a reluctant President Johnson. However, unlike the broader reach of the law in countries like Bangladesh, only the records of federal executive branch agencies and departments were subjected to FOIA. The law did not apply to the Congress, the Federal Courts, the President and his immediate staff and the Vice President. This was changed subsequently under the Presidential Records Act of 1978, whereby the public can now access most presidential records through the FOIA, five to twelve years after a President exits the White House. The FOIA also does not apply to state governments; each state has its own transparency laws.

The FOIA makes only nine exemptions

that enable federal agencies to withhold records—in cases where doing so would be harmful to national security or foreign policy, personal privacy, confidential business information, law enforcement records, and a few other interests. Comparatively, the Bangladesh RTI law lists twenty exemptions.

Since 1966, the American law has had its ups and down through different administrations and a series of amendments, starting in 1974 in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal involving President Richard

before it, previously exempted, should now become open. The Bangladesh law prohibits disclosure of such information permanently.

Another important improvement is that the new law enshrines the presumption of openness. In other words, the default position of government should be to disclose, not withhold. Information may be withheld only if it is “reasonably foreseen” that disclosure would harm an interest protected by a FOIA exemption. This is far from the law and practice in Bangladesh.

Over the past 50 years, the FOIA has been put to use in the US across a range of issues related to government misconduct, waste and mismanagement, privacy rights of citizens, questionable decisions on national security, threats to food safety, public health and the environment. A few examples of these cases are—a product labelled “parmesan cheese” had no parmesan at all; the FBI carried out surveillance on dozens of well-known African-American writers for five decades; the Environmental Protection Agency knew paper mills were discharging a toxic substance, dioxin, into rivers; recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 were marred by wasteful government spending; the cost-driven decisions by administrators in Michigan not to add corrosion controls to the

water supply caused lead poisoning in children; and government audits showed widespread billing mistakes, primarily overcharging, in the Medicare Advantage programme.

Recent FOIA requests have sought records concerning the Customs and Border Protection Department’s use of facial recognition to implement a biometric entry/exit program at airports and other ports of entry. Requests have also included records related to the Department of Homeland Security’s assessment and expansion of a system for monitoring media representatives. The current president’s tax records and those of his business entities have also been sought. Requests have pertained to records related to investigations of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential elections, to the Inspector General’s report concerning surveillance of Muslims and persons of Arab descent by the New York police department in collaboration with the CIA, and about the monitoring of news organisations and social media services by the Department of Homeland Security.

We hope these examples will spur civil society in Bangladesh to consider putting the RTI Act 2009 to similar use. Of course, the differences in the circumstances between the two countries and the provisions of the two laws may not permit seeking the same kind of information, but even apparently deniable requests can be made submissible by careful crafting. The ostensive purpose of the law is to advance interaction between citizens and public bodies to promote democracy and good governance. Requested information may or may not always be disclosed, but by asking for them, citizens play an important role in making their concerns known.

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Shamsul Bari and Ruhi Naz are Chairman and Project Coordinator (RTI section) respectively of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB). Email: rib@citech-bd.com.



# Jihadists of Bangladeshi descent

We may be forced to welcome them, sooner than we think

**KAMAL AHMED**

THE verdict rejecting the appeal of the so-called ISIS bride, Shamima Begum, has stoked an important debate in the United Kingdom, raising serious concerns and anxiety among migrant families and rights activists. Rights activists are concerned that this judgement allows the British government—or to be more precise, the Home Secretary—to revoke anyone’s citizenship on the pretext of alleged terrorism offences without any prosecution, on the basis of the person’s parents’ origin. British anti-terror law allows the government to take away the citizenship of anyone accused of commissioning or committing terrorist acts, provided that person does not become stateless. Migrants are worried that this is making their descendants second-tier citizens despite being born in Britain.

However, there is more in this judgement that should worry authorities in Bangladesh too. The three judges of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC), in reaching their decisions, among other things, relied on Bangladesh’s relevant laws and a Supreme Court ruling. The Commission, in its February 7 judgement, concluded that if Bangladeshi courts applied Bangladeshi law properly, then the Bangladeshi Government would have to grant her citizenship.

The appeal was against two decisions of the British government: revocation of her citizenship, and refusing her leave to enter the UK in order to enable her to pursue her appeal effectively. The court considered three issues to decide her fate—does revoking British

nationality leave her “stateless”? Is it in breach of policy by exposing her to risk of serious harm? Was she able to participate properly in her appeal? As the most crucial part of the appeal was her citizenship, a significant portion of court deliberations were focused on the issue of whether the action taken by the British government made her stateless.

Strangely enough, the legal deliberations seemed more focused on establishing whether she would become stateless or not, instead of the legality of the contested action that stripped her of her citizenship. The judges examined Bangladesh’s citizenship laws and other constitutional provisions in great detail, including the evolution of these rules. They heard two experts on Bangladesh law and referred to an article authored by a special assistant to the Bangladesh Prime Minister on this subject. The Supreme Court verdict on the citizenship of former Jamaat chief Golam Azam also featured heavily in the deliberations.

In the judgement, it was concluded that Shamima Begum is neither *de jure* (according to law) nor *de facto* (in reality, but not sanctioned by the state) stateless. The court rejected the appellant’s argument that the Bangladesh government would not treat her as a national and she would not be able to challenge that in court. The judges also rejected the appellant’s submission that the Supreme Court in Bangladesh would not be able to decide against the government due to political pressure and a lack of independence. These judges have taken the view that when the British Home Secretary revoked her citizenship, Shamima was a citizen of Bangladesh by descent, by virtue of Section 5 of



Shamima Begum before she left UK to travel to Syria

PHOTO: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

the 1951 Citizenship Act. In their view, “she held the citizenship as of right. That citizenship was not in the gift of the government, and could not be denied by the government in any circumstances”.

The suggestion made by the appellant, that Bangladesh’s existing legal framework gives the government absolute discretion to decide whether a person is or is not a citizen, was also rejected by the judges. In rejecting this argument, the judgement says “there is no such thing as an unreviewable discretion.” Although Shamima Begum, who still remains under the custody of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), has been granted permission to apply for a judicial review of the verdict on citizenship, her chances seem very little,

following two recent rulings by the UK’s High Court in similar cases.

Shamima Begum is not the only terror suspect that the British government has been trying to offload onto Bangladesh; there are several others in the pipeline. In fact, the New York Post on December 8, 2019, precisely two months before Shamima’s verdict, reported that the UK High Court had affirmed similar expulsions of two more British-Bangladeshis suspected of terror ties. In those two cases, identities of the suspects were not revealed and the High Court overturned the initial SIAC ruling that allowed their appeals. The High Court, in its ruling on the appeals brought by the suspects named E3 and N3, said that “they can in fact claim citizenship in Bangladesh,

meaning they would not be left stateless if barred from Britain”. Suppression of identities made it difficult to determine their latest whereabouts. Media reports in the past have listed nearly a dozen or more terror suspects in Britain of Bangladeshi descent.

Fears among migrants are also rising due to another dreaded policy of the British government, unrelated to terrorism, but aimed at curbing crime. However, it affects migrants who have gained citizenship through naturalisation. This worry emanates from the latest forced deportation of more than a dozen British-Jamaicans belonging to an immigrant group better known as the Windrush generation, for crimes unrelated to terrorism. Amidst protests from the opposition and rights groups against these deportations, which they term as discriminatory and racist, the government said “it is entirely right that foreign national offenders should be deported from the country in accordance with the law”.

Critics of both these policies argue that these British nationals have gone astray due to the government’s failings in providing them the right education, training and opportunities. Those who became jihadists were being radicalised in Britain under the noses of the security services. In Shamima’s case, some have argued that she was a victim of grooming at the age of 15 and subjected to sexual abuse. It has been further suggested that problems originated in Britain should be dealt with in Britain and attempts to shift them onto others are both immoral and unfair. However, so far, the current Tory government remains unmoved.

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Kamal Ahmed is a journalist.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

# Looking inward and thinking out loud

**#Research-Mesearch**

**NADINE SHAANTA MURSHID**

EVERY single day, a rapist is reported. Every. Single. Day. Let that sink in.

I usually speak fairly quickly. My grandfather is the one who made me conscious of it.

But he also provided a rationale: “it’s because you think quickly.” I always appreciated that positive reframe; that’s rare for grandfathers of his generation, particularly in Bangladesh. But all that is beside the point. The point is, now is the time to slow down, and make sense of what is happening in this world at a time when we see unprecedented levels of, well, everything—but in particular, progress, that is paralleled only by stupendous levels of human suffering of all kinds.

Poverty levels in Bangladesh are apparently lower than ever before, including extreme poverty. Girls’ enrolment in schools, particularly primary school, is almost ubiquitous. We now see some children, not hundreds of children, selling trinkets or books on the streets—possibly on behalf of parents or *dalals*. We rarely see unclothed people roaming around; almost everyone can afford a pair of pants, barring the *phokir* who threatens you with scatological terror if you refuse him money. These are (mostly) good signs for a nation with aspirations to become a middle-income country in the foreseeable future. But, amid such encouraging notions, we have found ourselves in a world in which we know that women are violated by men at extremely high rates. This is hardly new; but given historical under-reporting of violence, particularly sexual violence,

and normalisation of marital rape, it is only now that we hear about reports of violence. On a daily basis.

Exactly how prevalent is sexual harassment? In a recent study with K. A. S. Murshid from the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), we found that sexual harassment was reported by almost 65 percent of youth in the study. This is exceptionally high, if you take social desirability bias into account. In a country where sex is taboo, sexual

sexual harassment are rarely reported to authorities. We are justifiably indignant about rape-murders, as we focus on the innocent victim—while those who get away alive are somehow held responsible for their own rapes. In the name of protection, we call on patriarchal tropes that blame victims and police their bodies. What is perhaps most crucial is that the pervasive nature of sexual violence and the everyday experience of it makes it as banal as the intrepid conversations

a compliment; when women in public buses are groped; when anyone is made to listen to explicit sexual content without their consent; when married men force themselves upon their wives because that’s their “right.” These happen, and these happen often. We never talk about them.

Back to our study—unsurprisingly, for those of us who conducted the study, a large number of boys reported sexual harassment. In a culture that is hyper-sexualised amid sexual

more accessible, and amenable to being shamed into silence. Boys—and men—hardly report violence that they experience, knowing that people wouldn’t believe them, because our culture has boys buying into the idea that they have to “man up” and take what is thrown at them, instead of being a female sexual organ; even though why a female organ has to be used to indicate weakness is beyond me—particularly the one that delivers babies like a champion.

Why is any of this important beyond the moral imperative to foster a world in which people are free from violence? Because early exposure to violence is connected to a host of consequences. Those who are violated experience mental health, physical health and reproductive health concerns because of the violence they experience—ranging from depression and anxiety to sexually transmitted diseases, and a greater likelihood of using coping mechanisms that have lasting harmful effects, including substance use and risky sex.

What can we do? Think about it. Carefully. Think about how we contribute to creating a culture of violence (and ours IS that; let us not mince words here). And then think about how we can undo this. Let’s live up to that neoliberal mantra of personal responsibility that capitalism has fed us and think about how our individual actions—as educators, policymakers, parents, children, workers, capitalists, whatever-have-you—have created the world in which we live.

And then, maybe, think about how our individual actions are connected to the structure through policies, social norms, and tradition.

And ask the age old question: which came first?

.....  
Nadine Shaanta Murshid, PhD, is Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work, University at Buffalo.



University of Dhaka students come together to speak out against rape in early January this year.

PHOTO: MUNIR UZ ZAMAN/AFP

crimes are taboo as well. People don’t admit sexual crimes because it is conflated with sex. In addition, those who experience sexual violence can hardly trust the system to both believe them and then do something about it. It is not a coincidence that we see high numbers of rapes being reported, while everyday experiences of

about rape. Clearly, there is a hierarchy of oppression— which the youngsters today call Oppression Olympics—and only certain kinds of violence is worthy of our collective rage; the *really* violent kind that involves rape and murder. We ignore the more subtle forms of sexual violence: when an employer makes sexual comments in the guise of

repression, boys are imminent victims of sexual harassment. Amid patriarchy, boys are more likely to be in locations that girls are not in—and thus become easy prey. And because boys are not culturally viewed as sexual objects in the way girls are, thanks to advertising gurus across the world, they are hyper visible to predators who find boys

QUOTABLE  
Quote



**SALMAN RUSHDIE**  
(June 19,1947)  
British Indian novelist and essayist

*What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist.*

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Pick-up game  
6 Rumaki wrapper  
11 Detached  
12 Extreme pain  
13 One with a pick  
14 Thus  
15 Wilson’s predecessor  
17 Profing mark  
18 Parachute pull  
20 Open a bit  
22 Following  
23 Folding art  
26 TV, radio, etc.  
28 Romantic sort  
29 Identify, from a lineup  
31 Yale rooter

32 Play group  
33 Small workers  
34 Makes a choice  
36 Brewer’s need  
38 Portland setting  
40 Moles, e.g.  
43 Steer clear of  
44 Platter player  
45 Signs a lease  
46 Annie’s pooch

DOWN

1 Toast spread  
2 Boxing great  
3 Inconsistency  
4 Work dough  
5 Feudal farmer  
6 Scrooge cry  
7 Way back when

8 Infringement  
9 In the past  
10 Russian refusal  
16 Pitch’s kin  
18 Scout’s base  
19 Bread spread  
21 Leave at the altar  
23 Feedbag fill  
24 Turn to liquid  
25 Eye part  
27 Peeved  
30 Money machine  
33 Greek vowel  
34 General Bradley  
35 Make lots  
37 Nile reptiles  
39 Mag. workers  
41 Terminus  
42 Tofu source


WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO [dsopinion@gmail.com](mailto:dsopinion@gmail.com).

YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

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BEEBLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott





WHAT'S ON



**Musical Evening**  
Title: Bhalobashar Akhore Lekha  
Boshonter Gaan  
Organiser: Star Melodies  
Venue: The Daily Star Centre,  
Kazi Nazrul Islam Ave  
Date: February 15  
Time: 6 pm



**Solo Exhibition**  
Title: Parables of the Womb  
Artist: Dilara Begum Jolly  
Venue: Bengal Shilpalay,  
Dhanmondi  
Date: February 4 – March 28  
Time: 2 pm – 8 pm (Except  
Sundays)



**Book Fair**  
Title: Amar Ekushey Boi Mela  
Organiser: Bangla Academy  
Venue: Bangla Academy Premises  
Date: Feb 2-29  
Time: 3 pm – 8 pm; 11 am – 9 pm  
on weekends



**Group Art Exhibition**  
Title: Breaking Ground: Modern Art  
in Transition  
Venue: Subir Choudhury Exhibition  
Hall, Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi  
Date: Dec 17 – Feb 15  
Time: 1 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)



**Art Event**  
Title: Dhaka Art Summit 2020  
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala  
Academy  
Date: February 7 – 15  
Time: 10 am – 8 pm



'Roots' showcases 'An Alternative Thought; SM Sultan Pedagogy (L) and Dhali Al Mamoon's 'Laat Saheber Chair', a complex sculptural work made up of resin, spices, stone dust, fiber and textile, among other things (R) at DAS 2020.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

# Dhaka Art Summit 2020 concludes today

ZAHANGIR ALOM

The *Dhaka Art Summit: Seismic Movements (DAS 2020)*, organised by Samdani Art Foundation (SAF) in association with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), concludes today at the National Art Gallery, BSA.

Envisioned by Rajeeb and Nadia Samdani, the co-founders of SAF, along with Diana Campbell Betancourt, the Chief Curator of DAS 2020, this year's summit provided art lovers with a rare opportunity to experience different forms of art from all around the world under one roof.

The open-for-all event convenes a critical mass of artists, curators, scholars and thinkers invoking its audience to reconsider histories, movements, borders and fault lines through the lenses of art. More than 500 artists, sculptors, curators, critics, collectors, architects and art professionals from over 44 different countries participated in this grand fiesta of modern and contemporary art. Forged through alliances across Africa, Australia, South and Southeast Asia, and also extending into Europe and the US, the extravagant event also featured thought-provoking performance arts, videos, panel discussions, symposia, puppet shows and more.

"It has been incredible to witness how DAS and its collaborators have grown over the past years," asserts Nadia Samdani, the Director of DAS. "Our strive to empower artists and collectives from Bangladesh and South Asia, and being able to represent them internationally, is more of a privilege for us all."



(From left) Bishwajit Goswami, Diana Campbell Betancourt and Ruxmini Reckvana Q Choudhury at the summit.

PHOTO: COURTESY

An immersive installation by Adrián Villar Rojas, shedding light on geology through the millennia and made of 400-million-year-old ammonite and orthoceras fossils, welcomed art lovers at the event. Featuring these ancient fossils of extinct species from the super-ocean Panthalassa, this exquisite installation narrates a tale that goes beyond all timelines.

"Inspired by the geological reading of the word 'summit' as the top of a mountain, DAS 2020 considers the various ruptures that have realigned and continue to shift the face of our moving planet. Seismic movements do not adhere to statist or nationalist

frameworks. They join and split apart tectonics of multiple scales and layers," shares Diana Campbell Betancourt, Chief Curator of DAS 2020. "We are interested in what will happen through the movement of ideas from inside the BSA to outside in real life, and this is why the exhibition design of DAS 2020 keeps a porous barrier between the inside and the outside of the venue."

32 independent international and local curators from MOMA, Center Pompidou and Parasite, under the expert supervision of DAS's chief curator Diana Campbell Betancourt, presented a many thematic shows, alongside the unique exhibition, *Lighting The Fire of Freedom*:

*Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*, organised as a tribute to the Father of the Nation, marking his birth centenary. The marvelous exhibition, curated by Ruxmini Reckvana Q Choudhury, Assistant Curator of SAF, is enlightening.

*The Collective Body*, an exhibition co-curated by Diana Campbell Betancourt and Kathryn Weir, crystallises concerns pertinent to collaborative practice in Bangladesh, drawing parallels and creating unprecedented exchange with other collective movements emerging across Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and Oceania.

*On Muzharul Islam: Surfacing Intention*, a group exhibition of primarily commissioned works by seventeen artists responding to the built and unbuilt legacy of the groundbreaking Bangladeshi architect Muzharul Islam (1923-2012), is co-curated by Diana Campbell Betancourt with Sean Anderson, Associate Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art, and Nurur Khan, Director, Muzharul Islam Archive, showed the interplay and occasional confrontation inherent among architectural spaces within an emergent nation-state.

*Roots*, curated by Dhaka based artist and educator Bishwajit Goswami, examined the transfer of knowledge by art educators who have played a significant role in building Bangladesh's art history. The Bangladeshi curators, in particular, did a commendable job in curating their brilliant exhibitions at the summit.

## EKUSHEY SPOTLIGHT

## 'Apotti Shotteyo' — Mohammad Al-Masum Molla's collection of poetry layered with political satire

SHARMIN JOYA

The poetry collection, *Apotti Shotteyo* (In spite of objection), came out in the first week of the Ekushey Boi Mela. Published by Agamee Prakashani, it is a collection of poems, based on political satire, by Mohammad Al-Masum Molla, Senior Staff Reporter, *The Daily Star*.

The book consists of 20 poems and rhymes focusing on different prevalent issues. "As journalists, we have many limitations while reporting, and there is very little scope of going out of that," says Masum. "In this book, I tried to bring all of the major issues that we faced last year, in a different angle."

Masum believes that different thoughts can be articulated through poems in a few words. The issues that the book highlights include incidents like the market syndicate, people getting provoked by rumours, various student movements, road accidents, and the role of neighbouring countries on the Rohingya issue, among others.

At a time when talking about political matters is a sensitive issue, it is brave of the writer to highlight the suffocation of people living in the age of global fascism, and political and social constructs. "I have published the book this year, keeping the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in mind. My poems are about contemporary issues," affirms Masum. "My work will provide some food for thought to the readers, regarding the incidents of the past decade."

One of Masum's poem, *Manush*, was appreciated and recited by prominent Indian actor Sabyasachi

Chakraborty, during his recent visit to Bangladesh for his film, *Gondi*. Another one of his poems was recited by renowned elocutionist Hasan Arif.

The preface of *Apotti Shotteyo* is written by celebrated critic Syed Manzoarul Islam. The first edition of the book is close to being sold out. It can be collected at BDT 250 from pavilion 1 at the Ekushey Boi Mela 2020.



## Poster of 'Neel Mukut' unveiled

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The poster of Kamar Ahmad Simon's forthcoming film, *Neel Mukut*, was released recently. The poster, against a blue background, features a close-up shot of a woman looking far beyond with her eager eyes. *Neel Mukut* has received an uncut censor clearance from the Bangladesh Film Censor Board and will be released in the country soon. Batighor is the promotional partner while Quote On Set Production is the distribution partner of the film.

Kamar's first film, *Shunte Ki Pao!* (*Are You Listening!*) was well received at different festival across the globe and won several awards, including the Golden Conch at Mumbai International Film Festival and the Grand Prix at Cinema Du Reel in Paris. The film went on to win the National Film Award as well. It was screened in around forty international film events and venues, including the German Film Museum in Frankfurt, a few months back. Kamar conceived the idea for *Neel Mukut* after he saw someone crying on a plane.

The director completed the film in between his Water Trilogy's second episode 'Anyadin...' (*Day After...*), and *Shikolbaha* (*The Iron Steam*), the winner of the WCF, and the Best Project and Arte International prizes in Locarno Open Doors.

The poster of *Shunte Ki Pao!*, followed the vibrant classic movie poster style, gave birth to traditional rickshaw paintings. It was widely appreciated by the audience as well. The posters of both *Shunte Ki Pao!* and *Neel Mukut* are available at Batighor outlets in Dhaka, Chattogram and Sylhet.

## 'Hridoye Mati O Manush' to feature an episode on tulip cultivation in Bangladesh

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

*Hridoye Mati O Manush*, directed and hosted by Shykh Seraj, will feature a special episode on commercial tulip cultivation, in Bangladesh. The episode will focus on Delowar and Sheli, a couple from Keowa village in Gazipur, who have started tulip cultivation on a large scale. A development worker

from Belgium made a failed attempt to cultivate tulip in Bangladesh. However, after three decades, the duo made it possible. They are cultivating the flowers in shade net, currently. Delowar believes, the northern areas of Bangladesh are more suitable for commercial tulip cultivation because of their climate. The episode will be aired today on Channel i at 9:45 pm.

PHOTO: COURTESY



## JATIYO BOSHONTO UTSHAB 1426

Garnered vividly with yellow, pink, orange and red flowers, the nation rejoiced— singing and dancing to the vibrant tunes of traditional folk music, heralding the arrival of spring on 'Pohela Falgun'. Jatiyo Boshonto Utshab Udjapon Parishad (JBUUP) once again welcomed 'Boshonto' through various cultural programmes at Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka. The city dwellers, also celebrating the day of love, were seen enjoying the occasion with their loved ones, in the heart of 'Bakultola', yesterday.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## Star Melodies to present songs about romance and spring today

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Star Melodies, an initiative of *The Daily Star* to promote Bangla music, will host a musical evening titled, *Bhalobashar Akhore Lekha Boshonter Gaan*, serenading the audience with songs about romance and spring.

Sponsored by Dhaka Bank Limited, the event will be held today, at The Daily Star Centre, at 6:00 pm.

One of the leading Rabindra Sangeet artists, Fahim Hossain Chowdhury, talented playback singer Anupoma Mukti, along with promising singers Sabuj, Dr Alif Laila and Smoron will perform at the event. Sadya Afreen Mallick, Chief of Culture Initiatives, *The Daily Star*, will host and coordinate the programme. The event is open for all. However, seats are limited, and available on a first-come first-serve basis.







Muslim protesters hold placards as they shout slogans demanding the hanging of Hafiz Saeed, head of Pakistani militant organisation Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), in Mumbai, yesterday. The alleged mastermind of a deadly attack on India's financial capital over a decade ago has been jailed in Pakistan for nearly six years on separate terror charges, his lawyer said.

PHOTO: AFP

## No breakthrough yet on Nile dam talks: Ethiopia

AFP, Addis Ababa

Ethiopian officials yesterday said that negotiations this week in Washington failed to resolve a long-running dispute with Egypt over a massive dam on the Nile. The two-day meeting was the latest round of talks facilitated by the US Treasury Department, which stepped in after Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi reached out to US President Donald Trump, a close ally.

Ethiopia says the dam -- which will be the largest hydropower plant in Africa -- is crucial for its growing economy. But Egypt fears the project will disrupt the river that provides 90 percent of its drinking water. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visits Ethiopia next week, and a senior US official said Monday that Washington hoped the talks were "close to resolution." Fitsum Arega, Ethiopia's ambassador to the US, said on Twitter Friday that this week's talks "ended without a final agreement". Seleshi Bekele, Ethiopia's water minister, said in his own Twitter post that progress was made this week, but "more work" was required to reach a deal by the end of the month, the current deadline. Seleshi said Ethiopia's water and foreign ministries "will make national consultation... in the coming week and build consensus on results and way forward." Ethiopia's state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate reported Friday that the latest talks concerned sticking points, including the filling of the dam's reservoir, which can hold 74 billion cubic metres of water.

## Mother, 2 kids

FROM PAGE 16 Police said a brother of Munni went to the house yesterday afternoon after failing to contact the victims and Raquib for a couple of days. As he found the front door of the flat locked from outside and smelt foul odour coming out of the flat, he along with some neighbours of the victims broke the lock and saw the bodies of Munni and her daughter lying on a bed and that of her son on the floor. The family had been living in the flat since 2011. Raquib was recently transferred to the BTCL's Uttara office from Gulshan. Locals said they last saw Raquib in the locality on Tuesday. The bodies were sent to the morgue of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College for autopsies.

## Man lands in jail

FROM PAGE 16 her to his house and raped her. The victim's grandfather filed a case with the police station on Wednesday night accusing Sultan. The following day, the victim was taken to Sirajganj General Hospital for medical examinations. Police on Thursday night picked up the accused from Saydabad area of Sirajganj. He was produced before a local court yesterday and the court sent him to jail. The OC said they would produce the victim before the court tomorrow for recording her statement.

## Condemned

FROM PAGE 16 anti-liberation elements in Pabna, filed an appeal with the SC challenging his death penalty on March 18 that year. Arrested on September 20, 2012, the Jamaat leader was indicted on nine charges in December 2013.

# Yemen's Huthis drop 'tax' threat that jeopardised aid

AFP, Dubai

Yemen's Huthi rebels yesterday said they have dropped a threat to impose a tax on aid, in a significant step towards resolving a crisis that has jeopardised the world's biggest humanitarian operation. United Nations leaders and aid groups held crunch talks in Brussels on Thursday to consider scaling back or suspending the delivery of vital supplies to million of people at risk of starvation.

Humanitarian agencies have complained of a deteriorating situation in the Huthi-controlled north, with aid workers facing arrest and intimidation, as well as obstruction and bureaucracy that hampered their work. In a letter seen by AFP and confirmed by the Huthis, the head of their aid body SCMCHA wrote to the UN's undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs Mark Lowcock informing him of a decision to "suspend the 2% and not apply it for this year 2020". Abdul Mohsen al-Tawoos said the levy "was only to cover basic expenses so we can deliver all the assistance to our humanitarian partners" and that they hoped to find "alternative solutions that will enable everyone to fulfil their obligations". A UN official in Sanaa confirmed the rebels had backed away from the levy. "The cancellation of the tax is a positive development for sure," he told AFP, noting however that other issues that still need to be dealt with relate to "access and bureaucratic impediments". Yemen has been driven to the brink of famine during five years

of fighting between the Huthis and the internationally recognised government which is backed by a Saudi-led military coalition. The Brussels meeting heard that, while both sides have made trouble for humanitarian and UN agencies, the Huthi attempts to tax shipments triggered the latest crisis. "It cannot continue, the biggest lifeline on earth is at stake. There are 20 million people in need in Yemen," Jan Egeland, head of the Norwegian Refugee Council, told AFP on Thursday. "We cannot pay donated aid money to one of the parties to the conflict. So that is one of the many red lines that we are fearful of having to cross. We cannot do it," he said. The European Commission and the government of Sweden who called the Brussels meeting said Friday that the dire situation may still require aid to be scaled back. "We are deeply alarmed at the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian space all over the country. It has reached a breaking point where delivery of life-saving assistance is at risk," they said in a statement. The humanitarian groups' talks produced an agreement that if it became impossible to deliver aid without breaking their principles, responses could include "recalibrating humanitarian assistance, including a downscaling, or even interruption, of certain operations". In an apparent reference to the dropping of the tax, they said that "the recent indication of willingness to remove constraints for aid delivery on the ground needs to be followed up." The Yemen government has also sounded the alarm at reports

the United States was considering suspending much of its humanitarian assistance in response to the pressures including the rebel tax. "Scaling back on aid in governorates under Huthi control will affect citizens, not the armed Huthi militias," Abdul Raquib Fateh, a minister and the head of Yemen's relief committee, told AFP last week. Allegations of aid being diverted and obstructed are not new in Yemen, where 80 percent of the population needs some form of assistance. One battleground has been expired food, with the Huthis accusing the UN of distributing maggot-ridden rice and flour, and aid workers saying that supplies had been needlessly held for months until they spoiled. The UN World Food Programme, which feeds 12 million Yemenis a month, halted deliveries in Huthi-controlled areas for two months last year as it pushed for a biometric registration scheme to avoid the diversion of supplies meant for civilians. Another SCMCHA official Mane al-Assal on Friday hit out at the latest warnings as "inhumane and immoral" and accused aid agencies of "looking for empty excuses to suspend aid".

## Russian soldier

FROM PAGE 16 "I still don't understand what's going on," Kopytova told a television reporter at the scene. "It's very unexpected." The tanks used for the romantic manoeuvre also take part in the annual Victory Parade on Red Square, Zvezda reported. "No one has ever seen such a large-scale proposal," its reporter said.

## Pharmacist

FROM PAGE 16 legs and the neck, the OC added. However, family members alleged that Mobarak was murdered over money-related issue with the director. Mobarak of Bhola's Lalmohan upazila used to live in the capital's Kadamtali area with his wife. Talking to this newspaper, Mainul Islam, brother-in-law of the victim, said the director called Mobarak to Friendship Specialised Hospital and Digital Diagnostic Centre over phone on Thursday afternoon. "After he went there, his wife called him several times. He received the call once and hung up the call, saying that he was busy. He did not receive any more phone calls," he said, adding that they got the death news from police in the morning. He said the family would file a case in this connection. The Daily Star preferred not to mention the hospital director's name as it could not contact the person for comments. Dr MG Ferdous, managing director of Friendship Specialised Hospital and Digital Diagnostic Centre, said they heard about the incident and that the hospital authorities would help the police investigate the incident. The MD said he learnt that there was a dispute between Mobarak and another director of the hospital over money-related issue. Police were also looking into the matter. Family members demanded police check Mobarak's phone call records and CCTV footage of the hospital. Mobarak's body was sent to Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

# Build a society

FROM PAGE 16 independence if we fail to establish a society free from exploitation. Our vow of today should be that the freedom which we have earned will be protected by shedding blood, if necessary. We shall give more blood to build up the country." INDIAN TROOPS WITHDRAWN FROM KHULNA The people of Jessore accord a heroic reception to the Fourth Mountain Division of Allied Forces on the eve of their departure from Khulna Division. Speaking on the occasion, Major General MS Barar, commander of Fourth Mountain Division, pays glowing tributes to the Mukti Bahini for their gallantry and says that the liberation of Bangladesh would have been impossible had they not shown the highest sense of dedication. KENNEDY PAYS TRIBUTE TO BANGLADESH Edward Kennedy, who leaves Dhaka today, says that he will work for diplomatic recognition of Bangladesh by America. "I return to tell my colleagues in the Senate and the people of America of the bravery with which the people of Bangladesh fought for freedom and democracy," he adds. The Senator tells newsmen at the Tejaon Airport he will tell the American people that the people of Bangladesh have extended their hand

of friendship to them. The freedom struggle of Bangladesh, he says, has imparted one of the most important lessons of modern times to the world. Earlier, in the morning, Senator Kennedy planted a banyan sapling at the Dhaka University campus where an old banyan tree symbolising students' movement against the Yahya regime was felled by the Pakistan army in March last year. CANADA ACCORDS RECOGNITION Canada today officially recognises Bangladesh. In a message to Bangabandhu, the Canadian PM Pierre Trudeau expresses the hope that the relations between the two countries would prove harmonious and mutually advantageous. Canada will also support Bangladesh's application for Commonwealth membership, the Canadian External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp informs. 73,88,045 REFUGEES RETURN A total of 73,88,045 Bangladeshi refugees have so far been repatriated to their homeland, reports Press Trust of India. A spokesman of the Union Rehabilitation Ministry of India tells the press that 15,11,200 more refugees are awaiting repatriation. SOURCES: February 16, 1972 issues of Ittefaq, The Bangladesh Observer, Azad, Morning News, Dainik Bangla and Purbodesh.

# A man steps forward

FROM PAGE 16 Assistant Professor Kamrul Hasan of the department will coordinate the project as an advisor. Each pad will cost Tk five -- two times cheaper than the market price. Recalling the beginning of the initiative, Tausif said the idea came to him after he watched a Facebook video of these vending machines being installed in an Indian school.



Tausif Ahmed Rabby

In October, Tausif submitted his idea to LG's Ambassador Programme 2019, a competition aimed at implementing solutions for different community issues. He won Tk 4.5 lakh as one of the best ideas. The money is now being used to set up the machines, which are being imported from India. "Any student can now get pads by inserting a Tk five coin in the machines," Tausif said, adding that students will get free pads for the first two weeks. He plans to supply free coins after the launch to know which brand of sanitary napkins is preferred by the female students. The installation of the vending machines will begin on February 18 and will be installed in the faculties of BBA, Arts and Humanities, Social Science, Science, Biological Science and Law. Apart from those faculties, a machine will be installed at the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science and another at the dormitory of Sheikh Hasina. About the taboos surrounding menstruation, Tausif said, "Period related myths are still prevalent in our society. I believe the initiative will help to bust this taboo." Appreciating the initiative, Hasina Islam, a third-year student of the

mathematics department, said girls still feel shy and embarrassed when they go to pharmacies to purchase pads. "After buying them [pads], we literally keep a lookout and hide the pads as if we are purchasing something illegal," she said. Besides, due to high prices, most of the students cannot afford to buy pads and it would be much easier to purchase at Tk five, she added. "Despite menstruation being a phenomenon unique to girls, it has always been surrounded by taboos and myths that exclude women from many aspects of socio-cultural life. In our country, the topic has been taboo till date," said Ashrafi Nitu, general secretary of CU Unit Chhatra Union. She urged the university authorities to clean the female toilets on a regular basis as hygiene is of utmost concern when a girl is on her period. Commending the initiative, Assistant Professor Saima Alam, of the communication and journalism department, said the initiative will help ensuring menstrual hygiene, adding that the authorities must also take necessary measure of proper disposal of the napkins. CU Vice-Chancellor Professor Shireen Akhter said female students would be highly benefitted from the project. "Pharmacies and shops are not available on our campus. When students need pads, they do not get it on time," she said, hoping that this much needed initiative will bring a light of hope for women all over the country. VC Shireen and Bangladesh LG's Managing Director DK Son are scheduled to inaugurate the project on February 18.

# German police officer among arrests in far-right terror swoop

AFP, Berlin

Police in Germany arrested twelve men, including one of its own officers, in a nationwide probe into an extreme-right group suspected of planning attacks on politicians, asylum-seekers and Muslims, state interior ministry sources and prosecutors said yesterday. The arrests followed raids, some by heavily-armed special units, which hit 13 locations in six German states. The four prime suspects planned to spark "a civil-war-like situation... via as yet undefined attacks on politicians, asylum seekers and people of Muslim faith," federal prosecutors said in a statement. A further eight suspects were alleged to have agreed to "financially support the group, provide it with weapons or take part in future attacks". The twelve included a police officer previously suspended over suspicions he had links to the far-right, a source at the interior ministry in North-Rhine Westphalia state told AFP, though it was not immediately clear if he was one of the prime suspects. From its founding in September 2019, the group's ultimate aim was "to shake the state and social order in Germany and in the end to overturn it," investigators believe. In order to plan their attacks, the group allegedly held regular meetings which were coordinated and organised by two of the main suspects,

named only as Werner S. and Tony E. The suspects, all of whom are German citizens, also communicated using messenger apps. Investigators launched Friday's raids to determine whether the suspects already had weapons or other supplies that could be used in an attack. The twelve men are set to appear before a court on Friday or Saturday to hear whether they will be imprisoned on remand. German authorities have turned increased attention to the country's underground extreme right scene since the murder of conservative local politician Walter Luebeck last June and an October attack on a synagogue in eastern city Halle. Suspects arrested in both cases have ties to the extreme right. According to Spiegel magazine, police discovered several weapons in Friday's raids, including one self-made "slam gun" similar to the one used in the Halle attack. Interior minister Horst Seehofer announced in December 600 new posts across the federal police and domestic security services to track far-right extremist threats, citing a growing danger. At the time, federal police said they had identified 48 people on the extreme right as "dangerous" individuals who could carry out an attack.



2009 WAR CRIMES

US bans visits by Lanka army chief

AFP, Washington

The United States yesterday said it would refuse entry to Sri Lanka's army chief over "credible" evidence of human rights violations in the bloody 2009 finale to the civil war. Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva, whose appointment last year drew wide international criticism, will be ineligible to visit the United States, as will his immediate family, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said.

"The allegations of gross human rights violations against Shavendra Silva, documented by the United Nations and other organizations, are serious and credible," Pompeo said in a statement.

"We urge the Sri Lankan government to promote human rights, hold accountable individuals responsible for war crimes and human rights violations, advance security sector reform, and uphold its other commitments to pursue justice and reconciliation," he said.

Silva was the commanding officer of an army division in the island's northern war-zone in the final months of the military offensive against Tamil Tiger rebels in 2009.

Rights groups say some 40,000 ethnic Tamils were killed in mass atrocities as government forces seized Sri Lanka's predominantly Tamil north.

The United Nations, in a report into the allegations, said Silva played a major role in orchestrating war crimes. The 2009 offensive delivered a death blow to the Tamil Tigers, whose nearly four-decade campaign for a separate homeland had killed 100,000 people and was characterized by the rebels' bloody suicide attacks.

Pompeo nonetheless said that the United States hoped to maintain security cooperation with Sri Lanka, which last year was rocked by Easter Sunday bombings by Islamist extremists.



This photo taken on Thursday shows a train attendant gesturing to medical staff leaving for Wuhan in Nanchang, China's central Jiangxi province. The new coronavirus has infected 1,700 Chinese health workers and killed six, authorities said yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

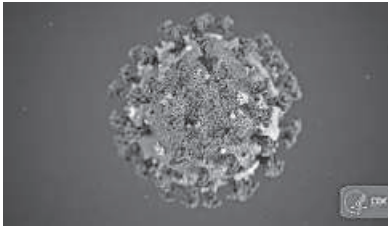
Six medical workers are among the latest victims in China of the novel coronavirus as the death toll nears 1,400. Here are the latest developments:

DEATH TOLL NEARS 1,400

The death toll from China's epidemic nears 1,400, according to authorities, with six medical workers among the victims. Nearly 64,000 people are now recorded as having fallen ill in China. Officials reveal that 1,716 health workers had been infected as of Tuesday, underscoring the risks doctors and nurses have taken due to shortages of protective gear. Japan reports its first death of an infected person -- the third fatality outside mainland China after the Philippines and Hong Kong. More than 500 people have now been contaminated in around 25 countries outside China, which excludes the autonomous territories of Hong Kong and Macao.

US CHANGES TONE

After initially praising Beijing for its response to the virus, Washington says it feels let down by a lack of transparency from China. Larry Kudlow, a senior White House economic official, contradicts President Donald Trump's upbeat message towards Beijing, expressing disappointment that it has declined Washington's offer to send experts to China. China has defended its record on transparency towards the international community in its response to the spread of the new virus.



PASSENGERS LEAVE JAPANESE SHIP

The Japanese authorities start evacuating a quarantined cruise ship off Japan's coast, letting 11 passengers aged 80 and over or in poor health off the Diamond Princess who have tested negative for the virus. More than 200 people on board the ship, the biggest centre of the virus outside China, have been diagnosed with the virus since it arrived off Japan on February 3 and was placed in quarantine.

END OF FRENCH QUARANTINE

The first French nationals repatriated from China and placed in quarantine leave the centre near the southern city of Marseille where they have been confined since January 31 after returning from Wuhan, Chinese epicentre of the virus. The 181 people concerned are given certificates saying they are not contagious.

\$4-5 BILLION LOSS IN AIRLINE REVENUE

The outbreak could mean a reduction of \$4-5 billion in worldwide airline revenue, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) says. The UN agency reports that 70 airlines have cancelled all international flights in and out of China and 50 others have reduced their operations.

SOURCE: AFP

Defence spending soaring

Study attributes the rise on big powers' rivalries, raging conflicts

AFP, Munich

Global spending on defence rose by four percent in 2019, the largest growth in 10 years, led by big increases in the US and China, a study said yesterday.

The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) said the rise was fuelled by growing rivalries between big powers, new military technologies and rumbling conflicts from Ukraine to Libya.

Beijing's military modernisation programme -- which includes developing new hard-to-detect hypersonic missiles -- is alarming Washington and helping drive US defence spending, the IISS said.

Its annual "Military Balance" report said the increase alone in US spending from 2018 to 2019 -- \$53.4 billion -- was almost as big as Britain's entire defence budget.

"Spending rose as economies recovered from the effects of the financial crisis, but increases have also been driven by sharpening threat perceptions," IISS chief John Chipman said, launching the report at the Munich Security Conference.

Both the US and China increased spending by 6.6 percent, the report said, to \$684.6 billion and \$181.1 billion respectively.

Europe -- driven by ongoing concerns about Russia -- stepped up by 4.2 percent, but this only brought the continent's defence spending back to 2008 levels, before



the global financial crisis saw budgets slashed.

Elsewhere, spending in Asia is booming -- growing more than 50 percent in a decade, rising from \$275 billion in 2010 to \$423bn in 2019 in real terms as the continent's economic success has allowed countries to invest more in their militaries.

The collapse last year of the Cold War-era Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty and the doubts surrounding the renewal of the New START arms reduction treaty, which expires in 2021, have contributed to the mood of instability, the IISS report said.

China's programme of military modernisation -- described by the IISS as "striking for its scale, speed and ambition" -- has unsettled Washington as well as its allies in the Pacific. In October, Beijing showed off new technologies including its DF-17 hypersonic glide vehicle -- designed to deliver warheads at huge speeds so as to avoid interception.

Russia, pursuing its own modernisation project, has already announced the entry into service of its own hypersonic missile system.

Dubbed Avangard, the system has been tested at speeds of Mach 27, or roughly 33,000 kilometres (20,500 miles) per hour, according to Moscow.

A senior Nato official warned that in a hypersonic missile strike, it may not even be clear what the target is "until there's a boom on the ground".

'US, China, Russia making world more dangerous'

REUTERS, Munich

Germany's president took an indirect swipe at US President Donald Trump yesterday in accusing Washington, China and Russia of stoking global mistrust and insecurity with a "great powers" competition that could threaten a new nuclear arms race.

In opening remarks at the annual Munich Security Conference,

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier deplored the three big powers' approach to global affairs and, without naming Trump, took issue with his vow to "make America great again".

"Great again" -- even at the expense of neighbours and partners," quipped Steinmeier, a former Social Democrat foreign minister whose comments on foreign policy carry authority.

"Russia...has made military force and the violent shifting of borders on the European continent the means of politics once again," he said in the text of a speech for delivery at the

opening of the conference.

"China...accepts international law only selectively where it does not run counter to its own interests," Steinmeier said.

"And our closest ally, the United States of America, under the present administration itself, rejects the idea of an international community."

The upshot is "more mistrust, more armament, less security... all the way to a new nuclear arms race," he said.

In response, he said, Germany should raise defence spending to contribute more to European security and to maintain its alliance with the United States, recognising that US interests were gravitating away from Europe toward Asia.

He also called for a European policy towards Russia "that is not limited to condemning statements and sanctions alone". Europe, he added, "must find its own balance with China between intensifying competition between systems and the need for cooperation."



Steinmeier

NEWSIN brief

Israeli attack on Damascus kills 7

AFP, Beirut

Israeli strikes on Damascus airport killed seven fighters, a war monitor said yesterday, the latest in a string of attacks targeting Iran's military presence in Syria. The strikes launched late Thursday hit military targets in the area of the international airport, according to reports.

Philippines lifts virus travel ban on Taiwan

AFP, Manila

The Philippines yesterday lifted a coronavirus travel ban on Taiwan after Taipei threatened retaliation. Taiwan had hit out at countries that "confuse" it with China and included it in travel restrictions. Some 150,000 Filipinos work in Taiwan, enjoying visa-free entry that reports said could have been withdrawn in retaliation.

Erdogan acquitted in terror trial

AFP, Istanbul

A Turkish court yesterday acquitted renowned novelist Asli Erdogan on charges of membership of an armed terror organisation. The court in Istanbul also acquitted Erdogan, who is living in exile in Germany, of disrupting the unity of the state, and dropped charges of spreading terror propaganda. Erdogan, whose books have been translated into various different languages, was an occasional columnist for pro-Kurdish newspaper Ozgur Gundem. Turkish authorities accused the paper -- where Asli worked as a literary adviser -- of being a mouthpiece for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).



Arrested Indian fishermen sit in a local police station in the Pakistan's port city of Karachi, yesterday. Pakistan Maritime Security Agency arrested 23 fishermen and seized four boats for illegally fishing in Pakistan's territorial water.

PHOTO: AFP

India SC orders telcos to pay \$13b or face action

AFP, New Delhi

India's Supreme Court yesterday ordered top telecom companies to pay \$13 billion in unpaid spectrum and licensing fees by March 17 or face punishment in a fresh blow to ailing mobile carriers.

Shares in Vodafone Idea, which said it would be hardest hit by the ruling, fell 23 percent on Mumbai's Sensex Index exchange after the court's announcement.

Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio -- owned by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani -- were also hit by the order, which comes after the companies failed to obey an October ruling demanding payment of overdue levies within three months.

The court has threatened contempt proceedings against the companies and Department of Telecommunications government officials for non-compliance with that ruling.

The long-running row between the government and India's big telecoms has centred on how licence and other fees paid by the firms should be calculated.

Companies argue they should be based

on income from only their telecoms business, while the court ruled they should be calculated on the amount earned from all business dealings, including handset sales and other income.

On Friday the companies asked the court for more time to pay, which Justice Arun Mishra described as "complete nonsense".

Vodafone Idea, a joint venture of Britain's Vodafone Group and India's Idea Cellular will have to stump up about \$3.9 billion.

Airtel has to pay \$3 billion while Jio, which escaped with a lighter fee has already paid \$1.8 billion.

Analysts said Airtel and Reliance Jio would benefit the most from any Vodafone Idea collapse, which could lead to the Indian market being dominated by two leading companies.

Baburajan said such a duopoly would "weaken" the Indian telecoms sector and limit choice for its 900 million subscribers.

Jio, which was launched in 2016 and is the top operator in terms of subscribers and revenue, has a relatively light \$1.8 billion bill.

Taliban, Afghan forces clash again

REUTERS, Kabul

Afghan government forces and Taliban insurgents waged war against each other in the past 24 hours despite US officials saying there had been a breakthrough in recent days in peace talks to end the 18-year-old conflict.

While negotiators from the warring sides pressed on with meetings in Doha, Qatar, the Taliban and the Afghan government both reported fighting on the ground.

The Afghan defence ministry said an air strike had killed a senior Taliban commander in northern Balkh province on Thursday evening.

"As result of a targeted air strike by Afghan air forces, Mawlawi Sardar Mohammad, a key member of the Taliban military commission was killed along with eight others," the ministry said in a statement.

The Taliban did not confirm the air strike.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said the insurgents had killed six Afghan soldiers, including two officers, in an attack on a checkpoint in northern Kunduz province.

Afghan, Taliban and US sources said a peace deal could be signed this month, allowing a withdrawal of some of 13,000 US troops and thousands of other Nato personnel that remain in Afghanistan following the US intervention to oust the Taliban in 2001.

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday there was a "good chance" of reaching an agreement with the Taliban on a reduction of US troops in Afghanistan.

Justice chief blasts Trump for making job 'impossible'

AFP, Washington

US Attorney General Bill Barr on Thursday delivered a highly unusual public rebuke of Donald Trump, saying the president's tweets were making his job at the Justice Department "impossible".

"I have a problem with some of the tweets," Barr said in an interview with ABC News, adding: "I cannot do my job here at the department with a constant background commentary that undercuts me."

"I think it's time to stop the tweeting about Department of Justice criminal cases," said Barr.

His interview came as Trump stands accused of interfering with the sentencing recommendation for his former advisor, Roger Stone -- prompting four Justice Department prosecutors to resign from the case this week.

The outburst was all the more remarkable as Barr has emerged as a powerful defender of Trump, earning the nickname of the

"president's attorney" from critics.

Barr has been at the center of allegations that he decided -- allegedly under pressure from Trump -- to overrule his own prosecutors and seek a lighter prison sentence for Stone.

He has previously been criticized by Democrats and legal experts for seeming to assist Trump during the independent investigation into whether the president was helped by a Russian influence campaign during the 2016 election.

The two men are so close that there was immediate speculation that Barr's television interview may have been more about managing public opinion than a real outcry against

Trump's alleged interference in judicial affairs.

The controversy comes about a week after the Senate acquitted Trump of impeachment charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress related to pressure on Ukraine to announce investigations, including into Trump's political opponent Joe Biden.



Where's the love?

Indonesia says no to Valentine's Day

AFP, Makassar

Indonesia wasn't feeling the love for Valentine's Day on Friday as authorities arrested couples in one city, scolded stores over condom displays and warned students they would be reprimanded for amorous activities.

Makassar on Sulawesi island doled out some tough love with raids at hotels and guest houses Thursday evening which netted about two dozen unmarried offenders, including a German national.

"We caught the German with his Indonesian partner in a motel and they weren't husband and wife so that's why we arrested them," Iman Hud, head of the local public order office, told AFP.

The unlucky lovers were quickly released after a lecture about the evils of pre-marital sex, but five sex workers caught in the dragnet would be sent to a rehabilitation centre, he added.

"These social illnesses must be prevented. We need to remind the public to uphold our culture and ethics," Hud said.

Valentine's Day is controversial in parts of the majority Muslim nation, with many Islamic clerics and conservative Indonesians criticising its Western roots and what they say is its promotion of pre-marital sex.

Still, many others practise a moderate form of Islam and celebrate the day with chocolates and flowers for their loved ones, and displays were set up at malls and cafes in the capital Jakarta.





POETRY



## Where's Home?

TANZILA TALUKDAR MIN

A city made out of dust  
Love, measured in the thickness  
Of our pizza crust  
Look at me, stranger!  
Do you want my trust?

Will you keep it safe?  
Put it in your chest pocket, so it doesn't chafe!

I have loved with all my broken bones,  
I deposit hope in dirty lakes and their stones  
I have lost, lost from every pore  
And still, I want to live

One more sip of my cup, one more remaining puff  
One last conversation, about ridiculous random stuff

My chest feels like it could hold a whole eco system  
A burnt swatch of land to build a whole kingdom  
Tell me, would you come?  
Would you catch fireflies to light up nightmare slums?

There'd be a lot of people in the town built on my heart  
But I'd give you the quietest corner to build upon your art  
On sunny evenings I'll come by for tea  
Tell me, am I welcome, would you let me see?  
In monsoon, I'd bring you flowers  
I'd spin you a different tale  
Of a princess who builds her own towers

I imagined us, over a steaming cup  
I dreamt us into a home, into our little hub  
Somehow, distance made loving you so easy  
Oh childhood dream! Tonight, I am surviving, I'm busy.

*Tanjila Talukdar is an aspiring poet trying to learn the magic of human emotions through her love of words. She is currently pursuing her LLB degree at Bangladesh University of Professionals.*

## Verses for My Valentine

FOUZIA MAHIN CHOWDHURY

1.  
Some stars fell...  
Some comet must have lost its way  
As you held my hand in yours...  
Something...incomprehensible...  
And obscure...  
...But I'm sure,  
Something was not just the same  
As it was before!

Those timid strokes...  
Soft and shivering...  
Yet drawing lines changing my destiny...  
I remember the temptation I fought to ignore...  
...But something was not just the same  
As it was before.  
2.  
As my words lie scattered on the empty page,  
Like puzzle pieces I try to keep them aligned;  
Just to realise,  
You have become my poetry in disguise.

*Fouzia Mahin Choudhury is a freelance creative writer, lyricist, and an emerging poet. She is also a media communications professional; currently working with a research based audio-visual production hub Empty Yard.*



TRAVEL

## Malta: Room to Roam

RAANA HAIDER

Different scenario unfolds at every turn of a corner. Grand in a domestic dimension is the historic house museum - the Palazzo Falson - apparently the second oldest building still standing in the walled city of Mdina. Parts of it date back to the thirteenth century. In the sixteenth century, it was donated by Emperor Charles V to the Knights of the Order of St John in Malta. In the 1920s, it was acquired by Captain Olaf F. Gollcher, a collector and conservator. His diverse treasure trove now mirrors an aristocratic domain of priceless paintings, silverware, glassware, carpets, furniture and numerous objects of decorative art. Cabinets of curiosities. A library stocks some 4,500 historical volumes. And again; spaciousness as we saunter through the Palazzo Falson museum.

In a grand gesture, riding the tide on a boat cruise around the historical Valletta harbour is *de rigueur*. Sight-seeing at its best is the timeless scenario of centuries old fortified walls, fortresses - some ruins and some intact, church towers and steeples, grottoes and gardens, small fishing skiffs and massive container ships. Side by side sleek yachts moored in plush marinas reflect the lifestyle of high-enders. As I photographed a Titanic dimensioned super-yacht dubbed "Empress of India," a young man asked me if it was mine? Quick in response I replied, "No. Mine is the one next to it." There was moored a much smaller yacht; nevertheless, super sleek; named "Plan B." We both had a good laugh! Also spotted the schooner "Black Pearl" now a restaurant that once belonged to the romantic swashbuckler Hollywood actor Errol Flynn (1909-1959).

Cutting edge modernity is exemplified in the capital's Parliament building designed by the Italian starchitect Renzo Piano. A state of the art stretched horizontal complex; it appears in vivid contrast to his London skyline vertical skyscraper - The Shard. Streets don't have to be a lesson in history; but some happily are so. Walking down Valletta's main street celebrating the city's European City of Culture 2018 UNESCO award, with flags, posters and plaques adding infinite colour to an already colourful city; I glanced down a narrow lane with the Mediterranean waters visible in the horizon. A signboard "His Master's Voice" beckoned. A left lane stroll landed us before 'Anthony D'Amato' Est. 1885. 'H.M.V. & M.G.M Records and H.M.V. Radios' boards stare bold at passer-bys. Drawn in, we found ourselves

amongst a vast collection of vintage vinyl 45, 78 and 33 rpm record albums. An Aladdin attic of musical mementoes. The King of Rock n' Roll called out Now or Never. "Yesterday" reminded the Beatles. Bedazzled, we were in a time warp. The d'Amato family had three stores. This is the only surviving outlet and he is counting the days before the shutters come down. His adult son's gaze fixed on his laptop is the image of our time.

Across this store stands an equally fascinating site; The Cinema Bar by Citylights. We met Anton Baldacchino, whose family has occupied the property since 1976. His grandfather owned



Palazzo Falson

a number of cinema halls in the 1950s in Malta. With declining cinema attendance, the young man transformed part of the original Capitol cinema hall into Citylights, a little gem of a museum of cinema memorabilia. A cult collection of posters, film reels, projectors of all sorts and sizes and original leather seats shipped over from London in the 1960s. Sophia Loren, Humphrey Bogart, John Wayne, Marilyn Monroe and other iconic screen stars gaze at us. The premise also functions as a venue for book launches, cultural events and a bar. A delightful space echoing memories of a bygone era of cinematic ambience. Anton invited us for the following night's book launch event. Sadly, this

was our last day in Malta. Continuity sometime works. Sometimes not in this fast forward era of ours. Others survive renewal; but for how long?

What has survived in Valletta is the national initiative evident in the following buildings and many marble plaques that has surely contributed to Valletta's signature "European Capital of Culture 2018." Auberge de Provence was an inn established by French knights from Provence in 1571. During the British period, it was the community's Union Club. Since 1958, the Baroque styled building has served as the National Museum. As we continued our walk, my eye caught sight of a marble

in this ambience of 'cafe candy'.

In the midst of the city's central plaza surrounded by bastions of officialdom; two marble wall plaques stand out, both commemorating Malta's considerable contribution to the Allies alliance in World War Two. One is a lengthy declaration by Franklin D. Roosevelt dated December 7th, 1945 recognizing the island's "valorous service far above and beyond the call of duty." The commemoration begins "IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA I SALUTE THE ISLAND OF MALTA ....." The other plaque of honour was given by King George R.I. on April 15th, 1942. Buckingham Palace. Addressed to: The Governor Malta; it reads: To honour her Brave People I Award The George Cross To The Island Fortress of Malta To Bear Witness to a Heroism and Devotion That Will Long Be Famous In History." Each item remains suspended in Time.

Saint Paul, who was shipwrecked in Malta around 60 AD en route to Rome, is historically the patron saint of writers - a vital nugget of information for any bibliophile. Entering the first shop displaying some books amongst touristy paraphernalia in Valletta's main boulevard, I asked for 'Maltese Falcon' by Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961). A best-seller of detective fiction in its time, it was adapted to the screen (1941) starring Humphrey Bogart and went on to become a noir classic. Never having seen the film nor read the cult book; but being in Malta, I wanted to acquire it. The book was out of stock. Well, I was told by the sales girl that I am only one of many that come searching for the book in which the entire setting takes place in California. Notwithstanding my literary ignorance, I later learnt that the celebrated auction house Christie's New York in late 2019 is putting on sale a fine first edition (1930) of the book. Estimated selling price between US\$1000 to 2000. Appropriate to quote here John Ruskin in 'Sesame and Lilies' (1865). He declared: "All books are divisible into two classes: the books of the hour, and the books of all time."

Intrigued, I google researched and came up with the following back-story. "And again, it's all due to Hammett's genius for merging fact with fiction. According to the film, the eponymous falcon was a present from the Order Of The Hospitaliers of St. John Of Jerusalem to King Charles V of Spain. In 1530, Charles had bequeathed the island of Malta to the order and had asked in return for the

annual payment of a bird of prey. The crusaders were so grateful that instead they sent a, 'Glorious golden falcon, encrusted from head to foot with the finest jewels in their coffers.' But the galleon carrying the prize was plundered and the falcon disappeared. Resurfacing at various intervals thereafter, the bird finally ends up in San Francisco where Gutman, Cairo and O'Shaughnessy are desperate to get their hands on it. There actually was an arrangement made in 1530 whereby a Maltese bird of prey was presented to Charles V as rent on the island of Malta, but the payments were always living birds. Hammett though, invests his McGuffin with not only a whiff of history but also of romance, danger and mystery. The falcon fuels his characters' obsession in a way that mere money never could and the spell the falcon casts over everyone involved is what makes the whole movie tick."

Malta hit headlines in late 2019 with the sale of a historical building with a contemporary context. The government of Malta bought a grandiose though dilapidated villa overlooking the harbour where a newlywed couple made their home. Between the years of 1948 and 1951, the then Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip lived at Villa Guardamangia outside Valletta. Prince Philip was assigned to HMS Chequers while serving with the Royal Navy Mediterranean fleet. In a visit to Malta in 2015, Queen Elizabeth II remarked that her home in Malta has been her only place of residence outside the United Kingdom and that she retains deep affection of her stay there. She ascended the throne in 1952. The government plans to restore the property with the potential to become another island attraction. Fostering creativity, heritage remains high priority in Malta. The past continues to evolve.

Malta still a secret spot; offers pastas, pizzas, piazzas, plazas, palazzos without a posse of people! Tread lightly on this isle. "Use your past experience of places that you have particularly enjoyed to create the most restful and pleasant place you can imagine. Once you have created your landscape, you are ready to move through it, imagining not just its appearance, but also its sounds and fragrances." (De-stressing Meditation) in Zen and the Art of Travel, Eric Chaline (2000).

Slow down. Ultimately, travel should be an experience. Not simply a destination.

*Raana Haider is a travel writer.*



# Keats and the Elgin Marbles—Message from Parthenon

SOHANA MANZOOR

The classic collection of marble sculptures from Parthenon at the British Museum, commonly known as the Elgin Marbles, has been a vexed source of doubt, appreciation, enthusiasm, disapproval, and envy ever since they were brought to England during 1802-1812. Thomas Bruce, the seventh Earl of Elgin, a British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, with permission from the Turkish Sultan, removed the stones from Acropolis at personal expense, and

with the Marbles. In his poem “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” Keats tells us that he first came to know about the Greek mythical world through Chapman’s translations as he did not have the opportunity to learn Greek like most of his peers. So, by the time he came across the sculptures, he had already entered the Greek classical world through Chapman’s translation of Homer. The antique stones rekindled his imagination to produce some of

of the Romantic Era. Haydon and Keats met in late 1816, and Haydon was by then the well-known champion of the infamous Marbles having battled against many of his contemporary art connoisseurs, most notable being Richard Payne Knight, who had railed against the authenticity of Lord Elgin’s treasure even before seeing them. For Haydon, the Marbles represented greatness echoing out from a lost time, as he wrote in his *Autobiography*: “The combination of nature and idea, which I felt was so much wanting for high art, was here displayed. . . .” Hazlitt joined Haydon in early 1816 in his attack on the connoisseurs that derided the Phidian Marbles in favor of Greco-Roman sculptures. Hazlitt found four particular merits in them, and today they stand as the key elements in understanding Greek art in Romantic poetry. Unlike Lord Byron, who refused to see any beauty in the stones calling them “maim’d antiques,” Hazlitt saw “vitality,” “pathos,” and “nature” in them (Larrabee, 80). These sculptures virtually caused the younger Romantics to respond in various ways, which in turn greatly influenced the Nineteenth Century British understanding of art and antiquity.

It is interesting to note that the opposing critical perspectives of the Elgin Marbles focused on two vastly different aspects of the sculptures. The one headed by Haydon and Hazlitt saw only genius and the “finest statuary in existence,” while the other by Knight & Farrington could detect only ruins, at best, of mediocre workmanship (Larrabee, 80). Keats looked at the marbles from the perspective of his time— borrowing the classical materials, and reconstructing them with early nineteenth century sensibilities. For example, the original story of Endymion, an extremely handsome shepherd, abducted by the moon goddess is transformed by Keats into a tale where the mortal youth pursues immortal beauty. Keats’s philosophy is rooted in the nineteenth century value system. This practice itself is very unlike the Greek tragedians whose artistic liberties would never impel them to change the basic facts of mythical stories, such as, Oedipus committing parricide and incest, or, Clytemnestra killing her husband.

In some vital ways, Keats’s reactions in reading Chapman’s translation and seeing the Elgin Marbles are similar. His two sonnets on these topics portray his awe at the richness and grandeur revealed before his eyes—in Chapman’s Homer he feels like an adventurer discovering new lands, while in the other he is staggered by the unexpected richness of the Phidian Sculptures. Keats

is indeed mesmerized by the literary and artistic beauty of the archaic Greece.

It is also interesting to note that he did not entitle either of his poems, “Ode on/ to Elgin Marbles.” Standing in between the two camps of approbation and deprecation of the Phidian Sculptures, Keats’s position is that of a modifier. He only tried to reconcile the two positions by “offering a specific experience of ambivalence rarely noted in the literature of response” (Scott). Keats wrote his poem on Chapman’s Homer in 1816, and the Elgin Marble sonnets came the next year in March. By the time he starts writing *Endymion* in April, he is already taken up with the philosophy of the permanence of artistic beauty, but the idea is still just forming in his mind. He is not so much impressed with the glorious but frozen beauty of Greek mythopoeic creation, but is keen on reshaping them with his own ideas and Romantic aestheticism. Just as Chapman took the liberty to use Elizabethan diction and phrases in his translation of Homer, Keats employs the individualistic romantic ideology of his time which saw the aspiration and achievement of the individual in figuring out the mysterious human soul and a poetic way to transcend the earthly realm.

For him, or for his Endymion, it is not a simple choice between the real world and the ideal one. Before Keats, Michael Drayton and Thomas Lyly had dealt with the Endimion myth. In Drayton’s version Endimion rejected Phoebe when she approached him as an earthly nymph, but eagerly accepted her when she revealed her immortal self. With Lyly, the earth played the role of a villain casting an evil spell on Endimion, and Cynthia herself had to intervene to save him from her clutches. But with the Romantic ideologies at the back of his mind Keats does not see Cynthia just as an embodiment of immortality. For him, the goddess of the moon also represents the ideal, or “essential beauty,” and therefore spiritual maturity is required before a genuine union can take place. Keats’s Endymion is united with his ideal love only after he has appreciated human love and compassion. What Keats does with *Endymion* and the Elgin Marbles is creating an ekphrastic world—where he is not so much concerned about ownership, or the authenticity of the materials; ekphrasis is never about copying, but “recreation as re-creation.” In a very similar way, the Parthenon sculptures being removed from their original setting, reestablished in the British Museum was for Keats indeed ekphrastic because now he would have to find other meanings for their existence as they have found new abode. Thus, Keats’s sonnet on Elgin Marbles reveals an awareness of neither the form

of the Marbles, nor their subject-matter. The poet’s eye seems to turn completely inward here—not the Marbles, but the essence of spirit.

This ekphrastic imagination is carried on into his creation of his greatest poems as well. The biographers of John Keats call the year 1819 *Annus Mirabilis*, as that is the most fruitful year in his short poetic career. All his famous odes were written in that year along with “Lamia,” and the fragment “Hyperion,” which he had started the year before. In August of the same year, he starts composing “Fall of Hyperion.” Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” is probably most associated with the Elgin Marbles simply because of Benjamin Haydon’s battle cry against Payne-Knight concerning the Marbles. As Haydon records in his *Autobiography*, he observed in them “... the union of the ‘truth of nature’ and ‘ideal beauty,’ a view repeated with variations” (67). Keats, by that time having already explored ideal beauty in Endymion, and also to some extent in “Ode to Psyche,” turns to take it to a step further. Critics have come up with various meanings of the last two lines of “Grecian Urn” concerning truth and beauty. Nevertheless, examined from the perspective of the poet’s handling of the theme of ideal beauty, it would only seem fair to suggest that for Keats the urn is a message from the past, and the poem itself is an attempt to decipher that message. When he sat before the Elgin marbles for hours, he could have tried to unravel the same mystery, “What men or gods are these? What maidens loth? / What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape? / What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?” For him, the Sculptures and the Urn indeed bear a message from a glorious past, but that glory at present lying in ruins. For a poet with romantic sensibilities, Keats can only attempt to find a meaning for the relics of that past in the present world, and that meaning might be very different from what it meant in the past.

In spite of all its beauty and possible interpretations the urn becomes in the end “cold pastoral,” calling from the dark shores of oblivion, a reminder of the ephemeral human existence. The speaker might be curious about the empty, imagined town, but at the end he realizes that it is a condition that is inevitable for his own civilization as well. Same goes for the famous Elgin Marbles—removed from their original place, transplanted to England, purchased by the British government, finally to be interpreted by young poets and artists.

Sohana Manzoor is Associate Professor, Department of English & Humanities at ULAB. She is also the Literary Editor of The Daily Star.



John Keats, 1795 - 1821

My spirit is too weak—mortality  
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,  
And each imagined pinnacle and steep  
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die  
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.  
Yet ’tis a gentle luxury to weep,  
That I have not the cloudy winds to keep,  
Fresh for the opening of the morning’s eye.  
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain  
Bring round the heart an indescribable feud;  
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,  
That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude  
Wasting of old Time—with a billowy main—  
A sun—a shadow of a magnitude.

## To Haydon with a Sonnet Written on Seeing the Elgin Marbles

Haydon! forgive me that I cannot speak  
Definitively of these mighty things;  
Forgive me, that I have not eagle’s wings,  
That what I want I know not where to seek,  
And think that I would not be over-meek,  
In rolling out upfollowed thunderings,  
Even to the steep of Heliconian springs,  
Were I of ample strength for such a freak.

Think, too, that all these numbers should be thine;  
Whose else? In this who touch thy vesture’s hem?  
For, when men stared at what was most divine  
With brainless idiotism and o’erwise phlegm,  
Thou hadst beheld the full Hesperian shine  
Of their star in the east, and gone to worship them!

years later after much controversy was able to sell them to the British Museum. Even though the sculptures failed to ignite the expected revolution among the British artists, they did encourage a group of young poets and critics to write about classical antiquity, among whom John Keats is named as one of the foremost.

My interest in the Elgin Marbles rose from my reading of Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” and when I stumbled upon the information that the young poet actually had a close connection

the finest poetry in English literature. However, the immediate reaction of the young poet after seeing them was to write two sonnets, entitled, “To Haydon,” and “On Seeing the Elgin Marbles,” demonstrating his dazed and dazzled pleasure.

In order to understand the relationship between Keats and the Elgin Marbles, it is important to assess the friendship between the historical painter Haydon and the aspiring young poet Keats, and to some extent, the role of William Hazlitt, the famous art-critic

## New Books

INTRODUCED BY MUHAMMAD MEHEDI HASAN

*Dakkhin Asiar Diaspora Shahitya: Itihash, Tatta o Shongkot*: A Book on South Asian Diaspora by Mojaffor Hossain

Cover design by Dhrubo Esh. Price TK 325. Panjeri Publishers, 2020

Diaspora literature is an integral part of the literary scenario today. When people migrate from their own country and settle abroad for whatever reason and employ in writing creatively featuring their lives and struggles, it enters the category of diaspora literature. The significant themes of diaspora literature include leaving home, nostalgia for one’s homeland, the loneliness one faces in a new country, adjusting with the culture of the foreign land, and often creating a new identity for oneself. In the twenty-first century, the number of moving people has increased to such an extent that the time is being identified as the “Age of Diaspora.” A large number of diasporic writers originally are from Asia. Many such names as Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Michael Ondaatje, Hanif Kureishi, Khaled Hosseini, Anita Desai, Amy Tan, Bharati Mukherjee among others have risen prominently in the last few decades. It might be noted that these writers are more popular in their

diasporic abodes than the countries they left behind.

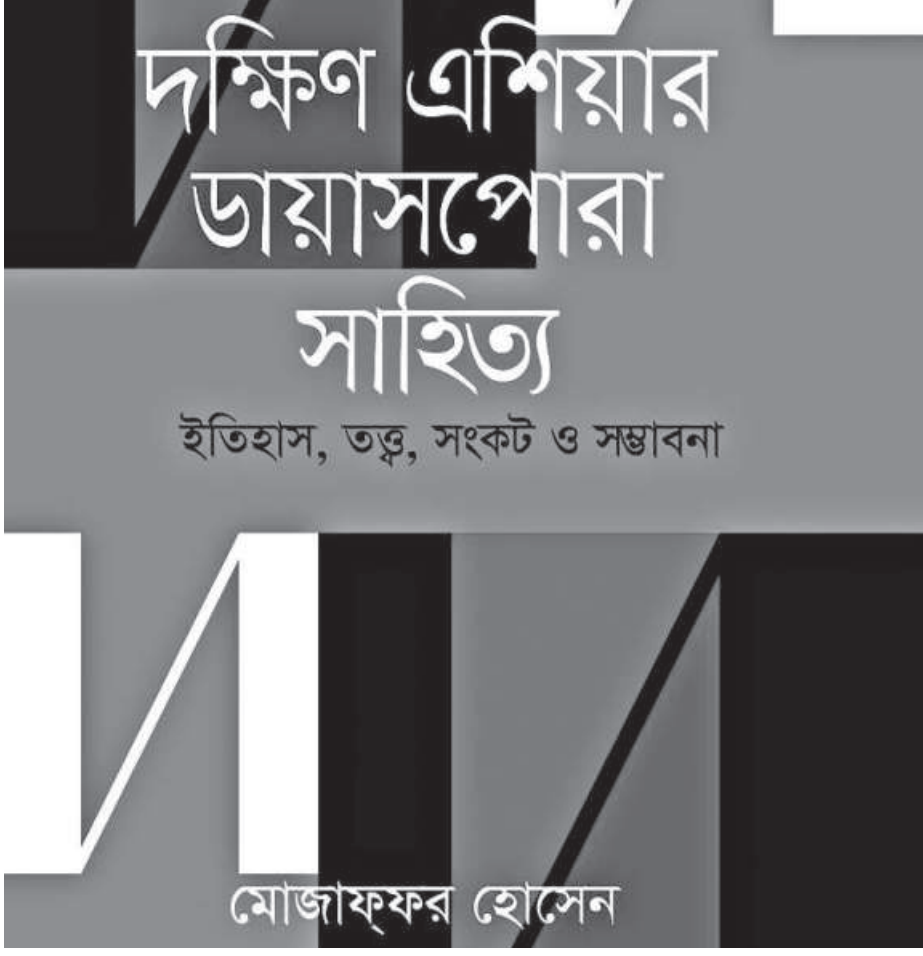
Through the last one decade, diaspora literature has grown to be widely included in various syllabi across the world. Unfortunately, there has not been much discussion and writing in Bengali language. True that we have seen some scattered articles by some writers on the topic, but the need to see a complete volume has been felt. Mojaffor Hossain, just did that. Hossain is more known as a short-story writer, but he has also written on the world literature. His fluent prose has turned the difficult topic of diaspora literature into an easy read. The title of his book is *Dakkhin Asiar Diaspora Shahitya: Itihash, Tatta o Shongkot* (Diaspora literature of South Asia: History, Theory and Problem). In the first part of his book, he has talked about the history of the people of South Asia. Then he moves on to cover the theoretical aspects. In the second part, he discusses the authors from different South Asian countries, especially those from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. An important segment of the book covers Bangladeshi diaspora writing. He looks at the diaspora literature written in both Bengali and English. He also brings in the Bangladeshi-Bihari and

Rohingya literature. He has attempted to understand the cultural and socio-political standing of the Biharis in Bangladesh. In this section, he has also addressed the diasporic tension caused by the partition of 1947. This is an aspect that has not been too widely discussed in the outer world.

The third section of the book showcases some very interesting articles on diaspora literature. There are some detailed discussions on Naipaul, Rushdie, Ishiguro, Jhumpa Lahiri and Rohinton Mistry. The problems of reading the diaspora writers have been addressed; e.g. why they are not so much accepted in their home-countries. At the end of the volume, the author has added a section interviewing a few of the diaspora authors from Bangladesh. There is a section where a lively adda takes place among five young diaspora writers.

This book marks a significant point because this is the first of its kind published in Bangladesh. Various aspects of diaspora have been covered in Bengali too. Second, some unaddressed issues of Bangladeshi literature have come up here.

Muhammad Mehedi Hasan is a mystery and thriller writer.





# Mushy, Nayeem stake claim

SPORTS REPORTER

 Two national players who did not feature in Bangladesh's first Test against Pakistan in Rawalpindi shone on the opening day of the third round of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) yesterday.

Mushfiqur Rahim, who opted out of the Rawalpindi Test due to security concerns, smashed a 157-ball 140 while playing for North Zone against East Zone at the Sheikh Kamal International Stadium in Cox's Bazar. Meanwhile, in the same match, off-spinner Nayeem Hasan -- who was not picked for the Rawalpindi Test -- picked up an eight-wicket haul to help East Zone bundle out North Zone for 272 in 82.4 overs.

With Bangladesh's next assignment being a home series



MUSHFIQUR ...140



NAYEEM ...8 for 107

over but his innings, which lasted for over four hours and was laced with 16 boundaries and a solitary six, helped North Zone get to a respectable total. And if it was not for Mushfiqur's amazing knock, North Zone would have been blown away by Nayeem as the off-spinner finished with spectacular figures of eight for 107. After the exchange, East Zone lost two quick wickets and could only manage three for two before stumps.


Meanwhile, at the Academy ground of the same venue, Marshall Ayub's 186-ball 116 helped Central Zone post a modest 235 before being bundled out by the BCB-operated South Zone in 82.2 overs. National players like Nazmul Hossain Shanto and Saif Hassan, who played in the Pakistan Test, had a bleak day but it was an unbeaten 26-ball 30 from recently dropped Mustafizur Rahman down the order that contributed to Central's cause. After the exchange, South Zone finished on 29 for two before umpires called stumps.

This BCL round saw Mohammad Saifuddin, who was suffering from a back injury, return to action after five months as he featured for North Zone. Another national player, Mehedi Hasan Miraz also returned from a finger injury to play this round for Central Zone. However, none of these two national players impressed yesterday.

## Zimbabwe set to arrive today

*BCB meeting tomorrow regarding series*

SPORTS REPORTER

 Zimbabwe's 15-member Test squad, led by Craig Ervine, are scheduled to land at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka at 4:55pm today. Bangladesh's full series against Zimbabwe consists of a lone Test, three ODIs and two T20Is.

The visitors will play a two-day practice match against BCB XI on February 18 and 19 before squaring off against the Tigers in the lone Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on February 22.

After the completion of the Test, the series will move to Sylhet where the two sides will play three ODIs slated for March 1, 3 and 6. After the ODI series, the teams will return to Dhaka for the two T20Is, to be held on March 9 and 11.

While Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) are yet to name the 'Tigers' squad for the lone Test, national selector Habibul Bashar informed The Daily Star yesterday that the Test squad might be announced following a board meeting on Sunday at the BCB headquarters.

It was learned that Mahmudullah Riyad had been asked to rethink his Test future during a meeting with head coach Russell Domingo. Any development on that regard will be made public once the board meeting comes to pass.

Doubts had also surfaced regarding Mushfiqur Rahim not being considered for the Zimbabwe Test after Domingo was keen to keep the same squad that played the first Test in Pakistan. Mushfiqur opted out of the first Pakistan Test citing security concerns. As per recent developments, it was learned that the wicketkeeper batsman will remain in consideration for the Zimbabwe series.

HIGHLIGHTS

Mushfiqur Rahim, who opted out of the Rawalpindi Test due to security concerns, smashed a 157-ball 140 while playing for North Zone against East Zone.

Another national player, Nayeem Hasan, took an eight-wicket haul for East Zone.

All-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, who had been out of action since September 2019 when he played a T20I against Afghanistan, made a return to cricket as he featured for North Zone yesterday after recovering from his back injury.

Mehedi Hasan Miraz, who missed the first two rounds of BCL due to a finger injury, also returned for Central Zone.

SHORT CORNER

### 'It is a legal landmark'

The head of Indian cricket's anti-corruption watchdog said on Friday Britain's extradition of accused match-fixer Sanjeev Chawla was "a legal landmark".

Chawla, one of the central figures in the scandal surrounding the late Hansie Cronje, was sent back to India on Thursday after spending four years fighting extradition.

It is the first time India has managed to get an accused individual from the cricket gambling underworld sent back for trial.

Delhi police filed charges against Chawla and five others including former South Africa captain Cronje in 2013.

Chawla is alleged to have conspired with Cronje to fix matches in South Africa's tour of India in 2000.

After his arrival, a Delhi court ordered Chawla to be held in custody for 12 days for questioning. He has challenged the order at the High Court.

"It is a legal landmark," Ajit Singh, chief of the anti-corruption unit of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), told AFP of the latest legal outcome.

"Extradition is a difficult process. All sorts of objections were raised, to the extent of threat to life of the accused and even the conditions of the Indian prisons.

"And this one is the first for match fixing."

-- AFP

for the French Open.

There was speculation that Federer would include the Madrid and Rome Masters in his truncated schedule for 2020 but his agent, Tony Godsick, said that was not the case.

"As his schedule states, he plans on playing just Roland Garros," Godsick told Reuters.

The 38-year-old has been cutting down on the number of tournaments he plays over the last few years in a bid to prolong his career.

Unlike his main rivals, Federer, who won the last of his 20 Grand Slam titles in 2018 at Melbourne Park, opted out of the inaugural ATP Cup in Australia to spend more time with his family before launching his 22nd season on Tour.

He arrived at the Australian Open having not played a competitive match since the ATP Finals in November but still made it to the semi-finals, where he fell to eventual champion Novak Djokovic.

Federer, who has won the French Open only once, in 2009, will arrive well rested for this year's campaign at Roland Garros, which begins on May 24.

The March 25-April 5 Miami Masters hard-court tournament is the last on his schedule before the Grand Slam.

The Swiss will defend his title at the Dubai Duty Free tennis championships next week before playing at next month's BNP Paribas Open in California.

-- REUTERS



The Bangladesh community in Brisbane hosted a reception in honour of the Bangladesh women's team yesterday evening. The Tigresses are currently in Australia for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup starting from February 21. The Salma Khatun-led side had a few official sessions including the tournament briefing, technical meeting, medical workshop, integrity and medical education. The Tigresses are scheduled for a practice session at the Gabba in Brisbane today before playing the first of their two practice matches against Thailand tomorrow.

PHOTO: BCB

## South Africa call off Pak tour

AGENCIES

 Cricket South Africa (CSA) on Friday expressed their inability to tour Pakistan next month, assuring the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) that they will honour the commitment of sending their side as soon as "it is reasonably possible".

South Africa, who are also touring India for three ODIs, were looking to visit Pakistan for three T20Is after the conclusion of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) on March 22 and before the start of the Indian Premier League (IPL) on March 29. Rawalpindi was the proposed venue but as it stands now, the tour is postponed and an alternate window to play the games is yet to be decided.

"While we were keenly looking forward to hosting South Africa next month, we respect Cricket South Africa's reason for not sending their side next month. Managing player workload is a top priority for any cricket board, and from that perspective, their decision is understandable," PCB Chief Executive Wasim Khan said.

"We are pleased that the CSA remains committed to rescheduling this short series as soon as practically possible. As there is a strong willingness and commitment, both the boards are now exploring their FITPs to find gaps so that we can agree on the dates," he added.

The proposed three-match T20I series was in addition to South Africa's full tour of Pakistan in January next year, when they will play two Tests and three T20Is as part of the Future Tours Programme (FTP).

## Ferguson not expecting to make India Tests

REUTERS, Wellington

 Fast bowler Lockie Ferguson is not expecting to be picked in New Zealand's Test squad on Monday for the series against India as he recovers from a calf injury that ruined his debut against Australia late last year.

Ferguson broke down after bowling just 11 overs in the first Test in Perth and has been working his way back to fitness for Auckland in domestic cricket.

He expects to play New Zealand's domestic one-day final on Sunday and indicated the limited overs series against Australia in March was a more realistic target for his international return.

"Of course the goal is for me to get back as soon as possible, but there is so much cricket coming up this year," he told Stuff Media in Auckland on Friday.

"We've got a lot of white-ball stuff and I head away to the IPL as well, so it's important with a calf injury, where there's a high percentage chance of re-injury, that we be conservative.

"Sunday's my focus and then I'll be looking to play some first-class cricket."

Despite making his Test debut last

December, Ferguson is realistically fifth in the pecking order behind the established trio of Trent Boult, Tim Southee and Neil Wagner and then Matt Henry.

Boult broke his hand in Australia but trained with the national side earlier this week in Mt. Maunganui before they wrapped up a 3-0 sweep in the one-day series over India and should play the first Test that starts on Feb. 21 in Wellington.

"It's not an easy side to make, the New Zealand Test side," Ferguson added. "Not that it's easy to make any of the sides, but they've been exceptional for so long, and especially the fast-bowling attack, that's been very settled for a long time."

He also acknowledged that despite being considered as more of a limited overs bowler at the international level, he was still motivated to play the longest form of the game.

"Since I started playing professional cricket, it has been my goal to play Test cricket, because personally I feel that's the biggest challenge," he said.

"I am obviously super stoked to be playing one-dayers and T20s for New Zealand, I love every moment of it, but playing red-ball has been a big goal of mine."





# What to WATCH

## STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League  
Southampton v Burnley  
Live from 6:20pm  
Norwich City v Liverpool  
Live from 11:20pm

## STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

Bundesliga  
Leipzig v Werder Bremen  
Live from 8:15pm  
Dusseldorf v M'gladbach  
Live from 11:15pm

## TEN 2

Serie A  
Bologna v Genoa  
Live from 11:00pm  
Atalanta v AS Roma  
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

## DAY'S EVENT

**Bangladesh Cricket League**  
Four-day Match, Day 2  
Time: 9:30am

Central Zone v South Zone  
Venue: Cox's Bazar

East Zone v North Zone  
Venue: Cox's Bazar

## PELE SAYS HE IS FINE

Former Brazil striker Pele dismissed talk he is depressed and reclusive on Thursday and assured fans he is doing well and maintaining a busy schedule. Pele's son Edinho told Globo in an interview published on Monday that the three-times World Cup winner was depressed and reluctant to leave his house because he cannot get around properly due to hip problems. "I am good," said Pele, who will be 80 in October. "I continue to accept my physical limitations in the best way possible but I intend to keep the ball rolling."

--- REUTERS



Mohammedan forward Ugochukwu Obi Moneke celebrates his decisive goal against Arambagh in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The 30th-minute strike was the seventh goal of the league so far, all seven scored by seven different foreign players.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Foreigners continue scoring spree

SPORTS REPORTER



Foreign players continued their hold of the scoring chart as two foreign recruits scored two goals in the two games of the Bangladesh Premier League yesterday.

Five foreign players had scored five goals on the opening day of the 12th edition of the top-tier professional league on Thursday, and yesterday Rwanda's Emery Bayisenge and Nigeria's Ugochukwu Obi Moneke added to that tally as Saif and Mohammedan notched 1-0 victories in their respective matches.

Saif had to battle hard to get the better of Federation Cup finalists Rahmatganj in their opening fixture at the Rafique Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium in Mymensingh.

Saif, who finished fourth in the league last season and were knocked out of the Federation Cup from the semifinal stage, had their centre-back Emery Bayisenge to thank for as the Rwandan centre-back curled in a free-kick to undo the plucky Rahmatganj side in the 63rd minute of the game.

It was the first match in charge for former Abahani coach Drago Mamic, who took the helm at Saif with former Chattogram Abahani coach Zulfiqar Mahmud Mintu as his deputy.

<b>SAIF</b> Bayisenge 63'	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>RAHMATGANJ</b>
<b>ARAMBAGH</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>MOHAMMEDAN</b> Obi Moneke 30'

Meanwhile, Sean Lane's Mohammedan beat trouble-hit Arambagh 1-0 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka, with Obi Moneke's 30th-minute strike separating the two sides.

The 28-year-old Nigerian collected the ball outside the box and skipped past Eleta Benjamoin before placing the ball at the far post.

The Black and Whites, who are experiencing a rejuvenation under Lane having reached the semifinals of the Federation Cup, had chances to increase the lead in the second half. Souleymane Diabate failed to beat Arambagh goalkeeper from a one-on-one situation two minutes after the break.

Arambagh, too, had their chances to equalise. Egyptian forward Mostafa Mahmood was set up for an easy finish by Eleta Kingsley five minutes into the second half, but Mahmood blasted the ball over the bar.

There were chances for local players to break the foreigners' scoring dominance, but former national team forward Yousuf Sifat saw his chip evade the Arambagh goal by a few inches while another former national team player, Abdul Baten Komol, failed to get the better of Mohammedan goalkeeper Mohammad Sujon in the 80th minute by wasting too much time on the ball.

## Barca still favourites, says Setien

REUTERS, Barcelona

Quique Setien says Barcelona should still be seen as joint favourites to win La Liga along with Real Madrid, ahead of his team's clash with Getafe on Saturday.

Barcelona, second, face Jose Bordalas's side at Camp Nou and can pull level with Madrid if they win, before their rivals host Celta Vigo on Sunday.

Madrid are in good form and have winger Eden Hazard poised to return from injury, while Barcelona forward Ousmane Dembele was recently ruled out for six months with a hamstring tear and striker Luis Suarez is still sidelined.

"Many leagues are decided by small details, that none of the teams fighting for the title can control," Setien told a news conference on Friday.

"I think we are exactly equal favourites with Real Madrid. We have three points less but we have a game against them there."

Barcelona hope to be allowed an emergency signing to replace Dembele, pending ratification from the Spanish FA on the French winger's medical report following his operation this week.

Getafe forward Angel Rodriguez has been linked by Spanish media, along with Levante's Roger Marti.

"Dembele's injury set us back a lot and put us in a risky situation, but you always have a plan because you play with 11 players," added Setien.

"I hope that it is possible (to bring in a striker), but if they don't let us sign a player then we will adapt."

Setien and Bordalas have a long history of rivalry, with the Barcelona coach claiming his opposite number "boils my blood" while he was at Real Betis.

"I have forgotten completely about the Bordalas topic and I will not speak about it," added Setien.

## Ronaldo earns Juventus a draw at Milan

AFP, Milan



Cristiano Ronaldo's injury-time penalty grabbed Juventus a 1-1 draw at AC Milan in their Italian Cup Semifinal, first leg on Thursday as his incredible scoring run continued.

The 35-year-old has now scored 12 goals in his last eight games in all competitions after the Portuguese ultimately got the better of old rival Zlatan Ibrahimovic despite being largely anonymous for much of the match.

Milan paid for Theo Hernandez's 71st-minute red card as they failed to close out a game they had dominated for long periods and led through Ante Rebic.

Juve will now be favourites to finish the job in the second leg at the Allianz Stadium next month, with a final against either Inter Milan or Napoli up for grabs.

The hosts started strongly, with Ibrahimovic heading over the crossbar inside the first minute.

He continued to be a threat to his former club early on, but could only direct an ambitious backheel flick beyond the far post, before picking up a booking which will see him miss the second leg through suspension.

Juventus finally produced their first shot in anger nine minutes before half-time, as Juan Cuadrado saw his low strike well saved by Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Milan started the second half as they did the first, on the front foot, but Rebic was denied an opening goal by Gianluigi Buffon.

Samu Castillejo also called Buffon into action seven minutes after the break, with the 42-year-old goalkeeper



The first part of the big clash between the two talismans – Cristiano Ronaldo and Zlatan Ibrahimovic – ended all square as the former's late strike salvaged a 1-1 draw for Juventus in their Italian Cup semifinal fixture against Milan on Thursday night.

PHOTO: AFP

able to make a comfortable save.

Stefano Pioli's side finally made the breakthrough in the 61st minute, though, as Castillejo's clipped cross was volleyed home at the back post by Rebic.

Juventus were gifted a way back into the game with 18 minutes remaining as Hernandez was handed a second yellow card for a late challenge on Paulo Dybala.

That prompted the 13-time winners to belatedly pile some pressure on the home goal, and Donnarumma had to be alert to keep out Matthijs de Ligt's header.

Dybala curled wide with five minutes remaining, but Juve were awarded a spot-kick in the final

minute of normal time as VAR spotted a handball by Davide Calabria.

Ronaldo stepped up and slammed the ball down the middle to score his 24th goal of the season.

Six minutes of injury-time gave the visitors hope of clinching an unlikely victory, but Milan at least held on for a draw to keep their bid for a first Cup crown since 2003 alive.

On Wednesday, Napoli struck first blood in their Semifinal as Gennaro Gattuso's men downed Serie A leaders Inter Milan 1-0 at the San Siro, with Fabian Ruiz scoring the winner.

The last-four second legs will take place on March 4 and 5, with the final on May 13 at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome.

## Italy's FA wants VAR 'challenges'

REUTERS, Undated

Italy's soccer governing (FIGC) has asked FIFA's rule-making body, the International Football Association Board (IFAB), if it can introduce a system where Serie A teams can challenge referee's decisions and ask for technology to intervene.

The Italian top flight introduced the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system in 2017-18 but it has received criticism from Serie A managers who feel technology should take a second look at controversial decisions made by on-field referees.

Napoli and Parma fumed over VAR last weekend for wrong calls made by the referee after they were not awarded penalties and the FIGC believes managers should be allowed to challenge decisions.

## Guardiola fearing sack

AFP, London



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said he could be sacked if he fails to beat Real Madrid in the last 16 of the Champions League.

Guardiola has won five major trophies in three seasons at the Etihad, but a failure to progress beyond the quarter-finals of the Champions League has been the big disappointment of his reign.

Guardiola's side trail Liverpool at the top of the Premier League by a mammoth 22 points this season with their campaign now set to be judged on how they fare in Europe.

"I want to win the Champions League. I dream (of it) and I will enjoy preparing for the games against Madrid," Guardiola told Sky Sports.

"If we don't beat them, OK, come the chairman or the sport director and say, 'It's not good enough, we want the Champions League, I'm going to sack you.'"

"I don't know (if this would happen). It has happened many times and could maybe happen."

Guardiola has a contract at the Etihad until the end of next season.

After four years at Barcelona and three



in charge of Bayern Munich, he is expected to fulfil his deal and enter a fifth season at one club for the first time in his managerial career.

But the Catalan coach also hit back at the suggestion that the success or failure of a season should only be measured in trophies.

"We give a bad, bad message for the new generation, for our kids, to just count the winner, the trophies to win," added Guardiola.

"You say the season is a disaster but if you win the Champions League it will be exceptional. Why? It is difficult to win it."

"If you don't, we can say in more than 100 years of history (there) were 100 failure seasons for Manchester City. That is not true."

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MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

# A man steps forward

Male student to install sanitary pad vending machines on Chittagong University campus

MD ABBAS with NAZIBA BASHIR

More often than not, we see only the change happening around us in the city. But sometimes, there are silent revolutions happening outside our own hub by people away from the limelight of capital.

One such man, Tausif Ahmed Rabby, has taken the initiative to make menstrual hygiene more accessible for the girls of Chittagong University.

While Dhaka University already installed sanitary napkin vending machines on its campus in December, Tausif's dreams are taking a little while longer to materialise even though he had thought of it back in October of last year.

The CU student took the initiative to install eight sanitary napkin vending machines on campus in a bid to break the social taboo and make menstrual hygiene more accessible for around 10,000 female students of the university.

An MBA student, Tausif will be supervising the whole project, while a voluntary team of students will monitor, refill, and collect money from the vending machines as well as sort out any problems, if found.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5



Valerie A Taylor, founder and coordinator of the CRP, shares a light moment with a differently-abled boy during the Annual Sponsored Walk at the Gulshan-2 lake park in the capital yesterday. Differently-abled children, along with their guardians, took part in the event, organised by the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed, to enhance awareness about disability and raise funds for treatment and rehabilitation of the underprivileged patients.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# Condemned war criminal Subhan dies at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Convicted war criminal and Jamaat-e-Islami leader Abdus Subhan died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

The 86-year old former lawmaker from Pabna was admitted to the hospital on January 24 with age-related complications.

He died around 1:30pm yesterday, said Mahbubul Islam, jailer of Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.

The International Crimes Tribunal on February 18 in 2015 sentenced him to death for committing crimes against humanity, including mass killing, murder, and confinement and torture of pro-liberation people during the 1971 Liberation War.

Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Subhan, who led the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



# Mother, 2 kids murdered at home in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police last night recovered the bodies of a woman and her two children from their flat in a five-storey building in the capital's Dakshinkhan area.

They suspected that the trio were murdered a couple of days ago as their bodies were decomposed.

The dead are Munni Begum, 37, her son Farhan Uddin, 12, and daughter Layeeva Bhuiyan, 3.

Police suspected that Munni's husband Raquib Uddin Bhuiyan, an official of Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited (BTCL), committed the killings as he had been missing for a couple of days. The motive for the murders was not clear.

Nabid Kamal Shaibal, deputy commissioner (Uttara division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they recovered the bodies from the flat on the third floor of the building after receiving information from locals.

A police official, who was present during the recovery of the bodies, said Munni's head was smashed with a blunt object. A hammer was recovered from near her body. Her children might have been choked to death.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

# 'Build a society free from exploitation'



Bangabandhu is offering prayers at the graveyard of Shaheed Sgt. Zahurul Haque (February 15, 1972).

FEBRUARY 15, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU SPEAKS TO THE NATION

In a broadcast to the nation on the occasion of the National Martyrs' Day, Bangabandhu says that the language movement was not only a movement centred around the language issue, it was also a movement aimed at the establishment of the rights of the people of Bangladesh. It was the movement for liberation, he adds.

The prime minister tells the nation, "Today we have earned freedom but we shall not be able to enjoy the fruits of our

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5



# PVT HOSPITAL Pharmacist found dead at director's room

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A pharmacist was found hanging from a window bar in a director's room of a private hospital in the capital's Matuail area yesterday.

Mobarak Karim, 33, worked at Proactive Medical College Hospital, another private hospital in Narayanganj.

"On information, police recovered the body after breaking the door of the director's room of Friendship Specialised Hospital and Digital Diagnostic Centre in Matuail around 11:00am," Siddiqur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Demra Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Mobarak's body was found hanging with a towel from the window bar. His feet were on the floor. The body bore injuries to

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

# Russian soldier rolls out tanks for love



AFP, Moscow

A Russian soldier has pulled out all the stops to propose to his girlfriend, with his fellow officers manoeuvring 16 tanks to surround the couple in a heart shape.

The high-octane romantic stunt was filmed in a video published by the defence ministry yesterday, on Valentine's Day.

As snow fell, the T-72B3 tanks rolled into position on the Alabino training ground outside Moscow.

Lieutenant Denis Kazantsev led his long-term partner Alexandra Kopytova into the centre as she held her hands over her eyes, the defence ministry's TV channel Zvezda reported.

Kazantsev, a platoon commander, went down on bended knee, holding a bunch of red roses.

"We've been together a very long time. We've stood the test of time and distance. Marry me!" he said as his girlfriend nodded silently. He then put a ring on her finger.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

# RAPE OF GIRL Man lands in jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A middle-aged man landed in jail yesterday in a case over raping a differently-abled girl in Sirajganj's Kamarkhand upazila six days ago.

The accused is Sultan Mahmud, 55, a shopkeeper from Paikosha village in the same upazila.

Quoting the case statement, OC Habibul Islam of Kamarkhand Police Station said the 14-year-old victim was playing near her home in Paikosha village in the morning of February 9. At one stage, Sultan called

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 15

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:25	12:45	4:30	5:57	7:15
JAMAAT 6:00	1:15	4:45	6:01	7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

# Former UP member killed in B'baria

UNB, Brahmanbaria

A former union parishad member was killed in an attack reportedly by his rival at Prato Bazar in the district's Sarail upazila on Thursday night.

The victim was identified as Abu Bakar Siddique, 55, former member of Sadar Union Parishad.

Quoting locals, OC Shahadat Hossain Titu of Sarail Police Station said Shah Alam member and Abu Bakar had been at loggerheads since Shah Alam's two brothers were assaulted by some supporters of Abu Bakar before the Eid-ul-Azha last year.

Around 8:00pm on Thursday, supporters of Shah Alam swooped on Abu Bakar and stabbed him indiscriminately, leaving him badly injured.

Later, he was taken to a local hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Additional policemen were deployed in the area to avert any further trouble.



A motor boat being pulled to the shore after the vessel, carrying about 30 tourists, capsized in Kaptai Lake of Rangamati yesterday. Five of the tourists drowned in the lake in the accident.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Senate votes to curb Trump's war powers on Iran

AFP, Washington

The US Senate voted Thursday to rein in President Donald Trump from attacking Iran, sharply rebuking his foreign policy despite a week earlier acquitting him in his impeachment trial.

Eight senators of Trump's Republican Party, which enjoys a majority, bucked their leadership to join Democrats in a resolution that bars any military action against Iran without an explicit vote from Congress.

"The Senate just sent a clear shot across the bow -- a bipartisan majority of senators don't want the president waging war without congressional approval," Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer said after the vote.

The resolution will head to the Democratic-led House of Representatives, which passed a similar text last month.

But much like an earlier attempt by Congress to end US support for Saudi Arabia's devastating offensive in Yemen, Trump is nearly certain to issue a veto, with lawmakers lacking the two-thirds majority to overturn it.

Moments before the vote, a rocket slammed into an Iraqi base housing US troops in the first attack on the site since a December 27 barrage killed a US contractor, according to Iraqi and US security sources. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The contractor's death set off an escalating crisis in which Trump ordered a drone strike at the Baghdad airport that killed Qassem Soleimani, Iran's most powerful general.

Democratic Senator Tim Kaine introduced the resolution after Soleimani's death, concerned that the United States was rushing into another Middle East war without debate.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2