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# Someshwari is being butchered

*Violating court order, sand lifters go wild in Netrakona*

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Violating a court directive, some unscrupulous people continue to illegally lift sand from the Someshwari river, posing a threat to ecological diversity.

However, the local administration turns a blind eye paving the way for the destruction of the Someshwari, considered an abundant source of high-quality sand.

Locals and environmentalists say the once crystal-clear river is nearing its death due to unlawful and unregulated extraction of sand and stone by using illegal "shallow" machines.

The Netrokona district administration has leased out seven spots of the river for lifting sand.

The leased out balmahals (designated sand quarries) are Bijoypur-Bhawanipur (287 acres); Teribazar-Shibganj Bazar (976 acres); Teribazar-Chaitati (287 acres); Birisiri-Keronkhola (341 acres); Gaoakandia (142 acres); Jhanjail-Shankarpur (140 acres); Omargaon-Hashanoagaon-Bishauti (35 acres).

The administration imposes certain conditions for sand lifting -- including that sand can be only lifted from morning to dusk and motorised pumps or dredgers cannot be used in the process.

However, leaseholders continue to lift sand round the clock; at times, up to 200 dredgers can be seen in the river lifting sand, alleged locals.

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Planes of local carriers are parked on the apron of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday as all flights, except one weekly to China, of local airlines have been cancelled.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

# US diplomats, citizens head home today

*Chartered flight to take them to America*

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A group of US citizens, including some diplomats, will be leaving Bangladesh today in a chartered flight arranged by the US government amid fears of coronavirus pandemic, US embassy officials in Dhaka have said.

They have not, however, specified the number of those leaving.

"I can tell you the flight will be full ... They are going because they want to be with their loved ones," an official said in a videoconference with some journalists yesterday.

An airlines source said the number of passengers would around 300.

The US State Department last week issued a travel advisory recommending its citizens not to travel abroad.

And if anyone wants to return to the US, the department would arrange it for them, the advisory said.

In response, some 10,000 US citizens have already returned to the US from 28 countries, the embassy officials in Dhaka said.

All passengers must agree to reimburse the U.S. Government for the flight by signing a promissory note for approximately the amount of a full-fare economy flight, or comparable alternate transportation, to the designated destination that would have been charged immediately before this crisis.

Asked, if the US citizens would feel safer in their country than in Bangladesh amid the coronavirus outbreak, a US diplomat said as per the regulations in Bangladesh, anyone having fever or symptoms of Covid-19 will be quarantined.

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**PRAYER TIMING MARCH 30**

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-45 12-45 4-45 6-20 7-45  
JAMAAT 5-20 1-15 5-00 6-25 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

# Earnings of Bede dry up

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

The life of Bede community members in Shariatpur has come to a halt as they are prevented from earning their livelihood by roaming around localities amid fear of coronavirus spread.

The local administration asked them not to go out of their homes without offering any financial assistance, said 35-year-old Bede woman Hasina Begum.

As a result, the day-to-day earnings have stopped putting the community members in trouble surviving, she added.

Showing snake charming, acrobatics of monkey, magic tricks, and selling herbal medicines, amulets, river oyster pearls and talismans in different areas are the traditional income sources of the Bede.

Besides, some males of the community work as day labourers. But all of these have now stopped due to the direction from the local administration.

Hasina said, "Our income sources have completely closed as we do not go outside. We even fail to ensure one meal a day to our families. We will not survive if the government does not help us."

Like Hasina, around 600 people in Domshar and Angaria unions in Sadar upazila of Shariatpur have envolved their lives because of the crisis that occurred due to ongoing 10-day shutdown.

Abdul Sattar, sardar of a Bede

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

# Bangabandhu calls for mass education



Bangabandhu talking to intellectuals in Chittagong on March 30, 1972.

MARCH 30, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

**BANGABANDHU'S ADDRESS TO INTELLECTUALS**

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today emphasises the need for mass education in the country. He observes that without mass education, economic problems cannot be solved effectively, nor can socialism be implemented. Addressing intellectuals at the government house in Chittagong, the prime minister says that an education commission is being set up with educationists and scientists. He further says there is no scope for differences regarding the need for a people-oriented education system. He observes that our

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# Construction of Covid-19 hospital to continue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities have decided to continue setting up the dedicated hospital for coronavirus patients in the capital's Tejgaon industrial area which was halted for a day due to protesting locals.

Akij Group and Gonoshasthaya Kendra have jointly taken the initiative to build a 301-bedded hospital with modern medical facilities in Tejgaon.

The hospital's construction saw a temporary halt on Saturday when a group of locals staged demonstration against it, saying setting up a hospital for coronavirus patients could cause the virus spread in the locality.

The incident halted the refurbishment works at a building for hours.

Contacted, Ali Hossain Khan, officer-in-charge

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**1/5+ STAY HOME, STAY WELL**

# Time to teach values, hygiene

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The countrywide school shutdown, enforced to curb further spread of the coronavirus, can be an ideal time for parents to teach their children morality, personal hygiene and share various tales, especially folk.

During the shutdown, it is critical to provide help to children at home, for whom confinement can be a reason to become restless. These students cannot meet with their schoolmates and friends, which can aggravate the problem.

"Usually, parents get little time to teach morality to their children. So, this is the right time for parents to give more time to their kids," said Professor Siddiqur Rahman, former Director of the Institute of Education and Research at the University of Dhaka.

He said once kids and parents have identified the subjects they will study, they make a schedule and display it prominently so that everyone in the family knows what is coming and when it is over.

Most kids work off a schedule in their classrooms, so recreating something similar at home can ease the transition to a different learning environment for the foreseeable future, the educationist said.

Parents can also make time for fun with their children and read stories and poetry to them to enrich their minds, he said.

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# Ctg admin in aid of the destitute

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

The Chattogram district administration and metropolitan police distributed relief materials to 480 poor and low-income families yesterday.

The families were severely hit by a 10-day countrywide shutdown enforced by the government on Thursday to contain the spread of novel coronavirus.

The Chattogram district administration and metropolitan police have been distributing relief materials in different parts of the district since Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Chattogram Elias Hossain, along with his team, yesterday visited some houses who returned from abroad and are in home quarantine at Khulshi, one of the posh areas in the port city.

Masudur Rahman, assistant commissioner of Chattogram district administration, said DC Elias distributed the relief

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Parvin Begum sitting on the pavement of Dhanmondi Road-21. She has no husband or children to take care of her. She used to live on alms but now she is in serious trouble. The 10-day closure to slow the spread of coronavirus has left streets devoid of people, and now she is finding it hard to survive.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

# Made for poor, eco-friendly too

*Biodegradable masks being made from scraps at RMG factories for free distribution in 64 dists*

NILIMA JAHAN

Some members of a garment factory alliance have been producing biodegradable general-use masks from surplus fabrics to distribute among the poor for free.

Following the coronavirus outbreak, masks, often made of non-woven materials including plastic, have been in high demand and are selling in the market at Tk 30 to Tk 100.

Under such circumstances, at least nine factories, which are part of Eco-friendly Low-Cost Liquid Absorbent (Ella) alliance, decided to distribute their masks in all 64 districts through the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA).

They entered an agreement with BIDA on March 19, Mamunur Rahman, coordinator of Ella, told The Daily Star.

He said initially they had planned to supply 25 lakh free masks but as the factories are closing down, they might need to revise their target.

"In our textile industry, we have a wide range of good quality fabric scraps and leftovers that can be reused for diverse purposes," said Mamunur, who also founded Ella Pad, a free sanitary napkin produced at a lower cost from textile scraps for workers of Ella's members.

He said the fabric scraps can be used to produce general-use masks in response to the current situation, when there is an apparent shortage of the product in the market.

Ella members have already distributed free masks to the workers of their factories, he added.

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