



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXX No. 55

FALGUN 24, 1426 BS

Your Right to Know

PLUS 2 PAGES JACKET ON UNSUNG WOMEN NATION BUILDERS AWARDS

RAJAB 12, 1441 HJRI

18 PAGES PRICE: Tk 12.00

**"Rather than thinking about what is going to trouble us, it's only about being there, enjoying the moment and giving our best."**  
INDIA CAPTAIN HARMANPREET KAUR AHEAD OF TODAY'S WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP FINAL. (PAGE 12)



**"We've been protecting the country but we can't be there for the next – eventually they're going to have to protect themselves."**  
TRUMP ON AFGHAN CONFLICT. (PAGE 11)



**"Coronavirus has created global panic and it might affect foreign guests' presence at Mujib Borsho celebration."**  
FOREIGN MINISTER DR AK ABDUL MOMEN. (PAGE 2)



33PC POSITIONS FOR WOMEN

## Most parties nowhere near

ZYMA ISLAM

The Representation of the People Order -- the act that governs the electoral system -- does not ask for much.

It is only asking that in a country where half the population are men and half are women, women should make up a third of any political party. Not half or 50 percent following the natural population ratio, but only a third, a minority.

The law stipulates this requirement be met by 2020, and calls it a pre-requisite for any political party's registration with the Election Commission.

"If any political party wants to be registered, it shall fulfil one of the following conditions, namely -- fixing the goal of reserving at least 33 percent of all committee positions, including that of the central committee, for women, and successively achieving the goal by the year 2020," states the RPO.

This target was set in 2008, when the law was amended to incorporate this provision.

Fast-forward to 2020, and with only nine months for the deadline to end, a majority of the political parties have not managed to meet the requirement. The Daily Star found this talking to leaders of 25 of the country's 41 registered political parties.

Let's start with the ruling Awami League.

The AL, led by its president Sheikh Hasina, is yet to reach the milestone, falling short approximately by 7 percentage points. Nineteen members of its 74-strong central committee are women, meaning women make around 26

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



Women holding a candlelit vigil to mark the International Women's Day. The event was organised by Dhaka University and a non-profit organisation called We Can Bangladesh at the Central Shaheed Minar last night. Story on page 14.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## The girls with clenched fist and courage

NILIMA JAHAN

It was not too long ago that this correspondent reported an incident of violence against her 16-year-old college-going cousin, who was beaten up with sandals by some stalkers in a village market, where hundreds of bystanders watched without protesting.

After that incident, the teenager even attempted to take her own life, unable to tolerate such public humiliation.

Last May, 13-year-old Shamima Akter from Rajshahi's Paba upazila found herself in a similar situation, but with a different twist.

The student of Baya High School and College was on her way home from coaching centre when some local young men started passing lewd comments at her, even though she repeatedly asked them to stop.

What happened next was hardly what the harassers were prepared for.

Shamima, who had

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

NARCOTICS, ARMS CASES

## GK Shamim got HC bail last month

Says his counsel; attorney general 'kept' in the dark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

GK Shamim secured bail from the High Court in two cases in the first week of February, it has emerged.

Two separate High Court benches granted bail to Shamim for six months in a narcotics case and for one year in an arms case, his lawyer Shawkat Osman confirmed The Daily Star yesterday.

The HC granted the bail as Shamim has been in jail for over five months, whereas the maximum punishment in the cases is six months of imprisonment, he said.

The lawyer said bail bond for Shamim was furnished before the lower court concerned last week.

Osman said Shamim could not be released from jail following the HC order as he is arrested in two other criminal cases.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## Coronavirus cases continue to rise

Italy sees highest deaths in a day; 70 trapped as quarantine hotel collapses in China

AGENCIES

Italy's death toll from coronavirus rose by 36 to 233 yesterday, while the number of infections shot up by a single-day record of 1,247 to hit 5,883.

Italy has recorded the most deaths in any country outside China and the third-most infections after China and South Korea. Official figures showed the number of people receiving intensive care in hospitals jump to 567 from 462 on Friday.

Meanwhile in China, about 70 people were trapped after a hotel being used as a coronavirus quarantine facility in the city of Quanzhou collapsed.

About 40 of the 70 have been pulled from the rubble of the five-storey Xinjia Hotel, state media says.

Back to Italy, the government has been watching closely to see if cases are spreading from the richer north to the poorer south, which has fewer medical resources.

All 22 Italian regions have now registered cases and one new death was reported Friday in the Lazio region that includes Rome and its outskirts.

The main countries affected are mainland China (80,651 cases, 3,070 deaths), South Korea (6,767 cases, 44 deaths), Italy (5,883 cases, 233

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

TOTAL DEATHS 3,556

1,05,000 confirmed cases

## Avoid public transport

IEDCR to returnees from virus-affected countries; Kuwait slaps travel ban on Bangladeshis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

IEDCR Director Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora yesterday said coronavirus could reach Bangladesh anytime.

"However, there is no reason to panic," the chief of Institute of Epidemiology, Research and Disease Control (IEDCR) told a press conference at her office.

She also urged people arriving from countries with coronavirus cases to avoid public transport and crowded places.

Meanwhile, Kuwait announced a seven-day travel ban for people from Bangladesh and six other countries, Bangladesh's

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## India scales up protective measures

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

As the coronavirus outbreak continues to evolve, India has taken various preventive measures in a bid to curb the spread of the virus, including closure of educational institutions in different states.

The number of coronavirus cases in India touched 31 on Friday, and the government announced the cancellation of large gatherings related to the official functions of the Holi festival on March 10, including those involving President Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his official residence on Lok Kalyan Marg, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP President Jagat Prakash Nadda at the party's offices across India.

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal also announced that Holi should not be celebrated, citing the recent violence in north-east Delhi and coronavirus among the reasons.

On Saturday, the Jammu and Kashmir government ordered all primary schools in Jammu and Samba districts to shut down till March 31 with immediate effect as the union territory braced itself for likely coronavirus infections.

On Friday, Bisva Bharati authorities at Santiniketan

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

## Poverty 'drives' mother to kill 2 daughters

She sets herself on fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"I killed my two daughters and burnt myself too..."

These were the words that Arifunnessa Popy, 35, the mother of two children, screamed to her father Abu Taleb, when he knocked on the door of Popy's Khilgaon flat yesterday morning.

Relatives suspect that the woman murdered her daughters before attempting suicide as she has been struggling financially because her husband could not bear the expenses of the family.

Mozammel Haque Biplab, her husband, who lives in Munshiganj and manages his electrical goods business, claimed that the allegations raised by Popy's family were not true. Mozammel, however,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

## Bangabandhu's speech inspires people across the globe: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the followers of Bangabandhu's ideology, particularly the Awami League leaders and workers, to find homeless people in their respective areas and ensure homes for them within the Mujib Borsho to fulfill the desire of Bangabandhu.

"You find how many people remain homeless or landless in your villages and areas. We will arrange homes for them. If you cannot spend money, I will. But we want to give them homes. This is our only desire [in this Mujib Borsho]," she said.

The PM was addressing a discussion, organised by the AL at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, on the occasion of historic March 7.

About the March 7 speech, Hasina said the speech of the Father of the Nation would continue to inspire not only the Bangladeshis, but also the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with her sister Sheikh Rehana and daughter Saima Wazed Putul and Sheikh Rehana's son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby at Joy Bangla concert in the capital's army stadium yesterday evening.

PHOTO: PID

## A leader who will be missed

SAKEB SUBHAN

In 2013, the then Bangladesh coach Shane Jurgensen had said on a tour of Zimbabwe that he was actually thinking of flying Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in. His thought process had nothing to do with bolstering the squad with Bangladesh's best ever fast bowler, who missed the tour due to injury, but it was just about having the most inspirational cricketer in the land among the squad to lift their spirits.

On Thursday, the 36-year-old Mashrafe announced that he would step down from the captaincy after the three-match ODI series against Zimbabwe. Fittingly, the Tigers gifted their captain his 50th win in the third and final ODI the following day.

It is uncertain whether Mashrafe will continue to turn out for the Tigers -- failing form and an injury-ravaged body may rule that out. He has taken Bangladesh to another level in ODI cricket after taking over in chaotic circumstances in late 2014. And it is an unfortunate reality that when he leaves, he will leave a team in chaos as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) -- despite Mashrafe's exit being long in the making -- has not made any clear succession plan.

Reams have been written about his captaincy, and his bowling to a lesser extent.

But only Bangladesh cricketers will truly know how much Mashrafe the man will be missed if Friday's match was indeed his last for the country he has passionately represented since 2001.

During tours, his hotel room doubled as the common room for all team members, including the coaches and the support staff. In South Africa in 2017, Taskin Ahmed used to sleep in Mashrafe's room.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



# Construction work leaves Manik Mia Avenue sidewalk in disarray

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Development work is an inseparable part of urbanisation. It is inevitable that sometimes even the busiest footpaths will have to be blocked, for the sake of maintaining the asphalt or repairing the utility lines that run underneath.

However, when this work stalls for a long time, it's the pedestrians who have to bear the brunt. As footpaths are the only allocated site for walking on roads, it becomes a problem when they are obstructed or cordoned off for months on end. Such a scene can be seen at the city's Manik Mia Avenue for nearly three months now.

While visiting the area on Friday, this correspondent saw the footpath on the NAM Bhaban side of the road resembling an obstacle course, as brickbats, sand, and other construction materials were scattered all over the place.

This is due to drainage work -- that started around three months ago, according to DNCC officials. The development work stretches from the opposite of Aarong to Indira Road T&T field.

Along with the difficulty of commuting on foot, the ongoing maintenance work also contributes to worsening air quality in the area as piles of sand and other construction materials are left uncovered, flouting the High Court order to cover up construction materials to curb air pollution.

Additionally, construction rods and drainage pipes are also cluttered across the footpath. This is forcing pedestrians



What's supposed to be walking space for pedestrians is now taken over by sand, pipes, and ditches, forcing pedestrians into the busy roadway of the Manik Mia Avenue.

PHOTO: STAR

to stray off the pavement and put themselves under risk of accident in one of the busiest roads in the city.

"We common people can't hold anyone responsible for this. We are used to seeing such disorderly construction work everywhere in Dhaka. No one usually thinks of the pedestrians; has the authority concerned thought of giving pedestrians alternative walkways before starting work in the area?" questioned Md Mizan, a pedestrian walking along the road.

Some pedestrians looked to avoid the hazardous and dusty construction side by crossing over to the other side

of the road. Md Sadman was one of them.

"Who wants to walk next to the construction area? Can't you see that there is dust everywhere? I prefer to walk by the National Parliament side -- it is much cleaner," Sadman said.

An Ansar personnel named Manik, posted at Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation which falls on the construction site area, said, "The sand piles are kept open for several days, which releases dust in the area. Sometimes we need to spray water so that dust does not blow in the air."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

# Celebration without Khaleda won't be successful: Fakhru

UNB, Dhaka

BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said the celebrations of "Mujib Borsho" will not be successful keeping Khaleda Zia in jail.

"Khaleda Zia fought for democracy throughout her life. She has been jailed numerous time in this regard. Even now she is in jail... only because of her efforts to restore democracy in the country," he said.

"So, [the celebration of] Mujib Borsho won't be successful, keeping her in jail," the BNP leader said.

Fakhru came up with the remarks while talking to reporters after placing wreaths at the grave of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman. Sheikh Rabiul Alam, party candidate for by-polls to Dhaka-10, accompanied him.

The BNP secretary general said democracy was the main spirit of Bangladesh's independence. "People fought for a long time for independence and thus we became independent," he said.

He also criticised the government for inviting Indian premier Narendra Modi at Mujib Borsho celebrations.

When his attention was drawn to ruling party leaders' remark that BNP is not serious about polls, Fakhru alleged that Awami League leaders are making various comments to mislead people since they have been in power without "the mandate of people and support".

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

# Women's Math Olympiad at DU today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women's Mathematics Olympiad Committee and AF Mujibur Rahman Foundation is set to organise the "Women's Mathematics Olympiad 2020" to mark the International Women's Day today. This will be the fourth iteration of the event.

The programme, to be facilitated by the Department of Mathematics of Dhaka University, will be held at AF Mujibur Rahman Ganit Bhaban at DU, said a press release.

More than 250 undergraduate female students from different public and private universities are set to participate in the Olympiad.

Prof Akhtaruzzaman, vice-chancellor of DU, will inaugurate the programme while Education Minister Dipu Moni will be present as chief guest at the certificate giving ceremony.

Prof Muhammad

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

# DAKSHINKHAN TRIPLE MURDER Husband still traceless

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three weeks have passed since Munni Rahman and her two children were murdered in Dhaka's Dakshinkhan. Yet, Munni's husband Raquib Uddin Bhuiyan, the prime suspect, remains traceless.

Police suspect Raquib to be the killer after recovering a note, apparently written by him, admitting to the killings and saying his body would be found near a rail track.

"We are continuing our search for him," said Nasir Uddin, inspector (investigation) of Dakshinkhan Police Station.

"We will be able to confirm whether anyone else was involved after finding him... We have alerted all the railway police stations in this regard. We are also checking whenever police recover a body from a rail track," he added.

On February 14, police recovered the decomposed bodies of Munni (37) and her two children -- Farhan Uddin (12) and Layeeva Bhuiyan (3) -- from their Dakshinkhan flat and said they were murdered a couple of days ago.

Munni was beaten to death with a hammer while the two children were strangled, said a forensic doctor, who conducted their autopsy.

Inspector Nasir said they are waiting for the report to confirm whether Raquib wrote the note or not.

Raquib, an official of BTCL's Uttara office, was having some financial problems due to a loan, police said.

**The New Age of Paediatrics : Just Published!**

**Author: Prof. (Dr.) Md. Salim Shakur PhD**  
MBBS, DCH, MRCP (UK), FRCPCH (UK)  
FRCP (London, Glasgow, Edinburgh)  
Consultant, Dept. of Paediatrics, United Hospital Limited  
Formerly: □ Professor & Academic Director, BICH, Dhaka  
□ Director, Dhaka Shishu Hospital, Dhaka

- Updated information of common and emerging childhood illness of Bangladesh
- Concise yet comprehensive management plan
- Features 650 coloured clinical photographs
- A 'must have' resources for medical students and paediatric practitioners

Available at:  
Paroma 01811-416026 | Parash 01743-946433 | HAB 01841666681 | Mullick 01971-529328  
Shakur's Health Care West Panthapath 01751 20 30 30 | Online Partner eboighar.com 01795-401010

# President returns home

BSS, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid returned home yesterday afternoon, wrapping up his 11-day visit to Uruguay and England.

A flight of Qatar Airways from London, carrying the president and his entourage, landed at Dhaka airport around 4pm.

On his arrival, the head of the state was received by Law Minister Anisul Huq,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

**আমরা শোকাহত**

ঢাকা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড এর সম্মানিত প্রতিষ্ঠাতা চেয়ারম্যান এবং পরিচালক জনাব আব্দুল হাই সরকার এর স্বাস্থ্য ও মরহম নূরুল ইসলাম খান এর স্ত্রী বেগম হাজেরা খানম (৮৯) গত ৫ মার্চ ২০২০, বৃহস্পতিবার রাত ৯৯টায় বার্বক্যজনিত কারণে ইন্তেকাল করেন (ইন্না লিল্লাহি ওয়া ইন্না ইলাহি রাজেউন)। মৃত্যুকালে তিনি পাঁচ পুত্র, তিন কন্যা ও নাতী-নাতনীসহ অসংখ্য গুণগ্রাহী রেখে গেছেন। পরে তাঁকে উত্তরা (৪ নং সেক্টর) কবরস্থানে দাফন করা হয়।

ঢাকা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড এর পরিচালনা পর্ষদ এবং সকল কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীদের পক্ষ থেকে শোক-সন্তপ্ত পরিবারের প্রতি গভীর সমবেদনা প্রকাশ ও মরহমার বিদেহী আত্মার শান্তি ও মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি।

**DHAKABANK LIMITED**  
EXCELLENCE IN BANKING

www.dhakabankltd.com

NEW PROJECTS BY

# CONCORD

BANANI | GULSHAN | BARIDHARA | DHANMONDI | SHANTINAGAR | SHYAMOLI

And More Exclusive RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL Projects in

GULSHAN | BANANI | BARIDHARA | DHANMONDI | SATMASJID ROAD | SOBHANBAGH | SHANTINAGAR  
RAMNA | UTTARA | KHILKHET | ASHULIA (RESORT BUNGALOWS) | NORTH KHULSHI | PANCHLAISH

HOT-LINE 16594

**CONCORD**



## Trade fair begins on playground again in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sylhet International Trade Fair (SITF) began on the city's Sheikh Russel Mini Stadium in Shahi Eidgah area yesterday. Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen inaugurated the month-long event organised by Sylhet Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SMCCI).

Occupying a playground to organise the trade fair has been criticised by the city dwellers; but neither the organisers nor the administration has taken the matter seriously.

Amid criticism, SMCCI got permission for the field from National Sports Council on December 31 last year and the Ministry of Commerce permitted to hold the fair on February 2 this year.

Sylhet Sadar upazila playground was upgraded to Sheikh Russel Mini Stadium in 2018 and was inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on October 21, 2018.

Since the day of inauguration, not a single notable sporting event was organised at the stadium; but two SITFs

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Khatiza Begum Runa (left), a government official and motorbike commuter, routinely helps other girls and women train to ride two-wheelers. The photo was taken yesterday morning at CRB area.

## Women taking the wheel in port city

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Breaking away from conservative societal norms, more and more women are taking control of their vehicles on the roads in Chattogram, both in the city and across the district.

While women on scooters or behind the steering wheel can be seen sometimes in the capital, the scenario in the port city was quite different even a few years ago. However, that is now changing gradually, despite some inconvenience faced in obtaining licenses.

According to sources at the Chattogram office of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), a total of 1,262 driving licenses have been issued to women in the last 10 years, with some 500 of them in the last three years.

In different upazilas under the district, workers of different non-government organisations are also using motorbikes and scooters more, said local sources.

"Among the total number of licenses given, 428 were issued for users in the district while 834 were issued under the metropolitan circle," said Shafiqul Islam, administrative officer of Chattogram BRTA.

The officer said, "The number of women applicants for licenses has been increasing, as students and job-holders are using bikes or scooters to save time and avoid the hassle of public transport."

However, BRTA is yet to introduce a separate cell for women for their applications and exams to get license.

Khatiza Begum Runa, assistant revenue officer of Chattogram Customs, has been riding her motorbike to work for a while now. She also helps women learn motorbike driving, providing informal training in the city's CRB area.

\*Female license seekers have to take part in license exams standing in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## 'MUJIB BORSHO CELEBRATION' Three arrested for extortion in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested three individuals on charges of extortion in the name of "Mujib Borsho celebration" in Chattogram city's Kotwali area.

The arrestees are -- Riaz Ahmed alias Razu (40), Shahjahan (45), and Batul Barua alias Dano (38).

Shah Md Abdur Rauf, additional deputy commissioner (south division) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, said they arrested the trio based on complaints from a businessman.

The arrestees demanded Tk 20,000 for "Mujib Borsho celebration", the businessman said.

"They are drug addicts. They set up this name-only club to extort money whenever any celebration approaches, to buy drugs," the ADC said, adding that the group has been active for over a year.

The police official said the arrestees extorted around Tk 35,000 -- in name of such celebration -- from businesspersons in Agrabad and Nandankanan areas.

According to police, the trio along with two others went to a shop named Three Home Sketch last Monday and demanded Tk 20,000. As the shop owner was outside, its employee Modhusodon Das refused to pay them.

The five then verbally abused and threatened him and left the shop saying they would come back for the money on Friday.

They went to the shop again yesterday, and demanded Tk 20,000.

This time, the shop employees informed law enforcers, who rushed there and arrested the three.

Two other members of the group managed to flee, police said.

## AL rebels resolute to contest CCC polls

Despite party restriction, aspirants eye councillor posts; last day to withdraw candidacy today

ARUN BIKASH DEV, Ctg

Many Awami League rebel candidates for the Chattogram City Corporation councillor race are determined to contest the polls, despite the party's strict order of not to do so.

Of the 41 general wards, 14 incumbent councillors have failed to get party nomination for the election, scheduled to be held on March 29. Of them, 13 have submitted their nomination papers to the returning officer.

Today is the last date for withdrawing candidacy.

Meanwhile, AL leaders are trying to convince them and warned of disciplinary action if they do not withdraw candidacy.

To this end, the party leaders recently had a meeting with them at Theatre Institute Chattogram. Sources said the nomination-deprived candidates argued that they were popular in their areas and were denied nomination due to "conspiracy".

Many argued that as the councillor race will not be held with party symbol (boat), the race should remain open to all and they should be given a chance to prove their popularity.

Engr Mosharraf Hossain, AL presidium member and coordinator for CCC polls, at the meeting warned them against it. He said the nomination was declared by the AL local government nomination board led by the prime minister.

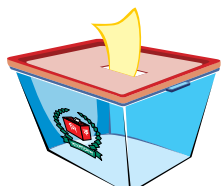
Those who were nominated by the party would contest the polls, he said.

According to AL insiders, none of the rebel candidates assured the leaders of withdrawing candidacy.

Meantime, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader is supposed to come to the port city today and sit with AL leaders and activists. A decision in this regard may come from the meeting, said party sources.

Contacted, Tareq Solaiman Selim, incumbent

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



CTG CITY  
POLLS 2020

HISTORIC MARCH 7

## One speech in thousands of voices

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Around 19,200 students from 128 schools in Khulna city participated in a programme at Khulna Zila Stadium yesterday, to celebrate Bangabandhu's March 7 historic speech.

Khulna District Administration organised the programme under the auspices of Child Integrity and Shishu Bangabandhu Forum, which began with hoisting the National Flag and placing floral wreaths at Father of the Nation's portrait.

Wearing "Mujib coats", the students stood in 100 rows

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

BlueRidge

4 Bedroom Apartments  
at Banani

ASSET  
DEVELOPMENTS

Asset Developments & Holdings Ltd  
91 Gulshan Avenue, Dhaka 1212

Please Feel Free To Call  
01714 039846, 01714 016717, 01713 367486  
Tel: (+8802) 55068001-5

## Two children among 12 killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

The deathtrap of road accidents created many a new tragedy over the last two days, as 12 people were killed and at least 21 were injured in separate incidents across the country, report our correspondents and news agencies.

In Panchagarh, separate road crashes killed a boy and a schoolgirl in Tentulia and Panchagarh sadar upazila on Friday evening, reports our Thakurgaon correspondent.

In Tentulia, five-year-old Rajiul Islam was killed after being hit by a battery-run easy bike. The accident occurred as Rajiul was playing with an abandoned bicycle tire in front of his house on Bhajanpur-Bhutipukur road at Prodhagach village in the afternoon, said police and locals.

After the easy bike hit him, Rajiul was left in a critical condition. He was rushed to Panchagarh Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Four 'JMB' men held in N'ganj

BSS, Dhaka

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-11) claimed to have arrested four members of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in Narayanganj early yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Sarkar alias Mashrur Anwar, Mohammad Kausar Alam alias Farhad Nur, Asif Imtiaz Mohammad Ribat and Hafez Md Rakibul Islam, said Rab officials.

They were arrested from signboard area under Sadar upazila of the district, they added.

"Some JMB members gathered in the area early in the morning to plan and launch subversive activities," Lt Col Imran Ullah Sarker of Rab-11 told a press conference at Rab headquarters in Siddhirganj.

On information, a Rab team raided the area and arrested them with huge number of books and leaflets on jihad, added the official.

Filing of a case with Siddhirganj Police Station was underway as of filing of this report yesterday evening.

## 50 held over drug offences

BSS, Dhaka

Police have detained 50 people in the capital over various drug offences.

Teams from different police stations and DB conducted the drives from Friday 6am to yesterday 6am, said a DMP release.

Police also recovered 2,444 yaba tablets, 187 grammes of heroin, 417 grammes of cannabis, two bottles of local wine, 155 bottles of Phensedyl and 49 sedative injections. At least 41 cases were filed.

**South Asian Regional Standards Organization (SARSO)**  
(A Specialized Body of SAARC)  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

SARSO/GSS Recruitment/03/2020/2150 05-03-2020

### Vacancy Announcement

Category: General Service Staff (GSS)

Applications are invited from the citizens of Bangladesh for filling up the following vacant posts:

| Designation & No. of post along with level | Salary and allowances  | Qualifications, experience and age   |
|--|--|--|
| Senior Finance Officer 1 (one) post GSS-I  | Pay Scale: US\$ 241-6x5-271(EB)<br>9x5-316(EB)<br>House Rent Allowance: 50% of basic pay<br>Conveyance Allowance: US\$ 50.00<br>Medical Allowance: US\$ 50.00<br>Children Education Assistance: As per rule<br>Festival Allowance: One month basic pay per annum<br>Others: As per SAARC Harmonized Rules. | M. Com/MBA with at least 2 (two) years relevant experience in line with the job requirements. Competent to handle financial matters independently using computer software, such as budgetary control, fund release, maintaining accounts and finance in Tally software, desk monitoring and audit. Experience in financial management of foreign/donor agency and large government enterprise will be of added advantage. Computer literacy is a must. Should be capable of preparing Annual Budget, claim of contributions from the Member States, preparing the relevant document for presenting in the Governing Board. Capable of providing the relevant financial matters/documents to the Regional Audit Team and reply to the queries, should have good knowledge in foreign currency dealing. Age: Maximum 35 years as of 31st March 2020. |
| MIS Officer 1 (one) post GSS-I             | Pay Scale: US\$ 241-6x5-271(EB)<br>9x5-316(EB)<br>House Rent Allowance: 50% of basic pay<br>Conveyance Allowance: US\$ 50.00<br>Medical Allowance: US\$ 50.00<br>Children Education Assistance: As per rule<br>Festival Allowance: One month basic pay per annum<br>Others: As per SAARC Harmonized Rules. | MS/M.Sc in Computer Science/Computer Engineering/Electrical and Electronics with at least 2 (two) years' experience in system design, programming, installation, operation, maintenance of data base system, LAN, WAN and website management in programs. Knowledge in Apache Server, PHP, ASP, NET, MySQL, CSS/HTML etc. will be of added advantage. Preparation of computer aided presentation materials, report writing and communication with audience in discussion forum, meetings and training classes are the key prerequisites. Age: Maximum 35 years as of 31st March 2020.  |
| Office Assistant 1 (one) post GSS-II       | Pay Scale: US\$ 185-6x5-215(EB)<br>7x5-250(EB)<br>House Rent Allowance: 50% of basic pay<br>Conveyance Allowance: US\$ 40.00<br>Medical Allowance: US\$ 40.00<br>Children Education Assistance: As per rule<br>Festival Allowance: One month basic pay per annum<br>Others: As per SAARC Harmonized Rules. | Graduate with minimum 3 (three) years relevant work experience and good speed in typing. Should have skill and ability to prepare official correspondences/documents independently. Must be conversant with and having practical experience in MS Office (Word, Power Point, Access and Excel). Age: Maximum 40 years as of 31st March 2020.   |

For more details, please visit [www.sarso.org.bd](http://www.sarso.org.bd) or [www.sarso.org](http://www.sarso.org)

E. Devendar  
Director General

GD-450

LUXURY APARTMENTS FOR SALE AT GULSHAN

Almost Ready  
3900 SFT

FOR ENQUIRIES  
01713 228 817 | 01713 228 818  
[www.mirrealestate.com](http://www.mirrealestate.com)

MIR real estate Ltd.  
Mir Real Estate Ltd.

দেশ সেরা ই-কমার্স  
ইভ্যালির পক্ষ থেকে

**নারী**  
দিবসের  
শুভেচ্ছা

#IWD2020 #EachforEqual

evaly

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY MARCH 8, 2020, FALGUN 24, 1426 BS

## Road crash casualties rising by the day

23 lives lost in a single day!

**W**E are shocked to learn that at least 23 people were killed and nine others injured in separate road crashes across the country on March 6. Ten people were killed when a microbus crashed into a roadside tree in Habiganj (all of them were going to attend an engagement ceremony in Sunamganj), while in another accident, six people were burnt to death when a gas cylinder of a microbus caught fire after it collided with a bus on Dhaka-Sylhet highway. On the same day, a student of Dhaka University was killed when a bus hit his motorcycle in the capital's Banani area. What worries us most is the fact that such horrible accidents, despite taking place on our roads regularly, seem to have no effect on the road transport authorities as well as the transport owners and workers. It is only the victims' families who suffer in silence as their fight to get justice for their loved ones never ends.

According to a report by the Road Safety Foundation, at least 445 people were killed and 834 others injured in 340 road accidents across the country in January alone this year. The alarming increase in road accidents indicates that all the initiatives taken by the government—the formulation of the Road Transport Act 2018, observance of Police Week to make the commuters and pedestrians aware of traffic rules, the PM's directives given in 2018, including limiting the drive-time of the drivers on long-route vehicles, etc.—have failed to bring order on our roads.

The reasons behind the rise in road accidents have already been identified by the transport experts as well as the organisations working on road safety, which include unfit vehicles, reckless driving, drivers' incompetence and their physical or mental unsuitability, unregulated working hours for drivers, poor traffic management, the inefficiency of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and the lack of knowledge about traffic rules among the general people or the tendency to disregard them.

Since cases of road accidents and the deaths resulting from them are rising by the day, the government must wake up to the reality and make all-out efforts to properly implement the Road Transport Act 2018. Besides, initiatives should also be taken to increase the number of skilled drivers, construct road dividers on all highways, fix salaries and working hours of drivers and ban low-speed vehicles on highways, as the Road Safety Foundation has also recommended.

## CCC's half-hearted attempt at cleaning streets

Proper waste management is vital to city life

**A** recent report by this daily has drawn our attention to a pathetic display of dereliction and inefficiency by the Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) officials responsible for keeping the streets clean. According to the report, heaps of waste lifted from drains in the Ujir Ali Shah By-lane of KB Aman Ali Road in the Rahattar Pool area have been left by the roadside for several days now. The unbearable stench resulting from the unattended waste has left the pedestrians and residents of the area to suffer immensely. This is but an example of apathy by the city corporation authorities.

With the monsoon approaching, the rainwater causes portions of the garbage to fall back into the drain and then whatever remains of it forms a muddy sludge spreading across the street, making it nearly impossible for the commuters to move about. While the workers did a fine job of cleaning the drains preventing them from clogging up with rubbish, their negligence to properly dispose of the lifted waste is a common practice—not just in Chattogram—which is simply uncalled for, as it poses grave threats to public health as well as the environment.

A CCC officer's justification—that the waste has been left by the roadside so that it can dry up or else it would make the roads muddy if it is carried away—seems to be ludicrously impractical. The CCC simply cannot shrug off their responsibility like this given that they have already earned a reputation for leaving garbage on the streets for days and sometimes even weeks. Such flagrant disregard for the environment and public health by the city authorities is unacceptable. The CCC must solve this problem urgently as it is clearly causing public sufferings and address the lack of coordination and supervision between different segments of the corporation that is reportedly causing the delay.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Prices of electricity and water must not be increased

As per recent reports, the price of electricity will rise by 5.3 percent, where each unit of electricity will cost Tk 7.13, effective from March 1. Additionally, WASA has proposed increasing its tariff by 80 percent for residential and commercial use, charging Tk 20 for each unit (1000 litres) instead of the current price of Tk 11.57.

The prices of essentials in Bangladesh are already costly. At the beginning of July 2019, the government had hiked the price of gas for all users by 32.8 percent. Now that the government has decided to raise the price of electricity, it will further burden our lives. The government should reconsider increasing the prices of such essential utilities. I think instead of taking such decisions, it should instead pay heed to the alarming number of deaths caused by road crashes, fire outbreaks and other calamities that take lives.

Nur Jahan, Chattogram

# Should women alone bear the burden of unpaid work?

While recognising women's unpaid work is absolutely necessary, reducing the burden on them by redistributing the bulk of unpaid work is a prerequisite for more women to enter the workforce.



NAZNIN TITHI

**F**OR Nasima Begum, a 40-year-old who works as a domestic help in the capital's Mirpur area, balancing between her paid and unpaid works has become a daily battle ever since she came to Dhaka in search of a livelihood. Hailing from a village in Barishal, she finds it extremely difficult to run her six-member family with the meagre amount she earns from working in three different households. While poverty has forced her to marry her two daughters off at an early age, she still has to feed the remaining two daughters and two sons who stay with her. Her husband, a tile fitter who often remains unemployed, hardly takes care of their 3-year-old son, let alone doing any household chores.

As I listened to her story when she came to work at our house, I was shocked to learn how little she earns after toiling from morning till night. According to her, after waking up at the break of dawn, she does the cleaning, washing and cooking for her own family. Then she has to cook for her elder brother's family (since his wife lives away in the village). And from midday till night, she works as a *chhuta bua* (part-time domestic help) in different households.

Even though she doesn't like to work as a domestic help and wishes to work in a garment factory instead, her responsibility at home has always been a barrier to her doing so. What is even more frustrating is that, after getting a job at a childcare centre in a garment factory for a monthly salary of Tk 12,000 recently, she couldn't join there. The authorities there did not allow her to keep her 3-year-old son at the childcare centre citing "many" problems. And since it was an eight-to-eight job, it was not possible for her to take it leaving her son at home for such a long time. The result is, she is now stuck with her old job as a domestic help, struggling to make both ends meet.

Nasima's story represents the struggle of thousands of women who come to the capital in search of a livelihood but fail to get a job being stuck between daily household chores and caring for their children, eventually being forced to work as domestic helps for minimum pay.

The vast majority of women in our villages have also never earned a single penny in their entire life, despite the fact that they are doing all the work at home and also taking part in the farming

activities.

An ActionAid Bangladesh study titled "Time Use of Adult Women and Men in Rural North: Pattern and Trend", done in Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat in 2015, has found that women spend five times more time on unpaid household chores than men, which remains unrecognised both at family and national levels. Women devote an average of 6.45 hours to care work at home compared to men's average of 1.2 hours a day. As the study found, most of women's unpaid work involves cooking. And unbelievable as it may sound, a 72-year-old woman would spend 12 years of her life just on cooking.

anything. In addition, to balance between their jobs and care work, women often go for low-paid and part-time jobs.

According to an IMF working paper titled "Reducing and Redistributing Unpaid Work: Stronger Policies to Support Gender Equality," for women who do paid work, "occupational downgrading" is common as women choose jobs at a lower skill level or engage in part-time work to balance paid and care work. Also, "women's higher prevalence in part-time work arrangements is one of the key drivers of observed gender wage gaps, creating a feedback loop for gender inequality in

families which puts the entire burden of household work on women, lack of safety in public places and public transports, as well as men's lack of willingness to share the household chores with women because these works are not compensated by wage.

As women, both urban and rural, get stuck at their homes doing everyday household chores and caring for their children, they lose their dignity and self-respect in the process. Because their unpaid work—which contributes significantly to the economy (A study by South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (Sanem) finds that if monetised, the value of women's unpaid work would be 40 percent of the GDP)—is neither valued by their family members nor by the society at large.

So it's imperative that the government formally recognises the value of women's unpaid work and their family members, particularly men, are sensitised about the issue. However, only recognition is not enough to improve women's status in family and society; the burden of unpaid work on women needs to be reduced by redistributing the work and changing the social and cultural attitude towards women's role in society.

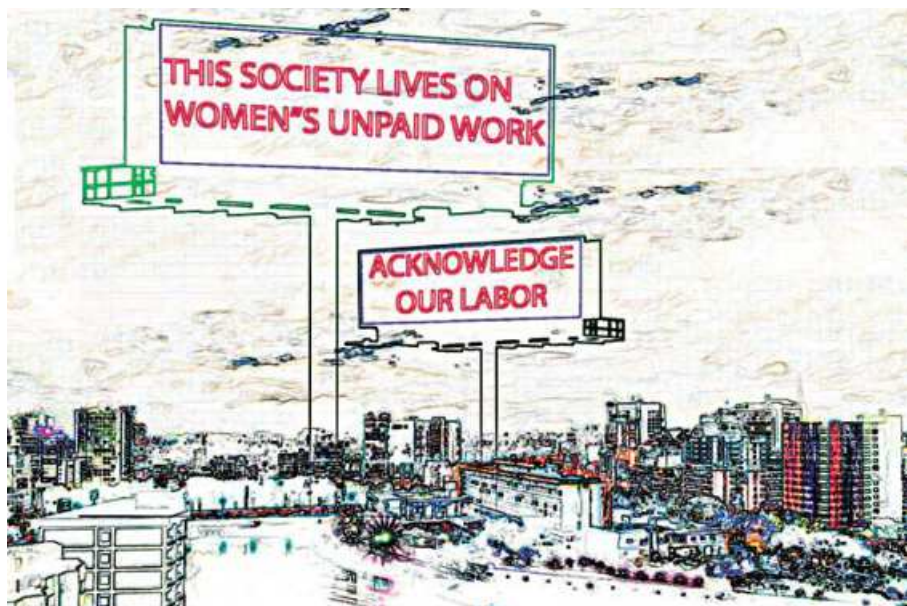
We need stronger policies to address the specific challenges faced by women to help them enter the job market.

The IMF study has come up with some policy decisions that can be considered by our government to reduce women's unaccounted work and increase their participation in the workforce.

Since social perception has a great influence on women's employment decisions, the government needs to work in that area with assistance from the private sector. The IMF study has also found that only women with higher education can substitute unpaid work with paid work to some extent, meaning that investing in girls' education is crucial. Moreover, investing in care services and reducing care burdens can potentially increase women's labour force participation, particularly in the urban areas. Also, family-friendly policies with flexible work arrangements and adequate social security services can help women join and stay in the labour force.

"Recognise, reduce and redistribute"—this can be our motto as we go about addressing women's unpaid work and increasing their participation in the workforce.

Naznin Tithi is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.



Collage-illustration by Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo

The situation of the urban middle-class women is not any better when it comes to doing unpaid work. I personally know a number of women who, despite having obtained the highest academic degrees from reputed public universities, could not enter the job market, or in cases where they did join a job, couldn't continue with it only because there was no one in the family to take care of their children. And when it came to leaving the job for the sake of their children, it's always the women who had to make the compromise even if both partners' monthly income was more or less similar.

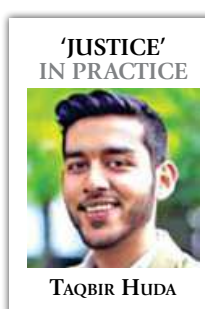
Strangely enough, women who overcome all these barriers to continue with their jobs still have to do the bulk of everyday chores. In cases where men share some of the work with their partners, when it comes to taking care of the children and the elderly, they hardly do

unpaid work."

Research also shows that the percentage of urban women joining the workforce is less than that of rural women, and although more women are now joining the workforce, most of the jobs that they do are informal and low-paid. At a recent discussion held at *The Daily Star*, Fahmida Khatun, an economist and Executive Director at Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), observed, "In 1974, women's participation in the labour force was only around 4 percent. But it has now increased to around 35 percent, according to the 2016-17 Labour Force Survey. However, these women are mostly engaged in low-paid jobs and 89 percent of them are in the informal sector."

As researchers have pointed out, the reasons why it is being more difficult for urban women to join the workforce are: not having day-care centres at the workplace, an increase in nuclear

## We have laws but why don't they work?



TAQBIR HUDA

**T**HIS year's International Women's Day, as the ones before it, comes with a reminder that the culture of impunity for violence against women (VAW) continues to be a concern, despite there being a myriad of laws that are meant to counter VAW in our country.

Originally, the Penal Code 1860, which was passed by the British colonial rulers and subsequently retained by Bangladesh upon independence, dealt with the majority of crimes including most forms of violence against women (except, for instance, child marriage). Two decades after our independence, lawmakers actively started passing special laws to counter violence against women (all of which still remain in force, save the first three): the Dowry Prohibition Act in 1980 (now repealed), the Cruelty to Women (Deterrent and Punishment) Ordinance in 1983, the Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman (Bishesh Bidhan) Ain in 1995, Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain in 2000, Acid Violence Act in 2002, Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act in 2010, Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act in 2012, Pornography Control Act 2012, Child Marriage Restraint Act in 2017, and Dowry Prohibition Act in 2018.

This trajectory of laws will give the impression that countering violence against women has always been a priority for successive governments. So the question that naturally arises is: if we have so many laws that seek to eradicate violence against women in all its forms, then why are incidents still so high?

One of the major obstacles in measuring the effectiveness of legal intervention vis-à-vis violence against women is the fact that there are no national official statistics on crimes that constitute such violence in Bangladesh

(for example, rape, domestic violence, etc.). Even if such statistics are there, those have not been made publicly accessible. While some statistics have been disclosed in government reports or ad hoc press statements by government officials (e.g. the total number of rape cases filed between 2014 and 2017), the data is typically a lump sum and not disaggregated. Similarly, while the official Bangladesh Police website does provide crime statistics which is disaggregated by year, it lumps, rather unhelpfully, all violence against women cases under an umbrella category termed "woman and child repression" cases (presumably denoting the total number of cases filed under the Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain 2000). This figure could easily be (and should be) disaggregated by the specific type of crime and the district in which it was committed. Additionally, although the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, in furtherance of the multi-million dollar Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women (MSPVAW), was meant to develop a National Database on Violence Against Women, it is now in its twentieth (and penultimate) year of operation, and the database is still said to be "under construction" on the official MSPVAW website.

Therefore, we have to rely on unofficial statistics, such as that of rights bodies like Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) which primarily records rape statistics on the basis of scanning nine daily newspapers in the country. ASK statistics for rape in 2019 (1413) is nearly double that of 2018 (732). We do not know if this is because the number of rape incidents actually doubled across the country, or whether the nine newspapers that ASK scans just so happened to report rape incidents with more frequency (because, for instance, sexual violence was more topical in 2019 than 2018 due to the much-discussed case of Nusrat Jahan Rafi). Therefore, it is imperative that the government should provide us with official rape statistics by launching the much-anticipated VAW

database and disaggregating the police cases as aforementioned.

Despite the data gap, there are obvious hurdles in our legal system that prevent VAW victims from seeking justice. First and foremost, our institutions, which serve as the entry point for victims who wish to seek justice, lack gender sensitivity. For most VAW victims, going to a mostly male (if not all-male) police station to report and narrate the details of the crime, especially if it is of a sexual nature, is a daunting experience. This is typically followed by intrusive and intimate medical exams in crowded

*While the official Bangladesh Police website does provide crime statistics which is disaggregated by year, it lumps, rather unhelpfully, all violence against women cases under an umbrella category.*

rooms, which often take place without the victim's express and informed consent. Second, due to the social stigma attached, victims of VAW wish to have a quick and discrete remedy. Filing court cases does the exact opposite: it goes on for years, if not decades, due to seemingly endless adjournments and deferred hearings due to non-appearance of witnesses and it has a tendency to generate publicity. Third, even if a VAW victim is willing to battle years of litigation, they may face threats to their safety from the perpetrator's side (who are typically more powerful) and constantly live under fear of reprisal and revenge due to the lack of a victim

protection system. Fourth, if the trial does proceed smoothly, the unabashed moral policing of victims by the defence in an open court may make the victims feel as though they have been put on trial, and not the accused perpetrator.

It is clear, therefore, that the process of seeking justice is re-traumatising for a VAW victim throughout. The first problem can only be solved through thorough and comprehensive gender sensitivity training of police officers and relevant medical professionals and ensuring the presence of round-the-clock female police officers and social workers. An online complaints mechanism could also be developed whereby victims can submit their first information report (FIR) in writing. The solution to the second problem already exists to a large extent in the Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain 2000, as it mandated that all VAW trials be concluded within 180 days, while it also introduced closed-door examination of rape victims by the court. Neither of these are met in practice. Furthermore, camera trials could be introduced for VAW cases. The third problem can be mitigated if the Witness and Victim Protection Law, which was drafted by the Law Commission 14 years ago, is finally passed and a witness protection scheme is activated at the upazila level. The fourth problem can be solved by prohibiting the admissibility of character evidence in VAW cases by amending the Evidence Act 1872 accordingly. Finally, the data gap must be overcome if we wish to be able to meaningfully measure successes in countering VAW.

However, if patriarchal social norms continue to remain in place, no amount of legal intervention can ever truly address violence against women. However, the solutions proposed to the four key problems presented above will go a long way in at least piercing the longstanding culture of impunity.

Taqbir Huda is a Research Specialist at Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), where he leads the Rape Law Reform Now campaign. Email: taqbirhuda@gmail.com

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

# The many milestones of the women's movement



SHEEJA HAFIZA

FOR the women's movement in Bangladesh, looking ahead can sometimes be a depressing task—the challenges and obstacles that we face are numerous, to say the least. However, when I look back at the last few decades, there also have been a number of milestones that we should be proud of, although there is always space to do better. This Women's Day, we should try and focus on a few of these positives.

Before the women's movement took off in Bangladesh, sexual harassment was not even recognised to be an issue, let alone the idea of a woman living her life in a dignified environment. Now, there has been a significant change in mindsets—the general population understands sexual harassment to be a real problem, and more importantly, women are able to come forward and speak out about sexual harassment, to the extent that in 2009, the High Court issued an 11-point directive on sexual harassment after a writ petition filed by the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA). While there is still an appallingly high prevalence of violence against women, the women's movement has also been able to demand some dignity for abused women, and their pictures and names are no longer printed in newspapers or splashed across the headlines.

Another milestone achievement for us is the streamlining of women into the strategies and policies of development organisations. Gender issues now go hand-in-hand with development, and there is a gender perspective on every project. The development sector, specifically women's organisations, along with the government, have been able to create a society where there is female entrepreneurship from the grassroots level up to the top. If you just look at the number of bank accounts that have been opened by women over the last few decades, the developments in women's economic emancipation become obvious.

However, the most positive change that has come about is in the mindsets of people, and

the society at large. Women are now able to speak out about violence and women's issues. Starting from the 70s, the voices of our activists have paved the way to laws, policies and action plans that put women at the centre, although implementation is still a struggle. This change is also reflected in the media. Once journalists would report on rural poverty, and all they would see were goats, houses, ponds—never the women! Now, the media is covering women's issues, and handling these stories sincerely and sensitively. The global #MeToo movement has even started a conversation around sexual harassment in the workplace in Bangladesh, and emboldened many women to

speak out openly. This is a huge step forward because in the past, on the rare occasion when sexual harassment was addressed in the workplace, we used to keep the identities of perpetrators confidential and they could then move on and get a job elsewhere. If women have the confidence to name and shame, this will change.

There are other demands of the women's movement that once received a great deal of traction but have, unfortunately, not come to fruition yet. One of the most significant demands is the uniform family code that provides women, irrespective of religion, class, caste and ethnicity, with equal legal

and social status and opportunities. The Bangladesh Mohila Parishad is still working on this issue and creating pressure for the removal of discrimination in the law in terms of gender, ethnicity and religion. This does not mean that no progress has been made. Only last year, the High Court ruled that the word "kumari" (virgin) cannot be used for the bride in the Muslim marriage deed, and it should be replaced with "unmarried". However, while Muslim marriage laws have been adapted to give women certain legal rights, the same has not been applied to women of other religions. The media needs to play a role here in putting focus on these disparities—it would be a positive step forward in building bridges between the different communities as well. The media has also focused on the economic emancipation of women, but it should be explored in more detail to express the contributions of ordinary women towards progress in Bangladesh—not just towards the economy, but also towards changing social and cultural institutions and creating spaces for women that did not exist before. We like to focus on the positives and achievements, as we should, but we also need to focus on their daily struggles against entrenched discrimination.

Going forward, one of the most important obstacles that we immediately need to deal with is in our law and justice system. We must review discriminatory laws with gender-sensitive eyes, especially with regard to inheritance and sexual violence. Another major field that needs to be focused on involves reproductive and sexual rights. It has been proven that sex education leads to less risky sexual behaviour. During my work, I have found that ordinary people are open to these discussions—even clerics and madrasa students—because these conversations are central to their lives, and are an important tool in reducing violence against women. Finally, we need to work on pension allowances for women aged 65 and above, to respect the sacrifices women make all their lives, especially in terms of unpaid care work despite daily obstructions, shaming, etc. The state tries in different ways to give dignity to women. This can be one of its areas of focus—an important one which can save them from being totally dependent in their old age.

In order to make the women's movement more sustainable in the future, we must acknowledge that there have been changes in how we protest over the last few decades. In the 90s, you didn't have to be a big organisation—anyone could stand up and protest. Now, the focus is more on the big names and VIPs, and less on the movements themselves. Every time there is a protest, there is a subtle competition on who turns up with the biggest banners and posters. This has created a class consciousness in the women's movement that wasn't there before, since those who have the most money will have the biggest banners. Our dependency on donor funding has definitely led to this state of events—donors want to see their branding on whatever they fund and need constant updates and reports, often with the pressure of a positive spin. This creates projects, not protests. On top of that, law enforcement authorities can also make it difficult for people to stand together, even if it is something as simple as a women's march. While all of us within the movement definitely need to look within and stop seeking the spotlight, the government also needs to understand that our protests are not anti-state, we are only against injustice.

When I was in Nepal in 2004, I was pleasantly surprised to see a huge women's march organised by the Nepali government, with the participation of key women's organisations. In 2008, the Bangladesh government also announced that it would celebrate March 8. I personally was happy to see this initiative, and I wanted to support the government to make the movement reach the grassroots. But within the women's movement, this created a divide that we are still struggling with. I understand the danger of having our movement co-opted by the state, but I believe that change must also come from within the system. It is now up to civil society, as the more forward-thinking and independent group, to support the state, monitor its activities and constructively critique the steps that are being taken. Change is possible if there is political will from the state, and civil society can lead the way by providing the utmost support.

Sheeja Hafiza is Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra. The article is the result of an interview taken by Shuprova Tasneem.



COLLAGE-ILLUSTRATION BY KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

## Our journey towards 'Balance for Better'



KEDAR LELE

THIS year, we are celebrating 25 years of the United Nations' Beijing Declaration on women's rights and empowerment. Adopted with a determination to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all

women, it has guided nations of the world to make progress in enhancing women's participation in all spheres of the society. However, this is not good enough.

According to the World Economic Forum's latest Global Gender Gap Report, benchmarking 153 countries on their progress toward equality of the sexes based on four categories—economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, as well as political empowerment—it will take another 99.5 years to achieve global gender equality. And despite all the social reasons for this lack of progress, there is a strong financial reason for doing it. Closing the gender gap would add USD 28 trillion to the value of the global economy by 2025—a 26 percent increase. As governments and societies do their bit, it is equally important for private sector and larger business community to commit themselves to the diversity and inclusion agenda. A Boston Consulting Group (BCG) study found that companies with more diverse management teams have 19 percent higher revenues due to innovation. This is significant for tech companies, start-ups and industries where innovation is the key to growth. It shows that diversity is not just a metric to be delivered, but more importantly, it is an integral part of a revenue-generating business.

A survey conducted by Pew Research Centre found several areas including politics and business where women were stronger than their male counterparts. For example, women are more capable than men in working out compromises, they are likely to be more ethical and honest while also better at mentoring and nurturing talent. Employing women to drive better balanced organisation is a sound business strategy, not just a moral obligation. McKinsey's most recent Delivering Through Diversity report found that corporations that embrace gender diversity in their executive teams were more competitive and 21 percent more likely to experience above-average profitability. They also had a 27 percent likelihood of outperforming their peers on longer-term value creation. It is clear that different perspectives on assessing customer needs, product improvements and company wellbeing fuel a better business. Simply put, societies and organisations are more likely to grow and prosper when women gain greater financial independence. Period.

Closer home, at Unilever, for the last 90 years, we have been committed to making

sustainable living commonplace with our products and brands in service of our consumers across the world. However, the imbalance between our male and female workers was significant to a point where it worried us greatly. In 2010, Unilever made a commitment to empower over five million women across our own operations, in our extended supply chain and in the communities where we operate. We believe there is no stronger weapon of progress than the empowerment of women. As we step into 2020s, we unveil the fabulous news of achieving gender balance (50 percent women) across our management at a global level; and a non-executive board with 45 percent of positions occupied by women. Unilever's gender balance milestone follows a long-standing commitment to drive gender equality in the workplace. A dedicated Diversity & Inclusion team has implemented several initiatives, including a Global Diversity Board and a network of nearly 100 "Diversity & Inclusion Champions", who have set the benchmark for how a community can power an inclusive culture across markets. Tools are also being used to drive gender equity in recruitment, including gender-balanced interview slate requirements, robust Diversity & Inclusion goals, and the Gender Appointment Ratio—a measurement which tracks senior leaders' records in appointing women. Unilever is also driving the Unstereotype Alliance convened by UN Women, which aims to eliminate harmful stereotypes in the workplace and across the advertising industry.

In Bangladesh, while we are still short of being a gender-balanced organisation, we have made some great progress supported by sustained focus and organisational commitment towards the cause. Women participation among Unilever Bangladesh's managers went up from less than 10 percent to 37.3 percent over the last three years.

*It is easier to get diversity in the workplace but more difficult to drive a sense of inclusion in thought, behaviour and action. We have decades of research proving how diversity and inclusion boost financial performance, innovation, market share, team collaboration, and more. However, facts and data don't change people's minds and opinions.*

Just celebrating our success to achieve gender balance would be unfair if I do not highlight the favourable conditions that Bangladesh has created for women's empowerment and progress. As per the WEF's report, Bangladesh (overall score of 72.6 percent) with 50th rank is the only one of the seven South Asian countries studied to feature in the top 100 of the Global Gender Gap Index. Ahead of Nepal (101st) and Sri Lanka (102nd), and some 60 places ahead of India (112th).

It is quite remarkable how we as a country progressed in terms of breaking social barriers and stereotypical culture. Bangladesh

and is covered by government initiatives, it is increasing participation of women in the labour force that makes it easier for companies like us to drive positive action. As of 2018, 38 percent of adult women were part of the labour force (up from 34 percent in 2017), compared with 84 percent of men. I would like to mention a surprising statistic here: participation of working rural women is higher (37.6 percent) than urban women (30.8 percent), contrary to our common perception. It is a well-known fact that a large percentage of women are indeed part of the labour force, as informal farm labour or in



ILLUSTRATION: NOOR US SAFA ANIK

has been seeing the light of glory since its formation, but the parameter of social development has reached a new peak over the last decade. As more advancements take place, more opportunities bloom for women in this country.

While the government has made some extraordinary plans to support continued upliftment, it would need equal support from the society, families and private sector to achieve the vision of equality. The recent 7th Five Year Plan aims to increase the female ratio in tertiary education from 70 percent to 100 percent. At primary level, the enrolment rate rose from 57 percent (2008) to 95.4 percent (2017), and at secondary level, from 39 percent to 67 percent (2017). These figures show how Bangladesh is taking long strides with respect to providing education for women, aided by Female Secondary School Assistance providing tuition waivers and stipends.

While the education is fundamental

household chores, without their contribution being recognised through an economic measure.

One must acknowledge the microcredit revolution in Bangladesh for having played a significant role in helping women of this country take up small entrepreneurial projects in order to sustain livelihoods. Bangladesh also has an allocation for women created by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in judiciary, administration, defence and government jobs supporting gender diversity in formal sectors.

With increasing women participation in the labour force, organisations must become more aware about the issues of inclusion. It is easier to get diversity in the workplace but more difficult to drive a sense of inclusion in thought, behaviour and action. We have decades of research proving how diversity and inclusion boost financial performance, innovation, market share, team collaboration, and more. However, facts and data don't change people's minds and opinions.

Organisations need a comprehensive plan for supporting and advancing women. This requires a paradigm shift in the corporate culture which will include investing in employee training and giving employees greater flexibility to fit work into their lives. In order to create a workplace inclusive for everyone, organisations must deviate from what is considered "norm" to more flexible systems, work arrangements, variety of working conditions accessible to all.

At Unilever Bangladesh, we undertook a slew of systemic measures to build our female leadership pipeline across levels. Starting with a detailed talent landscape and market mapping of women for focused recruitment to create a sustainable pipeline, to creating and grooming visible role models in senior positions across functions, Unilever Bangladesh has been working tirelessly to break traditional stereotypes. Our inclusive and progressive policies like surrogacy and adoption leave, six months' maternity leave for new mothers and four weeks' paternity leave for new fathers, agile working policy, education assistance policy, operating creche facility within our office premise to provide childcare support to all our workers are shining examples of our commitment to walk the talk. Not only do we have a career break policy to support our employees at critical life stages, we also have a career re-entry programme for women who were in career breaks and want to rejoin the corporate world, rightfully called "Stride". We have been hosting a series of Diversity and Inclusion Dialogues both internally and externally to help us and others realise the unconscious biases and open our minds.

That's not all, however. Back in March 2019, our Diversity and Inclusion agenda took a new sharp turn when Unilever Bangladesh brought successful organisations together to collaborate and work towards the employment opportunities for women. This was called "Balance for Better". Taking the pledge forward, later in the year, Unilever Bangladesh initiated an external Council called INSPIRE, where purposeful diversity advocates from 7 large organisations have joined forces to co-create actions and build a more conducive environment for working women in Bangladesh. This council now plans to work closely with regulators and industry bodies to raise the bar for female workforce in the country. After all, coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success!

This Women's Day, as we celebrate a historic milestone of achieving a perfect gender-balanced Unilever globally at managerial level, our resolve for creating an inclusive workplace in Bangladesh gets stronger. We must raise both the ceiling and the floor in education, development, empowerment and progress of our women to live the true spirit of *Amar Sonar Bangla* envisioned for this great nation!

Kedar Lele is CEO and Managing Director of Unilever Bangladesh.

**WHAT'S ON**

**Group Painting Exhibition**  
 Title: Guru-Shishya Shishya-Guru  
 Presented by: The Oriental Painting Studio Bangladesh  
 Venue: Zainul Gallery - 1, DU  
 Date: March 2 - March 8  
 Time: 10 am - 8 pm

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

**Solo Photography Exhibition**  
 Title: Joy Bangabandhu  
 Artist: Nasir Ali Mamun  
 Date: March 6 - March 24 (Closed on March 13 and 14)  
 Time: 3 pm to 9 pm (Mon - Thurs); 9 am to 12 noon and 5 pm to 8 pm (Fri-Sat)

**Cartoon Exhibition**  
 Title: Shojonghati Rekha  
 Venue: Kala Kendra  
 Date: February 21 - March 17  
 Time: 4:30 pm - 8:30 pm

**Art Event**  
 Title: Bangladesh Art Week Women 2020 - Ora Egaro Jon  
 Venue: Dhaka Gallery, Banani.  
 Date: March 7 - 14  
 Time: 12 noon - 8 pm

# "We need to raise awareness of women's rights at grassroots levels"

- Dilara Zaman

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Dilara Zaman began her journey in acting over forty years ago. She has earned the esteemed Ekushey Padak and the National Film Award during her illustrious career. Aside from acting in countless plays, telefilms and films, she is also an educator. However, such accomplishments have not slowed her down, as the artiste continues to be a regular favourite on screen. On International Women's Day, she gets candid with *The Daily Star* about the challenges that women face, the changes in the industry, her upcoming ventures and more.

*The theme for this year's International Women's Day is 'I am Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights'. What, according to you, is the significance of this day and theme?*

It is important to have a day to raise awareness about the struggles of women the world over and honour their achievements. However, we need to go beyond the city life of Bangladesh, when it comes to forging equality for women. We need to raise awareness of women's rights at grassroots levels. Those who work to engage the hearts and minds of the community to help drive women's equality, should reach out to the remote and rural areas, for affecting real change.

*Women from all walks of life face different levels of discrimination and harassment on a regular basis, even today. How do you think we can overcome such hurdles?*

We owe an enormous amount to the women in our lives - be it our mothers, sisters or wives. We need to support them to overcome their struggles. We can combat the harassment, discrimination and negativity if we educate people on first and foremost, respecting and valuing women as human beings, on all accounts.

*As a female artiste, what were some of the biggest challenges that you faced when you*



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

*started out in the industry?*

You see, I come from a very conservative family. When I was a university student, the great novelist Munir Chowdhury sent a letter to my father for his permission to let me act. Many of my relatives said that if I become an actor and work in the media, I will not be able to find a good husband. So, there were different pressures from a familial, and from a societal level at large. Women often take a few steps back or leave the workforce entirely once they get married. Fortunately, in my case, I had a life partner who supported me through thick and thin.

*What are your thoughts on the opportunities for women in the media today?*

I think women and girls are making a mark not just in the media, but in other challenging fields as well. Today, we have capable women working as law enforcers, engineers, social change makers and what not. But these opportunities were not built

in a day - we had to walk a path layered with different struggles to get here.

*Moving on to lighter matters, you will be playing Sayera Khatun in Shyam Benegal's film on Bangabandhu. Can you tell us a little about the role?*

I feel honoured and privileged to be playing the role of Bangabandhu's mother, Sayera Khatun, in a Shyam Benegal film. I never thought that I would get such a great opportunity as an artiste. I will start shooting for the film from March 24, and I am really looking forward to it.

*You have been working for over four decades now. How do you look back on your journey so far?*

I would say it has been an incredible journey, filled with joyous moments. I have always been passionate about everything that I do - be it acting or teaching. I think I would not have been able to come this far, without the passion and dedication.

# 'Egiye Jaowa Nari' releases today

SHARMIN JOYA

Celebrating women and their success in musical fashion this International Women's Day, *Egiye Jaowa Nari*, by Shusmita Anis, has released today. The melodious piece is composed and arranged by Foad Nasser Babu. Prominent singers Shusmita Anis, Elita Karim, Kona and Priyanka Gope have lent their voices in this song, which is penned by Mahmud Khurshid. "In the song, I focused on gender equality, which I have admittedly wanted to do for a long time," says Shusmita, who is also the chairperson for the women empowerment committee.

M Anis Ud Dowla, Chairman of ACI Limited, has translated the lyrics of

*Egiye Jaowa Nari* into English. Shusmita also wants to initiate opportunities for women in terms of education, and initiate many other activities for them through Bangladesh work federation. "The music video of *Egiye Jaowa Nari* showcases women from all sectors, and ages," shares Shusmita. "It highlights the struggles and joyous moment of victory at the same time." The artistes in the song are been selected to reflect the diversity and compassion of women.

Under the banner of New Music Paradigm Company, the track, alongside music video, is made by Twala Media's Kolkata team. The song is available on all digital platforms, including Shusmita Anis's YouTube channel.



**WAHIDUL HAQUE SMARONIK MILONOTSOP HELD**

The two-day long 'Wahidul Haque Smaronik Milonotsob' was arranged by Konthoshilon at Central Public Library recently. To celebrate the legendary Tagore exponent's upcoming birth anniversary, musical, dance and recitation performances were arranged. Monchosharothi Aatur Rahman received Wahidul Haque Smaronik Milonotsob Sommanona this year.

PHOTO: MONON MUNTAKA



PHOTO: COURTESY

# Laughing Out Loud - 10 Years and Counting

Naveed Mahbub, an Engineer turned Comedian set up Naveed's Comedy Club (NCC) - Bangladesh's first ever Stand Up Comedy Club on March 6, 2010 in a small basement in Baridhara. The club instantly became a magnetic pull for Dhakaites who wanted a temporary respite from their mechanical everyday life.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Through ups and downs, shut downs and new beginnings, with more than 50 comedians NCC continues strong in its mission to bring laughter to Bangladesh. Yesterday NCC celebrated its 10th year with a full house at Chef's Table Unimart and prolific humorists like Akhlak Siddiqi, Anika Azam, puppeteer Asghar, Ahmed Ashik,

Amin Hannan, Ahnaf, Ananda Mazumdar, Antu, Atiq Sohail, Eftekar Alam, Farhan Nahid, Foiz Bin Akram, Fazlul Karim, Hasnat Mohi, Hedayetul Turki, Mosharraf Yafi, Naveed Mahbub, Parvez Sumon, RJ Bipro, Sami Doha, Solaiman Shukhon, Tahjib Abdullah Rivoo, Tahsin M Khan and Yamin Khan. NCC holds regular shows at the Chef's Table, Unimart, GULshan 2 on Thursdays at 8 pm.

PHOTO: SHAMS ASIF

# Gems of Nazrul's tribute to Bangabandhu on his birth centenary

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Gems of Nazrul will release their 11th musical production, *Aatta Aniruddho*, on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth centenary (March 17). Established as an initiative to promote the National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam's musical genius to audiences at home and abroad, Gems of Nazrul has been regularly marking important occasions in the Bangladesh calendar with their renditions of the poet's work. Performed by senior and upcoming artistes, the spirited performances of their most recent production will go on air on

Channel i at the stroke of midnight on March 17, and will be available for public viewing on YouTube. It is supported by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, with Mutual Trust Bank as the main sponsor.

"One hundred artistes, including fifty singers and fifty dancers, will be featured in this video, which is our tribute to the Father of the Nation," says Nazrul exponent Sadya Afreen Mallick, Chief, Culture Initiatives, *The Daily Star*, who conceptualised and directed the production. Eminent and emerging Nazrul singers, including Shaheen Samad, Dalia Nausheen, Sadya Afreen Mallick, Fatema Tuz Zohra, Khairul Anam Shakil,

Sumon Chowdhury, Yasmin Mushtari, Joseph Rodriguez, Karim Hassan, Shelu Barua and many others have contributed to *Atta Aniruddho*.

The production includes a prayer song, titled *Jago Amrito Priyoshi* and an inspirational song, titled *JoyHok, Shatter Joy*. Noted composer Mohammed Ibrar Hossain Tipu is the music director of the project, while prominent dancer duo Shamim Ara Nipa and Shibli Muhammad are the choreographers. The production was shot at historic locations, like the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban and Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka.





# Black rice is the latest superfood!

TAWHID ISLAM

Black rice is being called a superfood for being rich in nutrients. It is also called forbidden rice or 'emperor's rice', because in ancient China this rice was secretly cultivated and was consumed only by the emperor to ensure his health and longevity, and the common people were forbidden from growing or consuming it for them, hence earning its name as the forbidden rice. However, it is no longer forbidden and for its health benefits, it has gained attention worldwide. It is now being cultivated in the district of Cumilla and many other parts of Bangladesh.

Black rice owes its dark colour to a range of naturally occurring compounds called 'anthocyanin' (the same agent found in blackberry and acai). Anthocyanins are a class of extraordinary beneficial agents that reduce the ageing of cells, stem inflammation, enhance eyesight, improve many aspects of cardiovascular health and brain function, and help to stabilise blood sugar. It is also a major antioxidant.

This superfood offers hope to those who wish to control



their weight. Among the various anthocyanins in black rice, one known as Cyanidin-3-glucoside (C3G) demonstrates an appetite satisfying property by boosting adiponectin and decreasing blood levels of leptin which makes it a satisfying food. Japanese researchers have found that C3G also causes the body to

burn stored fat.

Black rice has about 3 grams of fibre per half cup of serving. This fibre helps sugar (glucose) from the grain to be absorbed by the body over a longer duration of time (since fibre takes the longest time to digest), thereby maintaining consistent sugar levels and preventing the risk of

diabetes. It also acts as a natural detoxifier.

It contains 8.5 grams of protein in every 100 grams of serving, while brown and red rice contains 8 grams and 7 grams of protein respectively for the same amount of serving. On the other hand, polished white rice contains only 6.8 grams of protein.

Nevertheless, eating black rice may also have a positive impact on your healthy cholesterol levels. The anthocyanins found in black rice reduces the low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol which is also known as the 'bad cholesterol', a common contributor to cardiovascular diseases. It also brings down the total cholesterol levels. Black rice has been proven to actively reduce atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) as well.

Various species of black rice have a delicate and nutty aroma when cooked, and offer a satisfying and complex flavour, making it more than just starch. However, the cooking process of this rice is not similar to the traditional rice; due to its stickiness, black rice requires more time to cook than white rice. Soaking the black rice overnight before cooking can cut down on the cooking time. As a good source of nutrients, Bangladesh should emphasise on the cultivation and production of black rice to eradicate malnutrition from the country.

The writer is a student of Pharmacy at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University. E-mail: tawhidislam2021@yahoo.com

## GUIDELINE



### Nutrition and diet in inflammatory bowel disease

Which foods to eat and which to avoid is an important topic to patients with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). A working group of the IOIBD has examined the best available evidence and provided expert consensus recommendations.

#### Key recommendations:

In patients with ulcerative colitis:

- Reduce consumption of red meat.
- Reduce consumption of myristic acid (palm oil, coconut oil, dairy fats).
- Increase consumption of omega-3 fatty acids but only from marine fish (not from supplements).

In patients with Crohn disease (CD):

- Increase the amount of fruits and vegetables consumed. (However, in symptomatic or significant fibrostricturing CD, restrict insoluble fiber intake.)
- Reduce consumption of saturated fats.

For both conditions:

- Reduce the intake of emulsifiers and thickeners (e.g., carrageenan) and processed foods containing titanium dioxide and sulfites.
- Avoid trans fats.
- Limit intake of foods containing maltodextrin and artificial sweeteners.
- Do not consume unpasteurised dairy products.

It seems the best overall dietary advice for patients with IBD is this: Eat a diet comprising all sources of calories that is freshly prepared without additives or preservatives, and consume it in modest quantities.

## HEALTH bulletin



### Drinking and smoking throughout pregnancy: A lethal combination

Did you know that sudden infant death syndrome is most likely among infants of women who continued to use both tobacco and alcohol beyond the first trimester?

The link between prenatal maternal smoking and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is well established, but an association with maternal alcohol use is less clear. In a prospective longitudinal cohort study, researchers examined potential effects and interactions of exposure to both substances on 12,029 fetuses in Cape Town, South Africa, and two American Indian reservations, locales with high rates of alcohol use and SIDS.

Of pregnancies with known 1-year infant outcomes, 28 (2.4/1000) met criteria for SIDS. Adjusted relative risk for SIDS was 11.8 for pregnancies exposed to both alcohol and tobacco beyond the first trimester compared with no or first trimester-only exposure.

The authors note this is the first study to document the apparent synergistic effects of smoking and drinking on SIDS risk. The encouraging finding is the beneficial effect of stopping these substances before the end of the first trimester — emphasising the importance of offering counselling and quitting resources to reproductive-aged women at every opportunity, especially during preconception and first-trimester visits.

## When should you actually eat to manage your weight?

STAR HEALTH DESK

The balance between weight gain and weight loss is predominantly determined by what you eat, and by how much exercise you get. But another important factor is often neglected... Published recently in the open-access journal *PLOS Biology*, research conducted by Kevin Kelly, Owen McGuinness, Carl Johnson and colleagues of Vanderbilt University, USA shows that it is not just how many calories you eat, but WHEN you eat them that will determine how well you burn those calories.

Your daily biological clock and sleep regulate how the food you eat is metabolised; thus the choice of burning fats or carbohydrates changes depending on the time of day or night. Your body's circadian rhythm has programmed your body to burn fat when you sleep, so when you skip breakfast and then snack at night you delay burning the fat.

The researchers monitored the metabolism of mid-aged and older subjects in a whole-room respiratory chamber over two separate 56-hour sessions, using a "random crossover" experimental design. In each session, lunch and dinner were presented at the same times (12:30 and 17:45, respectively), but the timing of the third meal differed between the two halves of the study. Thus in one of the 56-hour bouts, the additional daily meal was presented as breakfast (8:00) whereas in the other session, a nutritionally equivalent meal was presented to the same subjects as a late-evening snack (22:00). The

duration of the overnight fast was the same for both sessions.

Whereas the two sessions did not differ in the amount or type of food eaten or in the subjects' activity levels, the daily timing of nutrient availability, coupled with clock/sleep control of metabolism, flipped a switch in the subjects' fat/carbohydrate preference such that the late-evening snack session

resulted in less fat burned when compared to the breakfast session. The timing of meals during the day/night cycle therefore affects the extent to which ingested food is used versus stored.

This study has important implications for eating habits, suggesting that a daily fast between the evening meal and breakfast will optimise weight management.

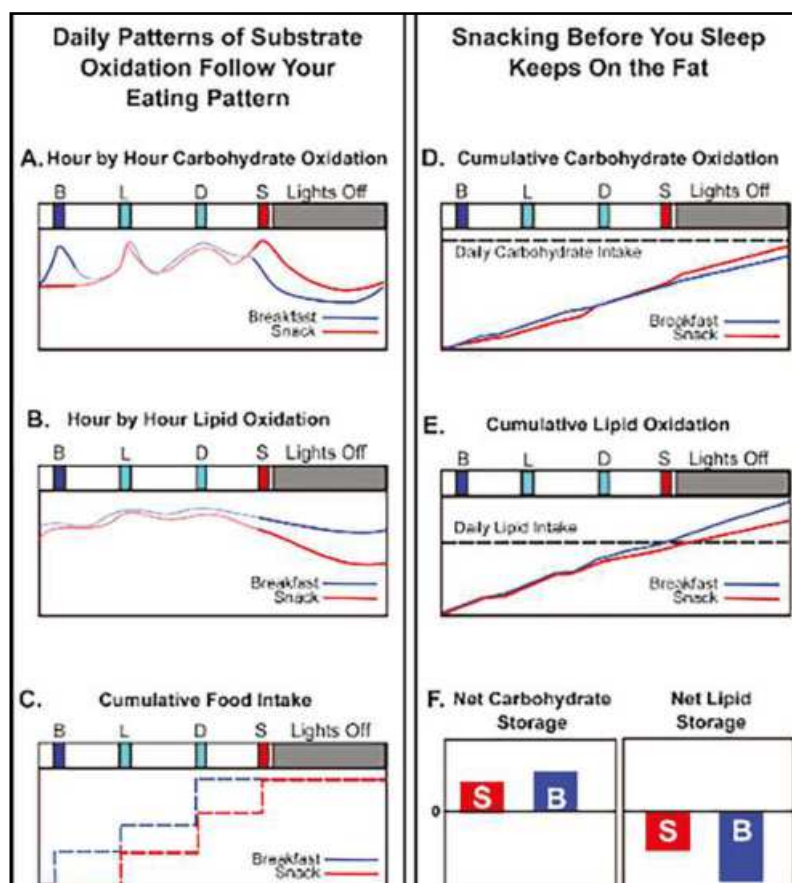


PHOTO: KELLY ET AL, 2020




### Frequent tooth brushing is associated to lower risk of diabetes

Brushing teeth three times a day or more is linked to an 8% lower risk of developing diabetes, while presence of dental disease is associated with a 9% increased risk and many missing teeth (15 or more) is linked to a 21% increased risk. These findings underline the importance of good dental hygiene and are reported in *Diabetologia*, the journal of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD).

There were differences between men and women, with stronger associations between increasing brushing and reduced diabetes risk in women. For women, brushing 3 times or more per day or twice per day were associated with a 15% and 8% reduction respectively of developing diabetes, when compared with women brushing once a day or not at all. For men, there was only a 5% reduction in risk of diabetes for those brushing three times or more per day, compared with those brushing once a day or not at all. There was no statistically significant difference in risk between men brushing twice a day and those brushing once a day or not at all.

The authors concluded: "Frequent tooth brushing may decrease the risk of new-onset diabetes, and the presence of periodontal disease and increased number of missing teeth may increase that risk. Overall, improving oral hygiene may be associated with a decreased risk of occurrence of new-onset diabetes."





**ORION**  
Pharma Ltd.

*In Search of Excellence*

*Be happy - feel significant in this world*

*Be loved and loving,*

*Let your works be accompanied*

*by success and*

*Carried on the wings of dreams !*

#EachforEqual



**MARCH**

*Women's*

**DAY**

**NEWS IN**  
*brief*

**Trump names Meadows as fourth chief of staff**

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump announced Friday he had chosen staunch ally Mark Meadows to be his new chief of staff -- the fourth person to hold the position since he took office. Meadows, a Republican congressman from North Carolina, will replace the ultra-conservative Mick Mulvaney, who had been serving as acting chief of staff since Trump fired John Kelly in December 2018. "I have known and worked with Mark, and the relationship is a very good one," Trump tweeted, making the announcement.

**Pope cancels main appearances in public**

REUTERS, Vatican City

Pope Francis has cancelled his regular appearances in public to avoid crowds gathering to see him and will stream them from the internet from inside the Vatican because of the coronavirus outbreak in Italy. The Vatican said that the pontiff will not address crowds today from a window overlooking St. Peter's Square, and will also not hold his general audience from there this Wednesday.

**Torrential rain kills 20 in Pakistan**

AFP, Peshawar

At least 20 people were killed and dozens more injured in Pakistan as torrential rainstorms destroyed several homes, officials said yesterday. Heavy rains have lashed stretches of the country near the Afghan border since Thursday. Fourteen children and three women were killed in "rain-related incidents" in northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, local relief official Taimur Ali said. The National Disaster Management Authority said three more had died in southwest Balochistan province.



A health worker disinfects an ambulance near the house of a coronavirus infected patient at a quarantined street in Hanoi, Vietnam yesterday.

**Imported infections in China jump**

*Shanghai tightens airport checks*

REUTERS, Beijing

Shanghai increased airport screening yesterday as imported coronavirus infections from countries such as Italy and Iran emerge as the biggest source of new cases in China outside Hubei, the province where the outbreak originated. Mainland China had 99 new confirmed cases on Friday, according to official data. Of the 25 that were outside Hubei, 24 came from outside China. Shanghai, which had three new cases that originated from abroad on Friday, said it would step up control measures at the border, which had become "the main battlefield". At a news conference, Shanghai Customs officials said they city would check all passengers from seriously affected countries for the virus, among other airport measures. Shanghai already requires passengers flying in from such countries, regardless of nationality, to be quarantined for 14 days. They will now be escorted home in vehicles provided by the government. Tighter screening has greatly lengthened waiting times at Shanghai's Pudong International Airport - some passengers say they have had to wait as long as seven hours. The Shanghai government vowed yesterday to severely punish passengers who concealed infections. Beijing police said yesterday they would work with other departments to prevent imported infections. They said some members of a Chinese family flying in from Italy on March 4 had failed to fill in health declarations accurately, and later tested positive for the virus. In addition to the growing risk of imported infections, China faces a challenge in trying to get migrant workers back to work by early April.

**'It's pandemonium'**

*Panic-buying hits Los Angeles despite officials' pleas for restraint*

AFP, Los Angeles

Sprinting shoppers, rationed mineral water and not a roll of toilet paper to be seen: panic-buying sparked by the new coronavirus soared in Los Angeles this week. Two days after California declared a statewide emergency, wholesale stores visited by AFP on Friday were unable to keep up with soaring demand for a range of staple items, as citizens prepare for the worst. "It's pandemonium -- our numbers are double the usual," said Rene, an employee at a Costco supermarket in Burbank. "Today has been out of control. That's why we're out of toilet paper, out of almost all water, out of hand sanitizer." One person has died so far in California, which as of Friday had registered 69 coronavirus cases -- second in the US only to nearby Washington state. Despite officials' pleas for restraint, Californians have begun emulating the panic-buying seen across swathes of Asia and other regions. "It's been nuts," Costco CFO Richard Galanti told analysts on a call Thursday. The same day, police in San Bernardino County, near Los Angeles, were called to one store after customers became enraged by the lack of supplies.



On Friday, Costco shoppers were restricted to two crates of water, down from four the previous day. Several tried to ignore the rule and saw their extra waters confiscated at checkout, leading to "some pushing, a little bit," an attendant said. A worker wheeling an overloaded cart of confiscated bottles back to their shelf was repeatedly stopped by new customers grabbing what they could. Even Costco's famous free food samples had been suspended for fear of spreading the virus, another employee confirmed. "With the madness here, it's starting to really set in," said Lisa Garcia, a 30-year-old retail worker who admitted she was growing seriously worried. "We were thinking of stocking up on paper products, but look at those empty shelves!" she told AFP. At another nearby branch, employees reported shoppers dashing at full pace through the doors as the store opened, desperate to grab supplies. By midday, only expensive sparkling Perrier bottles remained, to the disappointment of several shoppers. But some shoppers, though concerned, managed to see the lighter side of the situation. "I'm guarded," said emergency responder Andrew, who did not want to give his last name, wheeling a trolley filled with water, paper towels, limes and ginger ale.

**S Korea's coronavirus cases climb above 7,000**

*Most cases traced to church; death toll rises to 46*

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea's coronavirus cases jumped above 7,000 yesterday, up by 448 from the previous day, with more than half of the total number linked to a secretive church at the centre of the country's outbreak, health authorities said. The death toll rose by two to 46, according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC). Since mid-February when a woman tested positive after attending services at a branch of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus in the southeastern city of Daegu, the number of infections has exploded in South Korea, giving it the most cases outside China. There are 7,041 cases in total including a new small cluster of cases reported yesterday at an apartment complex in Daegu, where some members of the church live, the KCDC said. While 448 new cases remain a sizeable jump, it marked a third straight day of declines in the number of new cases for

South Korea. "There is a possibility that new cases increase as tests are still underway," Kwon Jun-wook, deputy director at the KCDC told a briefing. Lee Man-hee, the founder of the church, apologised on Monday calling the epidemic a "great calamity". The US Commission on International Religious Freedom has voiced concerns over members of the Shincheonji Church being blamed for the spread of the coronavirus. "We urge the South Korean government to condemn scapegoating and to respect religious freedom as it responds to the outbreak," it said on Twitter on Friday. The large amount of infections in the country has prompted nearly 100 nations to impose curbs on travellers from South Korea. On Friday, South Korea said it would suspend visas and visa waivers for Japan in response to Tokyo's travel restrictions on Koreans, as fears over the coronavirus reignited a feud between the neighbours dating back to before World War Two.

**WHO appeals for \$20m to fight Ebola in DRC**

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization said Friday it needs \$20 million to fight Ebola in DR Congo, even as the end of the devastating 19-month epidemic finally seemed within grasp. While the world's attention has been focused on the coronavirus, the last patient being treated for Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo was discharged on Tuesday. If no more cases are diagnosed, the epidemic will officially end within 42 days from the date of the last confirmed patient's second negative test. "The end of the outbreak will be declared on April 12" barring further cases, WHO assistant director-general for emergency response Ibrahim Soce Fall told the media in Geneva on Friday. But he issued a note of warning, saying "it is critical to maintain surveillance and rapid response capacity" in order to quickly diagnose any new cases. "We have over 1,169 survivors. So we have an important programme to continue to provide care to survivors, but also to make sure that we don't have any flare-ups," he added. "We know that the focus is more now on COVID-19, but... we still need an additional \$20 million for WHO to maintain the team on the ground because Ebola is also a matter of global health security." DR Congo's most recent Ebola outbreak was first identified in August 2018 and WHO declared it a "public health emergency of international concern" last July. It has killed 2,264 people in DR Congo, the vast central African country's tenth Ebola epidemic since 1976. It is the second-most deadly Ebola epidemic in history, after an outbreak killed more than 11,000 people in West Africa from 2013 to 2016.



A Greek fire fighter uses a water cannon as migrants gather on the Turkish-Greek border near Turkey's Pazarkule border crossing with Greece's Kastanies, in Edirne, Turkey yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

**India makes u-turn on TV ban over Delhi violence coverage**

The Indian government backtracked yesterday after slapping a 48-hour ban on two TV channels for what officials called biased coverage of New Delhi violence. A blackout of Asianet News and MediaOne was ordered on Friday but lifted after an outcry from opposition groups and protests by the channels to the information and broadcasting ministry. Information minister Prakash Javadekar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi requested the ban be revoked on learning of it. "Our basic belief is that press freedom is essential in a democratic set-up," Javadekar told reporters when asked about the move. A government order had accused the channels of covering last month's deadly violence in the capital "in a manner that highlighted the attack on places of worship and siding towards a particular community".

**Int'l tourist arrivals to drop 3% due to virus: UN**

The number of international tourist arrivals is expected to drop sharply this year, the World Tourism Organization said Friday, reversing a previous forecast for a substantial increase. The United Nations' UNWTO said in a statement that arrivals were now projected to fall by 1.0-3.0 percent in 2020, instead of a previous forecast of growth of 3.0-4.0 percent. This will lead to an estimated loss of \$30-50 billion (29-45 billion euros) in international tourism receipts, the Madrid-based body said. If confirmed, this will be the first annual decline in the number of international tourist arrivals since 2009 when the global economic crisis hit the travel and tourism sector hard.



**Space-grown lettuce is safe to eat, says study**

The astronauts floated around, expressing delight as they tasted something entirely unexpected in space. "Awesome! Tastes good! I like that! It's fresh!" they said, between bites of the "Outredgeous" red romaine lettuce. It was the first time astronauts were able to enjoy the fruits of their labour after growing produce from seeds and harvesting it. Ice cream was possible in space before fresh vegetables -- but in space, lettuce actually tastes like lettuce. The same can't be said for creamy delights. In the August 2015 video Nasa shared of the experience, US astronaut Scott Kelly, Kjell Lindgren and Japanese astronaut Kimiya Yui appear surprised as they munch on the leaves. SOURCE: AFP, CNN

**Taliban could 'possibly' seize power after US leaves: Trump**

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump on Friday said the Taliban could "possibly" overrun the Afghan government after the United States withdraws from the country, leaving the US-backed authorities to fend for themselves. "Countries have to take care of themselves," Trump told reporters at the White House. "You can only hold someone's hand for so long." Asked if the Taliban could eventually seize power, Trump said it's "not supposed to happen that way but it possibly will." "We can't be there for the next 20 years. We've been there for 20 years and we've been protecting the country but we can't be there for the next -- eventually they're going to have to protect themselves," he said. Trump said the Afghan government's ability to defend itself from the guerrillas after US forces pull out was unknown. "I don't know. I can't answer that question," he said. "We'll have to see what happens." Trump's comments came at a time when dozens of people were killed when gunmen opened fire at a political rally in Kabul on Friday.



The attack, claimed by the Islamic State group, highlights a glaring lack of security in the Afghan capital just 14 months ahead of the scheduled withdrawal of all foreign forces. It also calls into question a key element of the US-Taliban deal signed February 29 -- whether the Taliban are capable of stopping jihadists such as IS from running amok in Afghanistan after US forces pull out. In a statement, IS said two brothers had targeted a "gathering of apostates" with machine guns and grenades. The gunmen inflicted devastating carnage at the crowded event in west Kabul, killing 32 people and wounding 58 others, health ministry spokesman Wahidullah Mayar told AFP. Interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi put the toll at 29 dead, with an additional 61 wounded. He said special forces units had carried out clearance operations, eventually killing the two gunmen. The assault occurred at a commemoration ceremony for Abdul Ali Mazari -- a politician from the Hazara ethnic group, most of whom are Shia Muslims.

**Women account for quarter of world's MPs: IPU study**

AFP, Geneva

A quarter of all lawmakers serving in national parliaments worldwide are women, the International Parliamentary Union said Friday, warning though that progress towards gender parity was slowing amid significant "pushback". In 2019, women accounted for 24.9 percent of parliamentarians worldwide, the IPU, which was founded in 1889 and is one of the world's oldest international organisations, said in a fresh report. "There has been considerable progress" in recent years, IPU Secretary-General Martin Chungong told reporters in Geneva, pointing out that the percentage back in 1995 stood at just 11.3 percent. "There has been a shift in the way people think," he said, pointing out that a quarter century ago the ambition was to get women to the 30-percent mark, while today "the idea of having 50-50 in parliament is the norm." Four countries have reached full gender parity: Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia and the United Arab Emirates. Today, the Americas has the best gender

balance in parliament, counting 31.3 percent women MPs across the region, ahead of Europe which counts just under 30 percent. The Pacific has the worst record on female representation in parliament, with only 19.4 percent, and three countries in this region -- Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu -- have no women members of parliament at all. Chungong warned that worldwide there was now clearly "a slowdown in the growth of women's parliamentary participation." Last year, women's global representation in parliament grew by only 0.6 percent, after an already modest increase of 0.9 percent a year earlier. "There seems to be pushback when it comes to women's political participation, and it is important that we push back against pushback," he said. The IPU, a grouping of 178 legislative chambers that seeks to improve representative democracy worldwide, urged nations to redouble efforts towards gender parity by using tactics including carefully designed quotas.



India captain Harmanpreet Kaur and her Australian counterpart Meg Lanning pose for photos in front of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup on the eve of their final at the MCG yesterday.

PHOTO: ICC

## Australia eye fifth crown in front of mammoth crowd

AFP, Melbourne

Australian captain Meg Lanning says her team are "pumped" for their defence of the women's Twenty20 World Cup against India on Sunday with hopes high that more than 90,000 fans will cram the cavernous Melbourne Cricket Ground.

They go into the final as favourites, courtesy of being the sport's dominant side, winning four of the six tournaments so far, in contrast to Harmanpreet Kaur's India, who are in their first decider.

But with large numbers of Indian fans expected in the 100,000-capacity arena, there will be little in the way of home advantage.

Organisers have set their sights on beating the official world attendance record for a women's sporting fixture on Sunday, to coincide with International Women's Day.

That was set at the 1999 football World Cup final, when 90,185 watched the United States beat China at the Rose Bowl in California.

While widely accepted as the benchmark, an estimated 110,000 are said to have attended the Mexico-Denmark women's World Cup Championships final in 1971, but it was not a sanctioned event.

Pop superstar Katy Perry, who this week revealed she is pregnant, has been recruited to help get punters through the turnstiles, performing before and after the game.

As of Friday, more than 75,000 tickets had been sold for a match that marks the culmination of a 17-day, 10-team, tournament that has proved both entertaining and competitive.

"It seems like it has sort of fallen into place a little bit, and Sunday is going to be massive,"

We're not coming here just to put on a show, we're coming here to win... We are match and battle-hardened, all our games have been cut-throat, must-win clashes and have all been close. We've had to deal with that pressure, needed to stand up when you are under the pump.

**MEG LANNING**  
AUSTRALIA CAPTAIN

Everybody knows there is going to be a lot of noise in the stadium and they will keep an eye on each one of us. We just need to enjoy this moment instead of thinking about what can trouble us, because it's a big moment... I just want the trophy, nothing else.

**HARMANPREET KAUR**  
INDIA CAPTAIN

said Lanning ahead of Australia playing their sixth successive final.

"So hopefully there is 90,000 people there. Everything's been done that could possibly be done, and we're just really pumped we get to be out in the middle and play in front of everyone."

The final will be a repeat of the tournament opener, when India upset Australia by 17 runs after leg-spinner Poonam Yadav ran riot.

It made every game afterwards a virtual must-win for Lanning's team, and they rose to the task despite tournament-ending injuries to Tayla Vlaeminck and Ellyse Perry.

After beating Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, they edged New Zealand before overcoming South Africa in a nerve-shredding semifinal.

"It's been a hard road, certainly not smooth, but we've given ourselves a chance," said Lanning, who is wary of the threat posed by India.

"They're a class side, they've been playing excellent cricket through the tournament."

A lot of love

India went through the group phase as the only unbeaten side, on the back of quality spin bowling and the exploits of teenage batting prodigy Shafali Verma.

After upsetting Australia, they beat Bangladesh, New Zealand and then Sri Lanka before automatically making the final as Group A winners after their semifinal against England was washed out.

"Rather than thinking about what is going to trouble us, it's only about being there, enjoying the moment and giving our best," said Kaur. "One thing we have to keep in mind, Sunday is a fresh day, a fresh start. We have to start from ball one."

Like Lanning, she is relishing the chance to be part of a match that has the potential to take women's cricket to another level.

## A standard to live up to

NABID YEASIN



It was a fitting end to Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's reign as captain and the inspirational leader, who did a lot of head-scratching over the years while trying to find the perfect opening partner alongside automatic pick Tamim Iqbal, was glad to see Liton Das and Tamim break numerous records during Bangladesh's 123-run win against Zimbabwe in the third ODI in Sylhet on Friday.

292 of the 322 runs made by the Tigers were courtesy of the Tamim-Liton opening duo. The stand featured a total of 22 fours and 12 maximums but it was not merely a product of just boundaries. While the duo made a majority of runs -- 160 -- from boundaries, the remaining 132 -- of which six were extras -- were made by sneaking quick singles and doubles.

For a Bangladesh team that has struggled over the years to find the perfect opening combination, Friday's game could be showcased as the perfect example of opening batting. It included almost every aspect that a batting partnership should contain and so it was not a surprise to see them notch the third-best opening wicket partnership and the sixth-best in terms of runs for any wicket in one-day cricket history.

While the flurry of boundaries fuelled the scoring rate, it was the frequent running between wickets and rotation of strike that never let the scoring rate take a sudden nosedive -- as was the case many a time before. Bangladesh had often seen bright starts turn bleak by trying to find boundaries or by losing wickets. That, however, was not the case on Friday as Tamim, doing his bit as the senior player out in the middle, calmed Liton down when the duo went through a rare rough patch in the game.

"When I was on 80, the bowlers were

having a good time. Neither I nor Tamim bhai were being able to take singles. So Tamim bhai motivated me by saying that we could overcome this if we spent a bit more time on the pitch," Liton said of how Tamim motivated him to not throw his wicket away after the game.

Liton rarely fails when it comes to making a cricket connoisseur applaud his stroke-making with the willow, but over the years the major problem for the exquisite right-hander has been his consistency. The 25-year-old's ability has never been in doubt, but he has often failed to convert starts into big scores by throwing his wicket away while trying to do a little more than required.

It is also true that Liton rode his luck a number of times in Friday's game too. He was dropped thrice after his century and was also once rendered not-out after being caught off an eventual no-ball that looked to be below waist-high.

While Liton's 143-ball 176 -- the highest individual score by a Bangladeshi -- might have seen some close calls, it was still commendable. And unlike Liton, Tamim, who was a bit less aggressive and more composed, smashed seven boundaries and six maximums but still managed to bat at a strike-rate of 117.43 during his unbeaten ton.

Such an opening batting display coming against a 12th ranked ODI side with a number of missed opportunities might indicate that there are still a few improvements to be made in the approach, but if the duo can replicate half of what they did at the Sylhet International Stadium on Friday, it can be assumed that much of the concerns regarding the opening slot could be put to an end.

And the Tigers will not have to wait long to see if they can do it as the Tigers face Pakistan away in Karachi in a one-off ODI come April 1.



Liton Das had plenty of reasons to celebrate on Friday as he not only scored a century, but recorded the highest individual score by a Bangladeshi during a record 292-run opening stand with Tamim Iqbal.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

## Coronavirus sees PSG game postponed

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint-Germain's Ligue 1 game at Strasbourg on Saturday has been postponed following an order from the Bas-Rhin authorities in the face of coronavirus fears, the French football league (LFP) announced on Friday.

It is the first French league match to be postponed because of the new coronavirus.

The decision was made after a number of people tested positive for COVID-19 in the Haut-Rhin region, which neighbours the Bas-Rhin region where Strasbourg is located.

"The arrival of 26,000 at the Stade de la Meinau, a quarter of which would come from the Haut-Rhin region, is likely to promote the spread of COVID-19," local authorities said in a statement.

On Friday, the French health ministry said that the number of infections in the country had jumped by 154 to 577, with two more deaths bringing the total toll to nine.

## Proteas sweep series despite Labuschagne century

AFP, Potchefstroom

Australia's Marnus Labuschagne hit a maiden one-day international century on returning to his South African roots - but could not prevent South Africa from completing a series clean sweep in the third and final one-day clash at Senwes Park on Saturday.

Applauded by a large group of his South African family, Labuschagne made 108 in an Australian total of 254 for seven after they were sent in to bat.

South Africa were always ahead of the required rate and coasted to a six-wicket win with 4.3 overs to spare. Man of the match Jon-Jon Smuts (84), Kyle Verreynne (50) and man of the series Heinrich Klaassen (68 not out) made half-centuries.

Klaassen hit 242 runs in the series and was dismissed once. "It's been a fantastic couple of weeks for me," he said.

It was South Africa's third successive ODI series win against Australia and their 11th win in 12 matches against them, going back to September 2016.

"It's been disappointing but credit to South Africa, they put us under pressure with bat and ball," said Australian captain Aaron Finch.

It was a bitter-sweet day for Labuschagne, who was born in



Less than an hour's drive from the town where he was born, Australia's Marnus Labuschagne made a sensational return with a century, albeit in a losing cause, in the third ODI in front of 50 family members and friends in Potchefstroom yesterday.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Klerksdorp, 50km away, and started school in Potchefstroom before his family moved to Australia when he was nine years old.

He said it was "very special" to

score a century so close to the town where he was born.

"It was amazing. I have 50 of my family members out there from all over South Africa."

## Reserve days a 'no brainer', says Starc

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Mitchell Starc says it's "a no-brainer" for reserve days to be introduced for all knockout games at world cricket events, with the men's T20 World Cup this year at risk of being hijacked by rain like the women's tournament was this week.

Australia's rain-reduced semi-final win that set up a dream women's T20 World Cup final against India has somewhat glossed over the fact that England were knocked out of the tournament when their semi-final was completely washed out.

Despite there being a two-day break between the semi-finals and the final, no reserve days were scheduled in the case of rain, meaning England were sent home despite a ball not being bowled.

Starc said the fact the rain eased for long enough to allow the Australians to qualify for what looks set to be a record-breaking final at the MCG shouldn't mask the need for a rule change. "I'm sure if both games were washed out, everyone would be barking mad at the ICC for no reserve days," Starc said before he flew home from Australia's tour of South Africa to watch wife Alyssa Healy play in the final.

"In my opinion, it's a no-brainer. Considering it's a double header, there's obviously no downside for either team with turnaround for time between finals. There are currently no reserve days scheduled for the semifinals of the men's T20 World Cup later this year and Starc is unsure if the International Cricket Council will adapt in the seven months before the tournament begins and make a change.

"I only heard the other day that it's the same (rules) for ours," he said. "It's not for me to change the rules. It's up to the ICC. "If that's the way they go for our World Cup, I think it needs to be looked at for World Cups and all world events going forward."

## Archer unlikely for IPL

AGENCIES, London

England fast bowler Jofra Archer is unlikely to play for Rajasthan Royals in this year's Indian Premier League as he continues his recovery from an elbow injury.

England say Archer is "progressing as expected" following a scan on a stress fracture sustained in South Africa. The 24-year-old will have another scan in April before returning for Sussex in the County Championship in May.

The 2020 IPL season runs from 29 March to 24 May.

On signing a contract extension with Sussex on Thursday, Archer said he was "making good progress" with the injury and had his "fingers crossed" about playing in the IPL.

England said on Saturday that Archer's "focus will be playing for England" when the three-Test series against West Indies begins on 4 June and that he will play for Sussex to "ensure his preparation is optimal for Test cricket."

Archer, who is missing the current tour of Sri Lanka, will start a "back-to-bowling" programme near the end of March.

# What to WATCH

**STAR SPORTS 2**  
Women's T20 World Cup Final  
India v Australia  
Live from 1:00pm

**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
Premier League  
Chelsea v Everton  
Live from 8:00pm  
Man United v Man City  
Live from 10:30pm

**STAR SPORTS SELECT 2**  
Bundesliga  
Bayern Munich v Augsburg  
Live from 8:30pm  
Mainz v Dusseldorf  
Live from 11:00pm

**DAY'S EVENT**

**Bangladesh Premier League**  
Rahmatganj v Uttara Baridhara  
Time: 6:30pm

Venue: Bangladesh National Stadium

## STARC JETS OFF TO WATCH WIFE IN T20 WC FINAL

Pace spearhead Mitchell Starc was released from Australia's tour of South Africa Friday so he can return home to watch his wife Alyssa Healy in the women's Twenty20 World Cup final. Defending champions Australia face India in the T20 final at the Melbourne Cricket Cricket Ground on Sunday, with wicketkeeper-batswoman Healy a key part of their team. The decision means Starc will miss the third one-day against the Proteas in Potchefstroom, the last game of the series. "It is a once-in-a-lifetime chance for Mitch to watch Alyssa in a home World Cup final," said coach Justin Langer. "So we were happy to allow him to return home to support his wife and be part of a fantastic occasion." --AFP



Mohammedan forward Obi Moneke shapes up to shoot during their Bangladesh Premier League fixture against Bashundhara Kings at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Dutta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday. The Black and Whites won the historic match by a single goal.

PHOTO: BFF

# League leaders fall on Mohammedan's day

SPORTS REPORTER

All three league leaders suffered defeats in the Bangladesh Premier League yesterday, with Mohammedan Sporting Club hogging the spotlight with a 1-0 win over defending champions Bashundhara Kings in their home debut at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Dutta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

The Black and Whites had suffered two defeats against two wins in the league thus far, all the matches technically away from home as their home venue in Cumilla was yet to be prepared. Eventually the venue was free for football, and the Black and Whites made the venue – which was making its debut as a football venue for the first time in top-tier professional league – with a sweet victory.

Nigerian forward Obi Moneke's 25th minute strike, a superb curling effort from the edge of the box, proving to be enough to split the sides. Both sides had chances to score more in front of a decent crowd which was made up mostly of travelling Bashundhara Kings supporters, but Sean Lane's charges had the last laugh.

Mohammedan forward Yusuf Sifat failed to find the net from in front of goal on a cross from Soleymane Diabate on 36 minutes while Bashundhara Kings' Bakhtiyar Duishobekov headed wide from a similar position five minutes after restart.

Sifat was once again at fault for wasting a glorious chance right after the hour-mark while Bashundhara Kings' Argentine midfielder Nicolas Delmonte stabbed wide of target on injury time as the defending champions suffered their first defeat of the league.

The win for Mohammedan saw them move to nine points while Bashundhara Kings remained on 10 points, still in joint lead. The other results of the day meant four teams were

on 10 points with two more a point behind.

## Chattogram Abahani dominate their Dhaka namesake

The port city outfit moved to the top of the table with a 2-0 win over hosts Dhaka Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium later in the evening.

Following a barren first-half, Charles Didier gave Chattogram Abahani the lead in the 63rd minute with a superb left-footed strike from outside the box after receiving a cutback from Rakib Hossain. Abahani were desperate to find

**Mohammedan 1 – 0 Bashundhara**

Moneke 26'

**Saif**

Fahim 79'

**Abahani**

**0 – 2 Ctg Abahani**

Didier 63', Nasirul 90+4'

**Sheikh Russel**

Odoyin 6', Alison 28'

**2 – 0 Muktijoddha**

an equaliser and their desperation proved their undoing deep into stoppage time when former national team defender Nasirul Islam scored a glorious left-footed goal.

## Sheikh Jamal inflict first defeat on Saif

Sheikh Jamal notched their third straight victory in the league, following their first-game defeat, with a 2-1 win away to Saif Sporting Club at the Shaheed Rafique Uddin Stadium in Mymensingh yesterday. Gambian forward Pa Omar Jobe and Ivorian forward Ballo Famousa gave the visitors a 2-0 lead before Faisal Ahmed Fahim's later in the match only reduced the margin of defeat for the home team.

Jobe opened the scoring in the 14th minute with a clever dink over Saif goalkeeper Pappu Hossain following a flick from Famousa. The Ivorian doubled the visitors' lead nine minutes after restart, tapping home a low cross from the man whom he had set up the opening goal.

Fahim, the young forward who was called up to the senior national team squad for the first time in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup in January, scored a brilliant goal with a left-footed strike from the top of the box in the 79th minute as the hosts mounted some challenge, but they failed to find an equaliser.

The defeat left Saif on 10 points from five matches while Sheikh Jamal, thanks to their three-match winning streak, moved up to nine points from four matches.

## Sheikh Russel get first win

Sheikh Russel KC snapped a two-match losing streak and registered their first win of the league, thanks to a 2-0 win over fellow strugglers Muktijoddha Sangsad KC at the Sylhet District Stadium.

Sheikh Russel, last year's third-place finishers, had suffered consecutive defeats following two draws in their first two matches. But they had it easy yesterday against Muktijoddha Sangsad, who had themselves come into the match with a single point from three matches.

The hosts took the lead in the seventh minute when Raphael Odoyin tapped in Hemanta Vincent Biswash's shot from inside the box. The lead was doubled by Alison Udoka 21 minutes later, the Nigerian rising high to head home Khalekuzzaman's free-kick.

The win took Sheikh Russel up to eighth position with five points from five matches while Muktijoddha remained at the bottom with a single point from four matches.

# Liverpool bounce back in style

AFP, Liverpool



Liverpool recovered from back-to-back defeats and conceding the opening goal on Saturday with a 2-1 win over Bournemouth to move to within three wins of ending a 30-year wait for the Premier League title.

Callum Wilson's controversial early opener sent shockwaves around Anfield after a run of three defeats in four games in all competitions.

However, the prolific duo of Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane quickly turned the game around and a heroic goal-line clearance from James Milner in the second half secured the win to open a 25-point lead at the top of the table.

Jürgen Klopp's decision to make seven changes for Tuesday's 2-0 defeat at Chelsea in the FA Cup had been questioned as Liverpool lost the chance to build some momentum heading into a big week.

Atletico Madrid visit fortress Anfield in the Champions League on Tuesday hoping to defend a 1-0 first leg lead and despite the enormity of that clash, Klopp only rested Andy Robertson although first-choice goalkeeper Allison Becker was also sidelined by a hip injury.

The spread of coronavirus could have a big impact on the Reds' title celebrations in the weeks to come with the possibility of games being played behind closed doors. But the abandonment of the normal pre-match ritual of handshakes was the only disruption to the Premier League calendar this weekend.

Liverpool's dip in form has coincided with a lack of clean sheets for Klopp's men after a run of 10 in 11 league games between

early December and mid-February.

The hosts' backline was breached again after just nine minutes, although Klopp was rightly furious that VAR did not intervene to disallow the goal.

Joe Gomez was knocked off balance by Wilson to start the move and the Bournemouth striker then had the simple task of tapping home Jefferson Lerma's cross.

Defeat leaves the Cherries still in the bottom three. They were left to rue not making even more of a bright start as stand-in goalkeeper Adrian turned over Nathan Ake's powerful header.

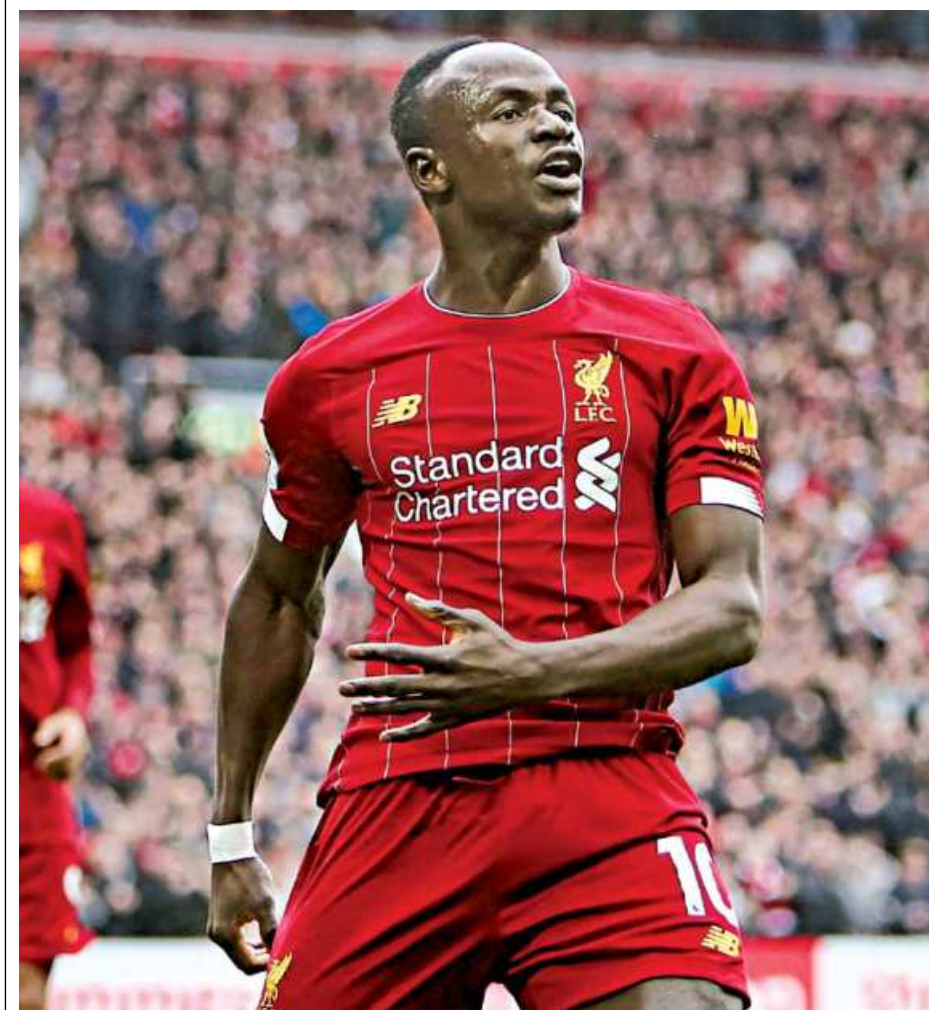
Bournemouth played a large part in their own downfall and settled Liverpool's nerves when substitute Jack Simpson gifted possession to Mane in a dangerous position. Despite a poor pass from the Senegalese, Salah steered the ball into the bottom corner to mark his 100th Premier League appearance for the club in style.

Eight minutes later, Liverpool led when Bournemouth again gave the ball away cheaply. Virgil van Dijk released Mane in behind and he kept his cool to slot into the far corner.

The champions-elect still needed a brilliant clearance from Milner to secure all three points as he sprinted back to clear Ryan Fraser's lob over the stranded Adrian on the hour.

Wilson and Ake also passed up a huge chance to level in the final minute.

However, Liverpool could easily have had more goals themselves. Mane curled a brilliant long-range effort off the bar and Roberto Firmino fired over with a glorious chance for his first league goal at Anfield this season.



Liverpool forward Sadio Mane celebrates his decisive goal against Bournemouth in their English Premier League fixture at Anfield yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal and State Minister for Youth and Sports Zahid Ahsan Russel were among the guests during the inauguration of the Bangabandhu Sports Championship at Hatirjheel in the capital yesterday.

# Sabina turns cyclist!

SPORTS REPORTER

Sabina Khatun, the prolific captain of the Bangladesh national women's football team, put off her shooting boots and instead donned cycling gears for a day in Dhaka's Hatirjheel yesterday.

The 26-old striker has scored three hattricks in three matches of the ongoing women's football league for title-contenders Bashundhara Kings, with her latest match coming on March 5. Her next match is tomorrow.

The prolific striker took this time off to hone her cycling skills, motoring to second-place finish for Gono

University on the opening day of the Bangabandhu Sports Championship.

Cycling was one of the two events to take place on the opening day of the meet, with marathon being the other.

Around six thousand students from 101 universities will be competing in 12 events in the largest university sports meet of the country. 13 universities will host the meet.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal and State Minister for Youth and Sports Zahid Ahsan Russel inaugurated the meet and witnessed the events on the opening day.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Ronaldinho arrested

AFP, Asuncion

Former Brazilian football star Ronaldinho and his brother were arrested Friday in Asuncion, Paraguay's public ministry said, after entering the country on fake passports.

"The Attorney General's office issued a warrant for their arrest, charged the player Ronaldinho with using a public document with false content and requested preventative detention," the ministry tweeted.

The two men will be held overnight at a police station.

Sources from the public prosecutor's office told AFP that the brothers will be summoned for a hearing on Sunday to impose measures.

Ronaldinho and his brother Roberto de Assis Moreira had finished a court appearance and left the Palace of Justice Friday night at 8:15 pm (2315 GMT). Ronaldinho declined to comment to reporters as they left the building.

The state attorney general decided to rectify a request for "opportunity criteria" in favor of the 2005 Ballon d'Or winner and changed prosecutors for the case. The original prosecutor, Federico Delfino, had decided Thursday not to pursue charges.

A new prosecutor ordered the men's arrest.

Plainclothes policemen then picked the brothers up from their hotel and drove them to the National Police headquarters, which also houses VIP prisoners and

former law enforcement officers who have committed crimes.

"We don't know under what authority they were arrested," their lawyer Adolfo Marin told reporters.

The brothers had been questioned for more than seven hours on Thursday by the public prosecutor in Asuncion.

Delfino said he had decided not to pursue charges against the pair, as they



"contributed relevant information to the investigation" and were acting in "good faith" when they received the falsified Paraguayan documents.

Brazilian authorities withdrew Ronaldinho's passport in November 2018 after he failed to pay a \$2.5 million fine for environmental damage incurred during the building of a property in Porto Alegre, in southern Brazil.

# Brazil call up Guimaraes

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Brazil coach Tite named Lyon midfielder Bruno Guimaraes to the national team for the first time Friday as the Seleccion launch their qualifying campaign for the 2022 World Cup.

Guimaraes, who has stood out for Olympique Lyonnais since arriving at the French Ligue 1 club last month, will make his debut with the men's senior team when Brazil play qualifiers against Bolivia and Peru later this month.

Unsurprisingly, he also named star Neymar and Paris Saint-Germain teammate Marquinhos.

The most notable absence is Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson, who will be replaced by Manchester City's Ederson.

Tite included three players from current Brazilian powerhouse Flamengo: midfielder Everton Ribeiro and strikers Gabriel Barbosa and Bruno Henrique alongside defenders Alex Sandro and Danilo of Juventus.

www.bsrm.com

**PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK PROJECT IS BEING BUILT WITH BSRM**

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT

**BSRM**  
building a safer nation

**GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS**  
RECORD HOLDER

**GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES**  
World's Largest VRM

**SHAH CEMENT**

# Helping the helpless

*Autorickshaw driver in Gazipur gives poor, physically-challenged patients free rides to hospital*



ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE AKAND

Go to the CNG-run autorickshaw stand in Gazipur's Board Bazar area, you can't miss a three-wheeler with stickers on its front, back, sides and roof, reading "free for the poor, helpless and the physically-challenged".

It belongs to Mohammad Forkan Mia, whose return from death's door nine years ago has changed the moto of his life.

Blessed with a second chance to live, the 40-year-old autorickshaw driver has devoted his life to serving poor patients and road-accident victims by taking them to different hospitals from their homes and accident sites, respectively, free of cost.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



**A part of the Buriganga river earth-filled by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority in Ramchandrapur area of Mohammadpur in the capital. The irony is that BIWTA's signboard, inset, in the area says river grabbing is a punishable offence. The photo was taken yesterday.**

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

# Vow made to ensure women's rights

DU CORRESPONDENT

People from different walks of life yesterday took an oath to ensure women's rights and work to end violence against women.

Non-profit We Can Bangladesh and Dhaka University organised the programme at midnight with the slogan, "vowing to dispel the darkness", marking International Women's Day today.

The programme was held at Central Shaheed Minar.

Hundreds of participants, mostly women, held a candlelight vigil to mark the day.

Meher Afroz Chumki, chair of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, said, "Women are leaving their mark in every field. We should work together with men to put an end to child marriage and violence against women."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

# Woman killed as lorry hits pedestrians

*It was being driven by a nightguard*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was killed and five other pedestrians injured when a lorry hit them at the capital's Biam Goli yesterday evening.

Maksuda, 40, died at the scene. The injured are Ariful Islam, 15, Billal Hossain, 20, Md Rasul, 14, Abdul Hamid, 15, and Tia Begum, 35, said Inspector Bacchu Mia, in-charge of Dhaka Medical College Hospital police outpost.

The incident took place at the alley entrance when the lorry hit them while they were having snacks, injured Ariful told The Daily Star.

He said that a security guard known to the driver had gotten behind the wheel, and that led to the vehicle lurching forward and running into the pedestrians.

The victims were rushed to DMCH, where doctors pronounced Maksuda dead. The others were admitted to the hospital, Bacchu said.

The lorry has been seized and its driver detained, said Golam Azam, inspector (operations) of Hatirjheel Police Station.

## FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

### Fresh elections to trade unions



**S Tarafdar presents a cheque to Bangabandhu on March 8, 1972. The money was raised by Bengalees in Michigan in collaboration with sympathetic Americans.**

MARCH 8, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZZA SAJEN

#### MUJIB MEETS LABOUR LEADERS

Bangabandhu in a meeting with labour leaders says fresh elections to the trade unions using secret ballots will be held soon. He also assures them that the representatives elected by the workers will only be allowed to represent the trade unions.

#### ALLOTMENT OF PLOTS CANCELLED

By an order of the minister for works, housing and urban

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

# Khaleda's condition very bad

*Say relatives after visiting her in jail*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khaleda Zia's younger sister Selima Islam yesterday expressed doubt whether they would be able to take the BNP chief out of hospital alive as the "government was delaying her release from jail".

Stating that Khaleda's health was very bad, Selima called upon the government to consider her ailment, physical condition, and age for either freeing or granting her bail on humanitarian grounds.

"She is suffering from respiratory problems. She is almost unable to speak," Selima told reporters after visiting the BNP chairperson at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

She said Khaleda felt a pain in her chest on Friday

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

# Rare orangutan spotted in Borneo



AFP, Katingan

The world's only known albino orangutan has been spotted alive and well in a Borneo rainforest, more than a year after she was released into the wild, conservationists say.

Alba, a blue-eyed primate covered in fuzzy white hair, was taken in 2017 from a cage where she was being kept as a pet by villagers in Indonesia's section of Borneo, known as Kalimantan.

Alba was released back into the wild in late 2018.

This week, the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation said Alba was spotted as it monitored three other orangutans who were recently released.

"After we learned that she can build nests, forage independently and is no longer dependent on human assistance we concluded that she can

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

# PADMA BOAT CAPSIZE Death toll rises to 6

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Bodies of five more passengers, including three of a family, who drowned in the Rajshahi boat capsized on Friday were recovered yesterday, raising the death toll to six.

The deceased were identified as Md Shahin, 48, his wife Moni Begum, 35, their seven-year-old daughter Roshni, Md Ratan, 26, and Eklas Uddin, 22, said Abu Aslam, additional district magistrate in Rajshahi.

Three people were still missing till filing of the report last night as rescue

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



#### PRAYER TIMING MARCH 8

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5-15 12-45 4-30 6-05 7-30  
JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-45 6-10 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

# 7-year-old raped in capital

STAR REPORT

A speech-impaired seven-year-old girl was raped in the city's Kamrangirchar area on Friday night.

The victim was sent to the one-stop crisis centre at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) early yesterday for treatment and forensic tests.

Aunt of the girl told reporters that the child left home without informing her mother on Friday evening and remained missing until around 1:30am yesterday, when the family found the girl beside a road nearby their house.

She was bleeding profusely, the aunt said. Family members and police suspect that the perpetrator(s) abandoned the girl after raping her.

Mostafa Anwar, inspector (investigation) of Kamrangirchar Police Station, said they were trying to arrest the culprit(s).

Filing of a case is underway, he added.

Meanwhile, a Joyprahat

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



**Rickshaw-vans occupying several lanes of Dhaka-Chattogram highway at Shanir Akhra in the capital, slowing down motor vehicles and creating risks of crashes during rush-hour traffic yesterday morning.**

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# SAUDI COUP ATTEMPT Saudi detains three princes

*Report US media; detentions signal a further consolidation of power by Prince Salman*

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi authorities have detained three princes including King Salman's brother and nephew on charges of plotting a coup, the US media reported Friday, signalling a further consolidation of power by the kingdom's de facto ruler.

The detentions cast aside the last vestiges of potential opposition to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and come as the kingdom limits access to Islam's holiest sites in a highly sensitive move to contain the fast-spreading coronavirus.

Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, a brother of King Salman, and the monarch's nephew Prince Mohammed bin Nayef were accused of treason and taken from their homes early Friday by black-clad royal guards, the Wall Street Journal reported citing unnamed sources.

The Saudi royal court has accused the two men, once potential contenders for the throne, of "plotting a coup to unseat the king and crown prince" and could face lifetime imprisonment or execution, the newspaper said.

The New York Times also reported the detentions, adding that Prince Nayef's younger brother, Prince Nawaf bin Nayef, had also been detained.

Saudi authorities did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The detentions mark the latest crackdown by Prince Mohammed, who has consolidated his grip on power with the imprisonment of prominent clerics and activists as well

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



PHOTOS: SK ENAMUL HAQ, PRABIR DAS

# Mountains they moved

ZYMA ISLAM AND NILIMA JAHAN

"I am building a new path for your child. Sowing seeds of courage. Your daughter will make those bloom into radiant flowers and your son will think it is absolutely normal."

This line from the performance poetry piece titled "Amra Agnijeetara" showcased on stage during the "Unsung

move mountains.

Laily is the only licensed female hilsa fisher in Barishal, venturing out to the river and sometimes into the high seas for days at a stretch.

"If this is not breaking the glass ceiling, then what is?" said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star at the event, held on Friday at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden.

to primary school," said Sonu, speaking to The Daily Star.

"We would never disclose at school that we belong to the Dalit community. We know that people don't take us seriously and always make a mockery of our language [Hindi] and the profession of our parents. This is the most important reason for children dropping out."

OF STRUGGLE, OF CHANGE

Think back -- have you ever wasted a handful of rice? Perhaps it spilled out while transferring from bag to container? Or went down the sink while washing?

Kohinoor Begum did not ask for much from the people of her community in a remote village of Sirajganj. She asked for a fistful of rice each to create a food bank. The bank now has five maunds of rice saved and around Tk 45,000 in cash, unheard of in a poverty-stricken area frequently at the mercy of natural and climate change-induced disasters.

"I have struggled all my life for food. I have passed so many days when my family and I only ate kolmi shaak (wild watercress collected from the banks of ponds) because we did not find any relief during the floods," described Kohinoor.

"Their contribution is not an isolated event. The change that has come to Bangladesh is a story crafted by its women. It is the story of the 35 lakh women workers of our ready-made garment industry, the story of every household in our villages which are production powerhouses," said IPDC's CEO and Managing Director Mominul Islam.

This change is encapsulated by Joya Chakma, the first female FIFA referee from the country. "There was a time in 2006 when I had gone to

play at Kamalapur stadium for a girl's tournament, and we were not allowed to do so by radical fundamentalists. They surrounded the stadium and trapped us inside for around five hours. They kept saying that they would not allow girls to play in shorts with their legs showing," recounted Joya to The Daily Star.

That never stopped her from playing. A short documentary made about

Mohal Baby, for establishing a successful library in her village in Kurigram, a former enclave; birangana freedom fighters Tepri Rani and Biva Rani; Marjia Rabbani Shashi, the first blind female lawyer in Faridpur, and Kamrunnahar Munni, coach of the Tangail girls' football team.

Marjia, however, could not be present because her kidneys have failed and she is battling for her life at a hospital. Her mother Afroza Rabbani accepted the award on her behalf.

While all the other awardees may be dreaming of what to do with the Tk 2 lakh cheque they received, Shashi will be using it to pay for dialysis and live a few days more.

"The light of the eyes is nothing; the light of the mind is everything. But now the light of her life is going out. Save my little girl, my beautiful girl," said Afroza, addressing the crowd.

Marjia needs a kidney to live, and as her mother pointed out, it is still difficult to get voluntary kidney donations from a non-relative. The law permits only near relatives to donate kidneys; however, in December last year, the High Court has ordered an amendment within six months.

"My daughter is very talented, you cannot imagine. Her whole life was a struggle and she fought bravely," she told The Daily Star.

"My husband has gone. If I have to lose my daughter, for whom I have fought since giving birth to her, can you imagine how will I live? How will I fight?"

She reminds us, that for some women, the fight never ends.

*"The light of the eyes is nothing; the light of the mind is everything. But now the light of her life is going out. Save my little girl, my beautiful girl," said Afroza, addressing the crowd.*

Women Nation Builders Awards 2020", organised by The Daily Star and IPDC Finance, fully encapsulates what the awardees are doing.

Laily Begum may not quite be able to articulate the story of her journey with the eloquence of the poets on stage, but her very existence achieves what good poetry aims to do -- inspire, ignite fire,

Similarly, how much effort does it take to finish your studies in a language that is not your mother-tongue? Just ask Sonu Rani Das, who became the first university graduate from the Dalit community in Tanbazar, Narayanganj.

"The average education level of my community is the primary level. And then too, a large number don't even go



# We owe you

Their tales highlight the struggles women still face and the sacrifices and strength they need to overcome adversity. "Confidence and sheer will -- that is why nothing could stop them," one distinguished guest said when they were honoured by The Daily Star and IPDC Finance on Friday night. They are our unsung women heroes whose lives show what real courage and patriotism are all about.



## TEPRI RANI

Her war never ended

Tepri Rani, now 65, still remembers the torture of Pakistani occupation forces at an army camp for six months. She was refused by her husband after the country's independence in December 1971. She was rejected by her own society for 40 odd years.

In May 1971, Tepri was newlywed when the Pakistan occupation army picked her up from her home in Bolidwar village of Thakurgaon's Ranisankail upazila.

Using sheer willpower, she fought social stigma and raised her son.

But her struggle and sacrifice for the nation remained unrecognised until she was bestowed with the title Birangana in 2017.

The Thakurgaon deputy commissioner's office built a house for her that year. Since March 2018, the war heroine has been getting her freedom fighter allowance.

But the war crimes committed against Tepri still haunt her.

"They [the Pakistani occupation army] used to torture me if I did not act as per their will," says Tepri.

She has been suffering from hearing impairment due to the torture she was subject to. She does not talk much these days.

The war heroine recalled that another phase of her struggle began once her husband refused to accept her back after the war. "There was no respect for me in society after returning from the Pakistani camp," she said bitterly.

On how she lived her life in those unbearable days, Tepri said, "After the death of my parents, I used to collect vegetables to feed my family. Later, I somehow managed a job at a local rice mill. I was paid Tk 5 per day in those days."

Tepri now mostly confines herself to a small room in her house.

Her son Sudhir said his mother gained some respect from the local community after the government's recognition.



## BIVA RANI

Birangana awaits recognition

Biva Rani, 63, fell victim to the torture of Pakistani forces during the Liberation War when she was an eighth grader. Despite applying for recognition of her sacrifice during the war around five years ago, her status is yet to be acknowledged. Meanwhile, to run her family that includes her differently abled son only, she does odd jobs.

Her husband, with whom she was married off a few months after the Liberation War, left her in 1988 when their son was born. Since then she has been floated on a turbulent sea.

In 1971, Biva along with her five siblings were living at their native home. The Pakistani soldiers, local razzakars and some other collaborators set their family shop on fire at a local market.

Her father, who was a small trader in Torki Bandar, tried to flee with his family to nearby Ramjanpur (Madanipur). But they became separated.

Together with some other women, Biva took shelter in a sugarcane field. Unfortunately, local razzakars found them and they were handed over to Pakistani soldiers. "We all became victims in that field," Biva says, weeping. "They tortured us and I lost consciousness."

When the army eventually left the area, Biva's father found her and brought her home.

Their family shop had been looted and burned. Biva was married off to a local, Anukul Majumdar, not much more than two months later. Both families soon after started on the perilous and long journey by boat and on foot to reach India as refugees.

After liberation, they returned. When her son was born in 1988, Biva says he was "alright" but Sagor later suffered a head injury.

"We took him to the Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital but due to incorrect treatment, the nerves and muscles in his feet, along with his brain, were affected. He became both physically and mentally disabled. Since my husband left, I have had to face the fight for our survival alone."

"I am old now," says Biva. "But I still have to care for my son. I had hoped to be recognised for the events that led to me being a victim of the Liberation War, so some years ago I filed an application online. Since then I've heard nothing."

The local upazila committee has sent a recommendation for Biva's recognition as a freedom fighter to the central committee; a final decision is pending.

Biva still awaits her recognition.



## LAILY BEGUM

Fisherwoman against the tide

Laily Begum, Barisal division's first fisherwoman with a licence to catch hilsa, has been sailing on the Bishkhali river for the last 13 years.

The 35-year-old woman entered the traditionally male-dominated fishing industry out of necessity and gradually secured her place.

Laily's family, along with her neighbours at North Dalbhanga village at Dhalua union in Barguna Sadar upazila, never tasted prosperity because of continuous river erosion and other natural disasters. On top of that, cyclone Sidr hit the area in 2007.

A few months after the cyclone wrecked their village, Laily lost her father and elder brother to illness. Her younger brother got married and moved away with his family, leaving Laily and her sick and elderly mother.

Feeling completely at a loss, Laily then decided not to get married and vowed to take sole responsibility of her mother and herself.

For a woman like Laily, who had never gone to a school, work opportunities were limited.

She tried her hand at farming on their family land but that was not enough to cover their living costs.

This is when Laily turned to the Bishkhali.

She asked one of her relatives to take her fishing, but he ignored her and even chided her for making such a request. But she did not give up. She was steadfast in her objective, learned fishing and slowly became adept at it.

Laily borrowed Tk 50,000 from a fish trader. She built a fishing trawler in association with a partner, bought nets and traps, and started fishing.

She spends about six to seven hours waiting for the tidal cycle while fishing in the river. Out in the sea, it is a six to seven days' task.

She said she was somewhat frightened during her first few fishing trips but her fellow fishermen gave her courage.

Now she earns between Tk 500 and Tk 1,000 per day.



## MOMOTAJ MOHAL BABY

Librarian enlightening a village

Momotaj Mohal Baby has been enlightening people of Dashiarchhara, a former Indian enclave in Kurigram's Phulbari upazila, through a library.

With a hope of doing good to her community, Momotaj established Golam Maola Alor Dishari Library with her limited resources in September 2015, a month after 162 enclaves were exchanged between Bangladesh and India.

Momotaj particularly wanted to develop reading habits among the girls and young women of Dashiarchhara as they were less exposed to the outside world.

The 37-year-old woman started collecting old books in 2009 and loaned those for free. After the enclave exchange, she inspired her husband Golam Maola to donate two decimals of land and later built a tin hut spending Tk 45,000 from their joint savings.

She said the library was named after her husband for his generous contribution of land and money.

Spending Tk 500-600, she buys at least two to three books every month and subscribes to a daily and a monthly newspaper for the library.

Momotaj, who currently works as a teacher at a mosque-based literacy programme run by the Islamic Foundation, also received Tk 29,000 in cash and books worth Tk 29,000 from the National Public Library in Dhaka in two installments.

Her library now has a collection of 450 publications which includes novels, poetry, children's literature, travelogues, science fiction, religious books, and guidebooks for high school and college goers.

After completing her day job, Momotaj spends most of her afternoons at the library, which is open six days a week, except Fridays, from 4:00pm to 5:30pm.

Anyone can enter the library free of cost, read books and newspapers there, and borrow one book for three days.

With the monthly salary of Tk 4,500 from her teaching job, Momotaj could not afford to keep up with library users' demand for new books.

Momotaj applied for library registration to the Kurigram District Public Library authority. Once the library is registered, she hopes to increase her collection of books.

Through the library, the visionary librarian looks forward to continuing her task of enlightening the young people, and especially women, of Dashiarchhara.



## MARJIA RABBANI SHASHI

Soul of resilience

With the help of her advocate father, 26-year-old Marjia Rabbani Shashi became the first blind female lawyer in the history of the Faridpur Bar Association. She has been practicing in the Faridpur court for the past year.

"As a lawyer, I want to help poor people. My father advised me to help the poor," she said.

But it seems her spell of bad luck is not yet over.

Her father, Golam Rabbani Babu Mridha, who used to read out case documents for her before court appearances, died on January 21 this year.

Marjia herself is currently admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU). She needs a kidney transplant to live, but her family members are yet to find a perfect match.

She has needed dialysis twice a week since she was a second-year student at university. Marjia is also blind since birth.

Marjia's husband Md Zahangir Alom runs a cosmetic shop in Faridpur. The couple lives with Marjia's mother Afroza Rabbani.

"I fell in a great problem since my husband's death. We need Tk 48,000 every month for Marjia's dialysis twice a week but I have no source of income to meet her treatment costs. I don't know what I shall do for my daughter's treatment in the future," said Afroza.

"If someone gives a kidney to my daughter, she will survive. I lost my husband a month ago, I don't want to lose my daughter too," she said.

"As a mother it is very painful to see that my daughter is nearing the end of her life."

Before her father's death, he would help Marjia by reading court documents out loud to her. Since his passing, her husband does it. Her younger sister Abida Rabbani Dorin wrote on her behalf when Marjia sat for public exams.

Marjia is the only blind female advocate in the 135 years' history of the Faridpur Bar Association. She completed her Bachelor of Law degree from Southeast University in Dhaka in 2015.

"We first suspected that she was visually-impaired six months after her birth. We took her to several doctors in Faridpur and Dhaka. We also went to India for treatment, but nothing helped," said Afroza.

"Ever since she was young, she was very bright. She learnt everything by heart just by listening to it once," added the mother of the 26-year-old, who is currently fighting to survive at BSMMU.



## KAMRUNNAHAR MUNNI

Sports against child marriage

Kamrunnahar Munni, an assistant teacher at a government primary school, is also manager of the district U-17 girls' football team. She works simultaneously for the physical and mental development of girls and to prevent child marriage.

Despite members facing social and family barriers and financial hardships, the Tangail girls' football team is moving forward, thanks to her dedication and intensive efforts.

Munni believes sports raise a girl's confidence level and makes her aware of her future. "Moreover, when a girl engages in sports after overcoming all these barriers, the people who have the mentality to marry children do not want to marry such an open-minded girl who has already got a taste of freedom," she said.

Munni first engaged with football when the school authorities gave her the responsibility of forming a girls' team to take part in the Bangamata Fazilatunnesa Mujib Football Tournament in 2011.

Later, after observing Munni's keen interest in football, Mokhlesur Rahman -- then the additional deputy commissioner (education) in Tangail -- requested her to take charge of the girls' school team that eventually became district champions in 2016.

Munni was afterwards made manager of the U-17 girls' football team in Tangail in 2017; the team went on to win the Jubo Games that year. Another Tangail team, also under Munni's guidance, became champions in the 2018 JFA U-14 Women's National Football Championship.

Most of the players come from poor families and many of their parents were initially reluctant to allow their daughters to play football.

Munni said she convinced the parents to allow their daughters to play, by assuring them that it will make their children physically and mentally strong. "And a mentally and physically strong girl can make a future on her own."



## SONU RANI DAS

The first graduate

She is one such woman who despite all the odds, achieved the distinction of being the first graduate among the Dalit community living in the sweeper colony of Tanbazar in Narayanganj.

She got married at an early age. But she was lucky to have a supportive and understanding life-partner who always stood by her.

After completing her BBA, Sonu has now gotten admitted to a master's programme.

"I was brought up in an environment where people are marginalised to the extreme partly by religious sanctions and partly by social and economic deprivations," she says.

According to Sonu, language is a barrier as they communicate mainly in Hindi whereas the academic curriculum is in Bangla. She says many are held back by language. Other problems facing the Dalit community include, of course, child marriage.

Sonu, an icon amongst women of the community, wishes to work on raising awareness to overcome these barriers. Children in the community are now following in her footsteps.

Along with studying, Sonu works in Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM) and in a project under the Narayanganj City Corporation to improve women and children's health.

As part of the recognition of her struggles and achievements, Sonu got the opportunity to participate in various international programmes in Scotland, Switzerland, and Brazil.

Being an inspiration to others who came from underprivileged backgrounds, Sonu has the confidence and courage to move ahead. She has created history in being the first graduate in her community, and she believes that she can bring about many more positive changes.

Sonu dreams of diminishing the problems she faced while growing up -- so that her children and future generations do not suffer in the same way.



## KOHINOOR BEGUM

A social leader of poor villagers

Borangile village lies on the char land of the Jamuna basin; villagers are mostly dependent on finding work as day labourers to survive. They are able to grow some crops when the water in the river recedes and the char lands are exposed. Situated around 100 kilometres from Sirajganj town, Borangile often falls out of the purview of government amenities or relief, even though its people are among those critically affected by flood and other natural disasters.

Early in 2018, a few women including Kohinoor Begum, going to collect relief materials from the local government, had to walk a distance which took a couple of hours by foot.

They were turned away as relatives of the local member-chairman had got the relief items instead of them. At least 3,000 families in her union were gravely affected by the floods that year.

Taking matters into her own hands, Kohinoor called a meeting in her village -- gathering around 40 women to help set up a community food bank for times of need.

The community is itself poor, but there are some who are needier than the others, Kohinoor said. "We should do something for them. During hard times, any member can take rice from our bank."

Set up in 2018, the food bank is independent of government support. "We are trying to gather financial support from other villagers as donations," she said.

The food bank also works as a crisis fund for the poor -- used to meet wedding expenses of poor families, treatment costs, and educational costs.

Members of this food bank also started setting aside whatever little they could manage. It now has 48 members and their savings have crossed Tk 40,000.

The initiative and its founder are now a source of inspiration for neighbouring villages.

Kohinoor, 55, has suffered extreme poverty since childhood. She is now mother to four daughters and three sons. To feed their children, she and her husband worked together as house maid and day labourer in their neighbours' houses.



## JOYA CHAKMA

Football is her life

While other girls ran after university degrees, "better" careers, and a secure future, a girl hailing from the hill district Rangamati devoted herself to football.

Her struggles, devotion, and hard work have afforded her the privilege of being the country's first female international referee recognised by FIFA, the world football governing body.

Joya Chakma is the only Bangladeshi among five FIFA-enlisted female international referees in South Asia.

As a child, Joya used to compete in sports and run races in her childhood, but loved football the most.

Her outstanding performance in an inter-district football tournament in Dhaka, where Rangamati won, earned her a call up to play in the women's national football team. She went on to play in various national and international tournaments including the SA Games in 2010.

Joya then got admitted to the history department at Jahangirnagar University. But she was already garnering hopes of being a football referee.

"I was in a dilemma about whether I should start studying for a job or work towards building a career in football," said Joya.

She then decided to sit an examination for referring.

Her career as a football referee started in 2012 through the Bangamata football tournament. Joya went on to referee matches in football tournaments in Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Tajikistan. In 2015, Joya refereed 10 football matches in an international football tournament in Berlin, Germany.

Joya joined Bangladesh Kira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) as coach; under her guidance, the BKSP women's football team became champions in the 'Subroto Mukherjee Gold Cup' tournament in India where she also received the 'best coach' award.