DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 11, 2020

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**33** Recovery



97,264



•

1,622,167

Total cases

# Cash aid for extreme poor

Under govt's third stimulus package, 34 lakh families to get monthly allowance through mobile banking; farmers to get loan at 3pc interest rate

#### REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

-FEY ASH FREE-AKIJ CEMENT

The government is set to unveil its third stimulus package soon, offering cash aid to poor families that have been hit hard by the ongoing shutdown amid coronavirus scare.

It plans to transfer between Tk 2,000 and Tk 3,000 a month to each of 34 lakh poor families across the country through mobile banking. The aid will continue for three months starting from April, said officials of the Prime Minister's Office and the finance ministry.

The stimulus package will also include a scheme -- between Tk 5,000 crore and Tk 10,000 crore -- to help farmers boost crop production, they said.

Finance ministry officials said they plan to provide growers with farm loans at 3 percent interest against the existing rate of 9 percent

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to announce the third stimulus package later this week as part of measures to safeguard the most vulnerable segments of society," a top official at the PMO told The

The Auly Star

Daily Star. Hasina on March 25 announced a Tk 5,000 crore package for paying wages and allowances of workers and employees of export-oriented industries.

BANGLADESH<br/>UPDATE94<br/>New cases in 24hrs424<br/>Total cases27<br/>Death

Chaitra 28, 1426 BS

Later on April 5, she unveiled a Tk 67,750 crore stimulus package to offset the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Under the third package, if Tk 2,000 is provided monthly to each of the poor families for three months, the government would need around Tk 2,040 crore. But if the amount is Tk 3,000 per month, it would need Tk 3,060 crore, said officials.

"We plan to send the money to vulnerable groups through mobile phones. We will select them through mobile phone tracking and send the money. We have already talked to three large mobile phone operators, and they gave positive feedback...," said a top official at the finance ministry.

Officials said the vulnerable segments include rickshaw and rickshaw-van pullers, transport workers, construction and hotel SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

The coronavirus outbreak has turned the vibrant capital into a ghost town. For Aleya Begum, surviving here has now become a day-to-day struggle. The 70-year-old, who lives alone on the footpath in Katabon area, is too weak to stand in queues for relief. She eagerly waits yesterday to see if anyone comes up with a pack of relief goods.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Six more people died of novel coronavirus yesterday, the highest in a single day since the first confirmed case was reported in the country on March 8.

It took the total number of deaths from Covid-19 to 27, said the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

Another 94 people tested positive for the virus in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, raising the number of confirmed cases to 424.



Shaban 16, 1441 Hijri

Don't go out after 6pm

Legal action against rules breakers; emergency services, journos exempted; shutdown extended till April 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

locked down three districts and two upazilas to prevent the spread of the virus. Health officials have

The government yesterday ordered people not to leave home after 6:00pm and extended the ongoing shutdown until April 25 as coronavirus cases and deaths continue

With deep sorrow, we're saying that although the number of infected people came down from the previous day, six more people died in the last 24 hours," IEDCR Director Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora told a press briefing via video conference from the capital yesterday.

The increase came after a day when the number of deaths had fallen to one, but the infections crossed a hundred for the first time in a single day.

Apart from the death, there remains a matter of concern as recovery of patients was not reported in 24 hours. Some 33 patients have so far recovered.

During her regular press conference on Covid-19, Prof Flora said of the six deceased, all aged between 30 and 90, five were male and one was female. Three of them were from the capital, two from Narayanganj, and the other was from Patuakhali.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



**KEEP SOARING** 

#### ZYMA ISLAM

If statistics from other countries are to be believed, Bangladesh is now at the shoulder of the epidemic curve, and the only direction that this can go is up. Thursday's test results were a turning

point with the number of detected coronavirus cases crossing a hundred (112) for the first time in a single day. The authorities vesterday said another 94 people tested positive for the virus. Together, this number (206) is more

than the total number of cases for the entire last month.

If one assumes March 8 -- the day when the authorities reported the first Covid-19 case in Bangladesh -- the beginning of Week 1 of the crisis, then by the end of the fourth week, on April 4, the country had only 70 cases.

This week, that number stands at 424. This is a 505 percent increase from the figure of Week 4.

What can the nation expect in the SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

collected samples of the deceased for tests, report our correspondent after talking to the officials concerned.

four districts yesterday.

Meanwhile, local

administrations yesterday

In Narayanganj, a 48-year-old man died of Covid-19-like symptoms at his residence at Charpara area under Kanchan municipality yesterday morning.

In Laxmipur, a 25-yearold man died of fever and diarrhoea at his residence in Saheberhat union under Kamolnagar upazila

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

to rise, according to a gazette of the public administration ministry.

Anyone defying the order will face penalties, it said.

'Everyone is requested not to leave home unless it is really necessary," the gazette said.

Announcements were made on loudspeakers at different mosques in the capital, urging people to stay indoors after dark

This is the third time the government extended the nationwide shutdown, which officials prefer to call general holidays.

On March 23, the government announced closure of all public and private offices from March 26 to April 4. On April 1, it was extended to April 11. The second extension was announced four days later.

Garment factories and educational institutions will also remain closed until April 25.

In the gazette notification, the ministry said the holiday SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



#### PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

### CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC Global death toll crosses 100,000

Europe eyes extending lockdowns several more weeks; IMF says pandemic to trigger worst recession since Great Depression

#### AGENCIES

European countries yesterday signaled that they were preparing to extend lockdowns several more weeks despite positive signs as the global death toll from the coronavirus epidemic crossed 100,000.

Governments have forced businesses to close and limited the movement of half the world's population, halting economic activity and prompting the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to warn that the world faces its worst downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Some 17 million Americans have so far lost their jobs, prompting the US government to launch a \$2.3 trillion rescue package, while the European Union late Thursday struck a 500-billion euro (\$550 billion) deal to help hard-hit member states.

The United States is now emerging as the global hotspot of the virus. More than 1,700 people died on Thursday from almost 500,000 cases, bringing its total death toll to the second highest in the world after Italy. It also has the largest number of cases

#### anywhere in the world by far.

More than 1.6 million infections have been recorded globally, according to an AFP tally.

Thousands of deaths across Europe yesterday helped to drive the confirmed global toll at 1,00,156 with nearly half of the deaths reported in the past week.

But there was relief in Britain as Prime Minister Boris Johnson, among the world's most high-profile virus sufferers, was moved to a normal hospital ward after three days in intensive care.

"He is in extremely good spirits," a government spokesman said.

And across Europe and the United States, officials sought solace in slightly improving figures

Spain, the third hardest-hit country, saw its lowest day toll in 17 days, and Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Thursday the "fire started by the pandemic is starting to come under control".

France also reported that fewer people were in intensive care for COVID-19, the

yesterday morning.

### India's coronavirus relief plan could leave millions without food aid

### **REUTERS**, New Delhi

Tens of millions of Indians stand to see few benefits from a coronavirus relief package worth \$22.6 billion, economists and food rights activists say, a scenario that spells catastrophe for Karan Kumar, a struggling day labourer in the capital.

Living in cramped quarters at a construction site where activity has been halted by a harsh three-week lockdown to stem the spread of the virus, Kumar has been without work

for days, unable to earn a daily wage of about \$4.

"I'm not suffering alone, my family is suffering with me," said 32-year-old Kumar, who relies on his earnings to support his wife, five children and ageing parents in his home state of Bihar, one of India's poorest.

"My wife calls up and urges me to get home anyhow," said Kumar, one of 1,500 workers at the site. "She says that even if we are hungry, we will be hungry together."

### Don't go out after 6pm

#### FROM PAGE 1

should not be considered as a regular one and people should strictly follow the directives to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

People must stay at home to be safe and to curb transmission of the virus, it added.

Government officials and employees in divisions, districts, upazilas and unions will have to stay at their workplaces to perform their duties, it said.

People engaged in electricity, water, and gas supply, fire service, cleaning activities, telephone and internet services and the media are exempt from the restrictions.

Transportation of fertilisers, pesticides, newspapers, food items, industrial products, medical equipment, emergency and essential goods are outside the purview of the restrictions.

Kitchen market, food and drug stores are also exempt. Production at export-oriented

factories may continue if they are working to meet deadlines. The Bangladesh Bank would issue

directives on limited-scale banking during the holidays, it said.

"Movement of... trains, buses, rickshaws and vans would be allowed in phases, considering the livelihood of people if the situation improves. RMG FACTORIES CLOSED UNTIL

25TH

The decision to keep the factories closed was announced in a statement issued by Rubana Huq, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), and AKM Salim Osman, president of Bangladesh

### Death toll 27 FROM PAGE 1

She added that among the 94 new patients, 37 are from Dhaka, 16 from Narayanganj, and the rest are from different other districts. "Five of them are from the capital's Jatrabari.'

The IEDCR director said 1,184 samples were tested in the last 24 hours. Of those, 701 were from the capital, and 483 outside the capital.

So far, 7,359 tests have been conducted since January 28.

Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA).

The statement was posted in a WhatsApp message group of journalists yesterday.

Any factory owner willing to pay the workers before 25th should inform the BGMEA, BKMEA, and Industrial Police beforehand, it said.

The associations earlier suggested that their member companies disburse the workers' salary of March by April 16.

The factory owners earlier announced that factories would open amid the shutdown, forcing thousands of workers to come to the cities. They returned home after the owners changed their decision following widespread criticism

SCHOOL CLOSED UNTIL RAMADAN The educational institutions will remain closed until April 25, said Abul Khair, public relation officer of the education ministrv

Secondary schools may not open until May 30, because of the Ramadan, May Day, Buddha Purnima and Eid-ul-Fitr, he said.

Secondary and Higher Education Division Secretary Mahbub Hossain said, "We may revise our decisions if the situation improves. You will all know."

The first half-yearly exams at primary schools have been suspended due to the shutdown.

The exams were supposed to be held between April 15 and April 23.

"We will take the exams later," Fasiullah, director general of Directorate of Primary Education, said.

Over 1 lakh primary schools, madrasas, and kindergartens have over 1.74 crore students across the country.

to dedicate the unit for Covid-19 patients as the number of such patients is increasing.

The authorities have also been requested to shift the burn unit's patients to nearby Sheikh Hasina National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute. Samanta Lal Sen, chief coordinator

of the institute, said they received an order. "We will start shifting the patients

tomorrow [today] and try to complete it within the day," he told The Daily Star vesterday. There are over 500 inpatients in the unit every day against nearly 300 beds. However, a number of doctors at the DMCH opposed the government decision, saying that DMCH is the premier hospital where patients from across the country were taken to. "The hospital is overcrowded with patients. If any portion is dedicated for Covid-19 patients, the virus may spread," said a doctor, preferring anonymity. Another doctor suggested that the government should reconsider the decision and build a temporary hospital or dedicate the whole hospital for Covid-19 patients. A health ministry official told this newspaper that they would use the burn unit if the existing dedicated hospitals for Covid-19 patients were overflowed with patients. He said some doctors were opposing the move as they thought they had to treat the Covid-19 patients.

A medical team of Brahmanbaria's Akhaura upazila health complex collects information about a suspected Covid-19 patient, who died at her in-law's house in Ranikhar village early Thursday, about 10 days after returning from Narayanganj. The team also collected samples from the body of the 40-yearold housewife on Thursday.

### Cash aid for extreme poor

#### FROM PAGE 1

workers, street hawkers, agricultural and day labourers, porters and domestic helps.

They said the aid programme would be run taking into consideration the Census of Slum Areas and Floating Population 2014, conducted Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

The survey shows there were around 5.95 lakh households in 13,935 slums across the country at that time.

The government plans to transfer cash to 34 lakh poor families as the number of such households in the slums may have increased in the last few years, and there are poor families outside the slum areas as well, mentioned the officials.

Of the slum dwellers, 16.80 percent were rickshaw or rickshaw-van pullers, 14.35 percent garment workers, 14.33 percent were in the service sector, 8.27 percent porters and day labourers, 8.38 percent construction workers, 6.94 percent transport workers, 2.82 percent hotel workers, 2.85 percent domestic helps, and 1.40 percent street hawkers and others, according to the census.

Low income people, especially rickshaw-pullers, domestic helps and day labourers, have already been hit hard by the ongoing shutdown as they have no work.

Yesterday, the ongoing nationwide shutdown was extended till April 25.

Earlier, the government announced closure of all public and private offices from March 26 to April 4, asking people to stay indoors and maintain social

distancing. It was later extended till the mitigation and containment of the April 14.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, said that without a minimum social assistance, the vulnerable and those who live a hand-to-mouth existence will have no choice but to defy orders.

The finance ministry needs to play a major role in providing cash assistance to the target groups, taking the help of other relevant ministries, parastatal organisations, NGOs and mobile financial services providers, he mentioned.

"While testing, testing and testing is the key to fighting Covid-19, governance, governance and governance is the key to delivering assistance to the poor and the vulnerable.

"Justifiably, one may worry about the impact on the prices of essentials after the cash transfers kick in. Inflation generally should not be a concern in the present context if the reliance on deficit monetisation is strictly restricted to the duration of the emergency measures linked to the health crisis," Zahid pointed out.

"What would be important is to ensure that the supply chains of essentials remain functional and the stocks of essentials available in the local markets are adequate. There is an overall contraction in domestic and

### Global death toll crosses 100,000

virus spread, the consequent deepening of poverty and the specter of hunger, he added. In an article published in an Indian

newspaper recently, noted economists Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, who won the Nobel Prize last year, called for bolder direct benefit transfers to deal with the coronavirus crisis that has left India's poor in the lurch.

'Be much, much bolder with the social transfers schemes. Without that, the demand crisis will snowball into an economic avalanche, and people will have no choice but to defy orders," the duo said.

Their comments came days after the Indian government on March 26 announced a \$22.6 billion economic package to ensure that no one goes hungry during th coronavirus lockdown. the nationwide

Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government would provide food rations and cash transfers for three months to take care of "the welfare concerns of poor and suffering workers, and those who need immediate help".

Earlier on March 24, the Pakistan government announced a rescue and stimulus package involving Rs 1.13 trillion to support various segments of society.

Of the amount, Rs 200 billion were allocated for the labour force and Rs

### No scope for postponement of directives

**UGC** chairman says about grade, admission at private universities MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The University Grants Commission yesterday said it would not accept the private universities' request to postpone its decisions on stopping awarding grades to students without holding semester finals, enrolling new students without admission tests, and holding tests online.

In a letter to UGC Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah on Thursday, APUB Chairman Sheikh Kabir Hossain said they were requesting the UGC to postpone its decisions until holding a discussion with Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh APUB).

Speaking to The Daily Star, Prof Shahidullah yesterday said, "There is no scope for postponement of such decisions. The situation has not improved since we issued the directive [April 6]. Rather, it has deteriorated."

He said they were readying an answer to the APUB letter. "I discussed the issue with the others UGC members. We all agreed that

export demand any way. "The key priority to focus on now is 150 billion for vulnerable families.

As part of measures to curb the spread of the virus, the government yesterday extended the ongoing countrywide shutdown until April 25.

The spread of the Covid-19 continued to put significant strain on the country's health system that lacks enough manpower and facilities to deal with the outbreak.

So far, 112 ICU beds have been prepared across the country for treating Covid-19 patients, Sanya Tahmina Ihora, additional director general at the Directorate General of Health Services, said at the briefing.

The instructions to fight coronavirus were changing quickly. As it is a novel form of the virus, it is still under lots of experiments, she said, urging all to have faith in the authorities.

Meanwhile, the burn unit at Dhaka Medical College Hospital is going to be another centre for treating Covid-19 patients.

The health and family welfare ministry yesterday issued a circular in this regard, stating that it is now needed

### 6 more die

#### FROM PAGE 1

55-year-old madrasa Besides, а teacher died of Covid-19 symptoms in the district's Sadar Hospital on Thursday evening. He was a resident of Charjangaliya village under Kamalnagar upazila.

In Dinajpur, a 75-year-old man died of Covid-19-like symptoms at Deor village under Birampur Upazila on Thursday night.

In Joypurhat, a 21-year-old man died of flu-like symptoms at Poulunja village under Khetlal Upazila on Thursday morning.

In Feni, a 60-year-old man, who returned home from Narayanganj on March 24, died of Coronavirus-like symptoms at his residence at Shibpur village under Sadar upazila on Thursday night.

Cumilla, the district In administration locked down the entire district from 3:00pm yesterday until further notice to prevent the risk of spreading coronavirus.

Besides, a 50-year-old man Biramkandi in Korikandi union under Titash upazila of Cumilla has been tested positive for coronavirus.

district's In Gaibandha, the coronavirus control and prevention committee led by the deputy commissioner locked down the entire

#### district from 5:00pm yesterday.

In Noakhali, the local administration yesterday announced that the entire district would be put under lockdown from 6:00am today until further notice.

In Patuakhali, local administration yesterday locked down Dumki upazila until further notice. Besides, three doctors of Patuakhali General Hospital have been kept in quarantine as they came in contact with a Covid-19 infected patient.

In Barguna, the district's Amtoli upazila was locked down from 2:00pm vesterday until further notice.

In Gopalganj, a 21-year-old man and his wife of a village in Borni union under Tungipara upazila tested positive for coronavirus.

This is the first confirmed case in the district.

In Brahmanbaria, a 65-year-old man tested positive for coronavirus in Nabinagar upazila, the first confirmed case in the district.

In Gazipur, a worker of an agro-feed factory has been tested positive for coronavirus in Dasu Narayanpur area under Kapasia upazila.

correspondents Our from Narayanganj, Dinajpur, Feni, Noakhali, Cumilla, Bogura, Patuakhali, Brahmanbaria, Faridpur and Gazipur contributed to this report.

first fall since the pandemic broke out.

However, European leaders made it clear that the lockdowns imposed to prevent the spread of the virus would not go away soon.

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, whose country has reported the most virus-linked deaths worldwide, is leaning towards an extension to early May, with few concessions to business demands to allow more companies to operate normally.

Spain prolonged a state of emergency until April 25 and Britain also is likely to extend restrictions.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel joined Spain and Italy on Thursday in upholding restrictions on people's movement and face-to-face contacts, saying progress in defeating the pandemic is "fragile" and it's too early to relent.

Anthony Fauci, the US government's

top pandemic expert, said the United IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva, urging States was "going in the right direction" after a slight drop in the US daily death rate from Wednesday's record toll of 1,973

In New York, the epicentre of the virus in the United States, the rate of hospital admissions fell on Thursday and state Governor Andrew Cuomo said the actions taken in the state were "flattening the curve", referring to attempts to stabilise the death rate.

The fallout is shaking every corner of the financial world, with sectors from travel and tourism to hospitality and arts and culture slammed by the pandemic.

The IMF, which has \$1 trillion in lending capacity, said it was responding to calls from 90 countries for emergency financing.

"We anticipate the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression," said

### For now, the only way is up

FROM PAGE 1

coming weeks? What will Bangladesh's epidemic curve look like? Experts say one should look at the countries already into the crisis to search for the answer.

"The number of positive cases may increase by a lot. We can learn from our neighbouring countries," Dr Mushtuq Hussain, said consultant, National Action Plan for Health Security at the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

India's turning point occurred in Week 8 of the crisis -- between March 20 and March 26. The total number of positive cases stood at 694, which was a staggering 359 percent increase from the previous week.

Two weeks later, at this current moment, the cumulative number of positive cases is 6,771, which is 10 times more than the number from their watershed week.

Unlike India, Pakistan did not have much time in hand before things went south. Bangladesh and Pakistan reported their first cases approximately around the same time, but Pakistan's case numbers have seen a meteoric rise from the first week.

From a total of 16 cases the first week, it had 187 cases at the end of Week 2, and all very suddenly that number shot up to 887 by Week 3. As of April 10, the country has 4,489 positive cases with 63 people dead.

United States of America saw its which another 41 tested positive. This first sharp jump in Week 7, with 647 cases reported. Today at Week 13, the number is over seven hundred times samples a day. more at 463,619. Over 16,000 people are dead.

Malaysia also saw its number of positive cases skyrocketing from one week to the next at a precise point of the pandemic. On March 13, which was the end of Week 7, the country had a cumulative total of 200 cases. By Week 8, the total number stood at 1,030. At the current moment, three weeks after its watershed week, Malaysia's total positive cases have risen four-fold.

Dr Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of IEDCR, was asked whether Bangladesh could see a rise in cases the way its neighbouring countries did. "There is a fear of that happening," she answered.

"The number of positive cases has increased and will continue increasing," she stated.

"In fact, to get a proper sense of how much the number of positive cases has increased, one should look at the tests done at the IEDCR laboratory today. We conducted 196 tests today and results of 53 of them were positive. This is a big proportion when comparing to the numbers of the previous days," she added.

Approximately a thousand additional tests were done in other labs across the country yesterday, of

governments to provide lifelines to businesses and households.

And major oil producers except Mexico agreed to cut output after a dramatic slump in demand caused by the virus, exacerbated by a Saudi-Russia price war, sent prices crashing to a near two-decade low.

Despite hopeful signs in Western nations and China -- where the virus was first detected late last year -- there are fears the worst is still to come in much of the developing world.

War-torn Yemen, which has been experiencing one of the world's most acute humanitarian crises, yesterday reported its first case.

Brazilian authorities confirmed the first deaths in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, where overcrowding and poor sanitation have raised fears of a catastrophe.

Essentially, Flora warned that even

as testing has been ramped up, the

percentage of samples found positive

is on the rise because there are more

infected people than there were

which have experienced a meteoric

rise in coronavirus cases, shows that an

increase in the percentage of samples

testing positive is an indication that

the country is climbing up the curve.

For example, after India ramped

up testing, the percentage of cases

found positive has gone up from 0.88

percent in Week 5 to 5.17 percent

right now. Bangladesh is now showing

a similar figure -- 5.76 percent of the

samples tested positive as of yesterday.

senior infectious disease researcher,

involved in the government's response

to Covid-19, said this could only

happen because the rate of infection

is also increasing. "If rate of infection

did not increase, and only testing

increased, then we could not see such

an increase in the percentage testing

has been a key to how the country has

Experts said a lack of containment

"Narayanganj is a big hotspot. We

positive," she said.

WHAT NEXT?

come to this point.

Requesting not to be named, a

Statistics from other countries,

before.

there is no change in the situation and there is no scope for postponing the decisions. We stand by our earlier decisions. We hope that all private universities will abide by those."

The UGC chief said they would consider reviewing the decisions if the situation improved.

Shahidullah said private universities can complete classes online, but they have to take exams only after return of normalcy. "Students should not think about exams in this dangerous situation. Also, not all students have internet connections."

Meanwhile, the UGC in a statement yesterday said their April 6 directive would remain in force until further notice. The commission will issue its next directive regarding the matter after the situation improves.

have failed to keep positive cases in Narayanganj and now they are all over was the first time the government the country," said Flora. managed to test more than a thousand

Experts warned that the numbers would increase well into the next few months and all efforts should be made to flatten the curve.

"We are facing a very difficult time ahead and this situation will prevail for the next couple of months," said Dr Mushtuq Hussain.

"We have to ensure active surveillance among the community and test all with flu-like symptoms. The government alone cannot do that. Communities like housing societies can take the responsibility of making sure that their residents are getting tested," he said

"Lockdown of neighbourhoods is not the only answer. We have never asked the police to start marking homes with positive cases with red flags. This [marking homes] is creating stigma and resulting in people hiding their disease status, or refusing to get tested," he said.

He added that the way the pandemic has been handled has resulted into social stigma against families of those testing positive. "That is why people are leaving and going to their village homes," he said.

"We have to make sure people have enough to eat. Otherwise, they will get out into the streets looking for food," he said, adding it will only increase the chances of coronavirus transmission.

### BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Mountain Gorilla, Bwindi, Uganda.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

### **Re-Visiting Africa**

ecently I started re-reading a book I first read three decades ago. African Silences chronicles writer/naturalist Peter Mathiessen's travels through Africa during the 1970s and 1980s looking for rare birds and wildlife. Covering three broad swaths of Western and Central Africa, the book is both exciting and gloomy. Having visited several African countries in recent years, I can readily connect with the book. I am excited when Mathiessen finds rare animals and birds, and saddened when he recounts the destruction wrought on the wildlife of the continent. The strong human element of the book - a hallmark of Mathiessen's work and one that attracted me in the first place also resonates with me.

My first reading of this book during the heady days of my youth when I found my stride in Silicon Valley and believed the world was mine to conquer - had left me unimpressed. Non-fiction attracted me, but since I was, at that time, not keen about observing wildlife, Mathiessen's descriptions of gorillas, elephants, rhinos and numerous birds did not particularly strike me. The only reason I finished it was because Mathiessen had autographed the book for me at a reading.

After several decades my interest in observing nature has greatly increased. So when I opened this book, I found myself drawn to several sections.

Take Mountain Gorillas, for instance. These rare and endangered creatures are seen in a mountainous area where three countries, Uganda, Rwanda and The Congo, meet. In 2014, I tracked them in Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. After a brutal day of climbing slippery slopes which included falling countless times, I came face to face with a silverback and his troop - a memorable

by the sudden appearance of about twenty-five humans who frantically photographed them with wide-eyed amazement for several minutes.

And what was it like for Mathiessen? He tracked the gorillas with a safari group in the Virunga mountains of The Congo, not too far from Bwindi. When the humans finally found the gorillas and they faced each other, "the apes are more relaxed than we are and also more discreet, since they do not stare rudely at our strange appearance; on the contrary they avert their gaze from the disorderly spectacle we represent [and concentrate on eating leaves.]" His group however had a bonus over mine. Its path crossed with that of nasty Siafu ants which bit "the hell out of the women and children," causing chaos and groans, to which the Gorillas gave nary a glance.

Mathiessen is a keen observer of birds. He writes about his quest for the elusive Congo Peacock, one of three peacock species of the world, which was first recorded in the 1930s. Little was known about this bird during the 1980s, but today we know as many as 9,000 exist in the wild.

The author also documents with empathy the daily surprises and hiccups while travelling in Africa. Flat tires, broken down cars, collisions with domesticated animals, even the emergency landing of a small plane and the subsequent harassment by officials - Mathiessen covers them all with good humour. My own experiences with African drivers and cars can attest to this.

The book reminds me once again why Mathiessen was a great writer. Very few have been able fuse observations about flora and fauna with stories of the human condition like him, effortlessly moving from one to the other.

### 'Be wary of muggers'

Police instruct pharmacies, emergency suppliers

#### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Police have instructed owners and workers of emergency supply products and pharmacies, who have government permission to stay open after sunset, to not allow customers to enter inside shops unless absolutely necessary.

Police also told shop owners to carry out financial transactions and deliver products from inside the shop and to keep their shop grilles closed if they have the option.

Sohel Rana, Assistant Inspector General (media and public relations) of Police Headquarters (PHQ), made the disclosure in a video message to media yesterday.

Bangladesh Police gave the instructions in light of mugging activities that were reported in different areas of Dhaka, including pharmacies, during the shutdown enforced, said officials.

Meanwhile, Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police on Thursday arrested four people from the capital's Dhanmondi, Lalbagh and Hajaribagh areas for their alleged involvement in a robbery at a flat in the capital's Kalabagan.

The arrestees are Md Hasan alias Jisan, Md Anowar Hossain, Md Abdul Alim and Md Likhon Sheikh.

Shamsul Arefin, additional deputy commissioner of DB, told media the unit chiefs to perform duty with utmost arrestees looted gold ornaments, cash and a professionalism so that crime incidents do laptop after cutting grille of a flat on March not rise during this extraordinary situation.

A case was filed with Kalabagan Police Station regarding the incident on April 2 and police primarily identified two of the arrestees analysing CCTV footage, he said.

The arrestees in primary interrogation confessed their involvement in some other theft incidents, added Arefin. AIG Sohel Rana said, "We gave the

instructions to shop owners after we found the pattern of crime changing recently, and some mugging incidents were reported in ome medicine shops.

Police have intensified their patrolling in wake of the mugging incidents said the

Sohel Rana further said, "Every member of the police force is standing by the people, going beyond their normal responsibilities and duties. People are also showing respect and love for the police force. We can see it while going through mass media and social media.

"All members of the police force are being encouraged by the love and respect. We want to say clearly that the attitude of service to the people will continue," he said in another video statement to media.

Earlier on Thursday, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mohammad Javed Patwary in a video message instructed all police

### CMP launches app to monitor homequarantined persons

STAFF CORRESPONDENT. Ctg

To prevent the spread of coronavirus, Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) have launched a mobile app, aiming to monitor people who are in home quarantine after coming in contact with Covid-19 positive patients.

The mobile application, "Stay Home, Stay Safe" prepared by Inovace Technologies, was inaugurated by CMP Commissioner Md Mahabubor Rahaman on Thursday evening at CMP Headquarters.

The officials said the app has geofencing technology, which will ensure the current location and status of homequarantined people.

Apart from that, the app has a notification system and it will send notification and alert to both the homequarantined and the web-based admin panel if they try to go outside of their designated areas.

At the same time, the admin panel will convey the information to the police stations or monitoring units concerned to take necessary steps in this regard.

CMP officials said police are now under huge pressure but their time will be saved along with ensuring proper monitoring through the app.

Police personnel will also be able to avoid close contact with the home-quarantined, ensuring their personal safety

CMP Headquarters sources said primarily the app has been introduced under 16 police stations but it will be spread across the country. Currently, 41 home-quarantined persons are being monitored through the app.

Senior officials of CMP and Inovace Technologies were present at Thursday's programme.



if anticlimactic moment. They appeared remarkably nonplussed facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabir on Instagram.

LIFE FINDS A WAY ... This tiny seedling rising through layers of solid concrete and asphalt bears a heartening testament of the indomitable force of life. At a time when fear of sickness and death have closed doors and pulled down shutters across the globe, mother nature is leaving her reminder to mankind that the fight for life is worth it. The photo was taken on Mirpur Road in front of Chandrima Super Market.

### Tough times for seasonal traders in Barishal

Suspension of Pahela Baishakh celebrations hits SMEs

#### SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Usually, April is a busy month for Nantu Mia.

The 45-year-old tailor from Barishal not only remains occupied with orders, he also has to complete those before the deadline of Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla calendar.

Not just him, other traders too spend busy times during the period and eye good profit.

This year, however, the situation is different due to the countrywide shutdown and cancellation of the festival to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus, which is taking a toll on traders.

"I used to earn Tk 500-600 daily at this time every year. Now, I don't have enough money to buy essentials for my family," said Nantu Mia.

The stores at the city's Katpatty, Chawkbazar and Padmabaty are famous for their collections and discounts on dresses ahead of Pahela Baishakh, and hundreds flock to those ahead of the festival.

These days, the areas are wearing a deserted look.

Achol Fashions, a famous boutique in Katpatty, have been closed for 15 days. Its owner Bilkis Ahamed Lily said she is worried how she is going to pay rent.

clothes traders, Not just businesspersons of other traditional items are also hit hard. A small entrepreneur, Rebekha Sultana, said she had been making jute bags and craft items with a bank loan. "Now, it's not possible for me to pay the installment," she said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Banalta cancelled," she said. Murshida, president of Barishal Women Business Forum, demanded installment echoed her. postponement of



With dropped shoulders, a woman makes clay toys at Mahar village in Uzirpur upazila. These are widely sold during Pahela Baishakh, but with the traditional fairs cancelled this year, artisans are staring at a huge loss.

collection by banks for at least six months to support hundreds of small and medium enterprise (SME) traders.

According to Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), around 2,000 people are involved in making SME products in the city.

Mrinal Kanti Saha, owner of Swadeshi Bastralaya, said demand for dresses increases before Pahela Baishakh. "During this period, we sell more items than that of Eid and Puja festivals," he said.

But the traders are facing hardships, due to the present situation.

Tahira Siddika, an entrepreneur in C&B area, said last year she supplied over 50 dresses online. "But this year, almost all the orders have been

Debosree Sarker, owner of onlinebased design platform Bangaliana,

Saidur Rahman Rintu, director of the Barisal Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BCCI), said, "They [small entrepreneurs] need immediate government support.

BCCI sources said 3,000-odd people are engaged in clothes trading and there are over 500 tailors in the city.

Jalis Mahmud, deputy general manager of BSCIC in Barishal, said they provide training to SME traders. "Giving financial support to them is not our responsibility.

Contacted, Md Masudur Rahman, assistant general manager of SME Foundation under the Ministry of Industries, said, "We are looking into the crisis in this sector. We sent letters to all of our district offices. Once we receive their feedback, we will prepare a report to send to the ministry as early as possible.'

There are 107,072 SME traders in Barishal district, he added.



### Nat'l Professor Sufia Ahmed laid to rest STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Professor Sufia Ahmed, who died of cardiac arrest on Thursday night, was laid to rest at Banani graveyard in the capital yesterday.

Sufia, also a Language Movement veteran, was buried at 10:30am in the grave of her husband Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, former adviser to a caretaker government and a prominent lawyer. Sufia Ahmed (87) was a

professor of Islamic History and Culture department at Dhaka University. She passed away at United Hospital around 8:50pm on Thursday, said Md

Asaduzzaman, a senior member of Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed and Associates. She left behind her son

and daughter to mourn her death. Prof Sufia Ahmed

was one of the female forerunners to break the Section 144 on the Dhaka University campus on

February 21, 1952. She was awarded with Ekushey Padak in 2002 and Sufia Kamal Award in 2015. She served as the president of Bangladesh Itihas Parishad.

### Churches offer online Easter prayer services STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Christian Church authorities in Bangladesh are conducting online prayer services during the holy week ahead of Easter Sunday on April 12, after closing doors to the churches across the country to avoid any public gathering amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"Church authorities have instructed all Christians not to go to churches, in line with the government order. On Sundays, we are using Facebook Live for prayer service now," said Father Augustine Bulbul Rebeiro, director of Christian Communications Centre in Dhaka.

On Easter Sunday, authorities will conduct the prayer service via Facebook Live, as churches have been closed since March 22 following government directive, he said.

"Now we are towards the end of Lent [40-day fasting period] and will celebrate Easter Sunday on April 12. We call it a holy week and have frequent prayer services. So, we are doing it via Facebook," he told The Daily Star yesterday. Easter Sunday is celebrated in memory of what

Christians believe to be the resurrection of Jesus Christ three days after his crucifixion.

Church authorities have also asked all to stay home and follow instructions to prevent transmission of Covid-19.

### BSRM hands over PPE to 8 hospitals in Ctg

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BSRM, a leading steel manufacturer of the country, handed over 1,000 personal protection equipment (PPE) to eight hospitals in Chattogram recently.

The hospitals are - National Hospital, Parkview Hospital, Delta Health Care Chattogram, Max Hospital and Diagnostic, Chattogram Metropolitan Hospital, Surgiscope Hospital, Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) and Chattogram General Hospital.

CMCH Director Brig Gen SM Humayun Kabir thanked BSRM Managing Director Aameir Áli Hussain for the generous support.



### **Relief Distribution** Corruptors will not be spared: ACC STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in a statement yesterday said it will bring to book culprits involved misappropriating in government relief meant for the needy.

"We have learned through the media and our own intelligence that some people are involved in irregularities and graft in distributing relief under the government's social safety net programme in this critical period," ACC said in the statement.

Amid the countrywide shutdown to control spread of Covid-19, the government has begun distributing food among the marginalised.

But, some locals are gobbling up the relief, according to media reports.

ACC has decided that its officials will closely monitor the relief distribution activities in coordination with the deputy commissioners of the districts.

"If anyone is found to have amassed wealth illegally through misappropriation of relief, stern legal action will be taken against them," said the ACC press release.

ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmood said they have already given instruction to their officials in this regard. "We will not spare corruptors," the ACC chief said.

FROM PAGE 12

Moshi added

Moshi,

its social media page a notice about

the food assistance initiative and

asked those are in need to submit

their iqama numbers along with

locations so that the mission officials

can reach them in person and provide

As of Wednesday, some 1,600

Bangladeshi migrant workers sought

food assistance via social media,

Besides, the Saudi government

informed the mission that they

would not impose any restriction

for the undocumented workers from

getting the assistance, he further said.

permanent representative to the

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

(OIC), said he was informed that

Bangladesh missions in Jordan,

Kuwait and UAE have undertaken

similar initiatives to help several

Bangladeshi

also

Bangladesh's

migrant

them with the food packages.

### France says EU coronavirus recovery fund to be financed by joint debt

#### **REUTERS**, Paris

European Union finance ministers have agreed to an economic recovery plan for the coronavirus crisis that France's minister said implicitly opens the door to jointly issued debt and which he hailed as a French success

The agreement was reached only after Germany and France overcame opposition from the Netherlands to the crisis plan during marathon talks.

The final agreement avoids an explicit mention of jointly issued debt, which was anathema to the Dutch, but French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said it was there implicitly.

Le Maire told reporters after talks with his euro zone counterparts that European Union member states had agreed to mobilise a total 1 trillion euros (\$1.09 trillion).

Half of that amount would be made available in the short term and the rest would come from a new joint recovery fund, which France had set as its pre-condition for its approval of the overall package

Though the fund's details remain to be negotiated over the coming months, Le Maire said the final agreement implied that it would be financed with joint debt as there was no other way to finance long-term economic reconstruction.

"Who's going to raise the debt? There's a lot of uncertainty that remains to be determined. But I have a firm conviction that the fund will see the light of day and there will be debt raised jointly in a form that remains to be determined," Le Maire said.

He added that the agreement document's reference to innovative financial instruments, which was the subject of negotiations during 15 hours, opened the door for the first time to jointly issued debt.

"It means what it means. The only instrument that does not yet exist in European financing is joint debt," Le Maire said.

### Indo-Pak border FROM PAGE 12 the virus.

"The increase in ceasefire violations is an indication that Pakistan is trying to push militants into the Kashmir valley," said one of the officials, who all sought anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to media.

India has 5,734 new coronavirus infections, including 166 deaths, while Pakistan has reported 4,072 cases and 58 deaths, with the military of each helping its government's

efforts against the virus. As summer approaches, infiltration

### **Coronavirus appears to** |Hard times for expat workers strike men, overweight people harder

spreads.

"More men than women have In the emergency rooms of virus serious problems, and patients who hotspots around the world, medical are overweight or have previous staff are seeing a greater number of health problems are at higher risk, men than women suffering severe said Derek Hill, Professor of Medical symptoms of COVID-19, with obesity Imaging Science at University College emerging as another potentially London. aggravating factor. But experts are still Early statistics from Britain's

independent Intensive Care National What first began to appear as a Audit and Research Centre on people pattern in China, where the virus treated in intensive care for the virus emerged at the end of last year, has confirm this phenomenon: 73 percent echoed through hospitals in Europe are men and 73.4 percent are classed and the United States as the pandemic as overweight.

### VAT offices

### FROM PAGE 12

unsure why.

coronavirus crisis.

Sheikh Fazle Fahim, president of FBCCI, said, "We requested extension of deadline without penalty and believe that our request will be accepted considering the prevailing realities."

Contacted, NBR Member VAT Implementation Jamal Hossain said banks, ports and import-export related offices remained open. Plus, many businesses wanted to submit their VAT returns.

It is necessary to keep the VAT offices open as a fine of Tk 10,000 has to be paid by businesses in case of failure to furnish returns within the first 15 days of the month, he said.

If VAT offices are not open, businesses will complain that NBR kept the offices closed and blame us for the fine, he added.

Kazi Mostafizur Rahman, project director of VAT Online Project (VOP), said the NBR offered scope

for businesses to submit online VAT returns from October and the number of submission from 150,000 VAT registered entities had been rising since January.

In March, 34,400 VAT returns were submitted online, going up by 56 percent from 22,000 in February. The number of online submission would have been 50,000 had situation been normal, he said.

As per the rules, businesses have to submit details of transactions of previous month and deposit VAT paid by ultimate consumers to the state coffer within 15 days of the next month.

Businesses have to pay Tk 10,000 as penalty if failed to submit VAT returns ithin the scheduled time.

Firms can also seek time for delayed furnishing of returns but they have to pay 2 percent simple interest monthly for delayed submission, according to the rules.

be followed for the sake of your and

If needed, food will be sent to the

The Singapore government decided

The country's health ministry

to bear the treatment costs of anyone

has formed medical teams at the

all of our health and safety."

workers' rooms, he said.

infected with coronavirus.

workers in those countries Besides, local Bangladeshi communities in those countries have also come forward to help the migrant workers, he added. "Although it is a big challenge

thousand

to reach the food assistance to the Bangladeshi workers amid current situation, the missions are trying

### All shades of opinion

#### FROM PAGE 12

not remain confined to the members of the house alone, he adds. The business of the house is conducted in Bangla for the first time in history.

Shah Abdul Hamid and Muhammad Ullah Chowdhury are unanimously elected Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Bangladesh Ganoparishad.

During its deliberations for two hours and 45 minutes the house adopts a resolution condoling the death of those who laid down their lives for liberation of Bangladesh. The condolence resolution is moved by Bangabandhu. In another resolution the House expresses its complete solidarity with the Declaration of Independence made by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the night of March 25 last year.

On April 11, 1972 , the Gonoparishad forms four committees which include Draft Constitution Committee, Rules of Procedure Committee, Rights and Privileges Committee and House Committee. The Draft Constitution Committee will submit its report in the form of a bill. This Committee has 35 Members of Constituent Assembly as its members.

#### BANGABANDHU'S SPEECH AT GONOPARISHAD

Bangabandhu in his twenty-minute (April10, 1972) of the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh recalls that

reached, contacted our people in Chittagong through wireless and told them that from that moment Bangladesh was independent and sovereign. I asked them to announce my declaration all over so that they can put up resistance." The prime minister cautions all quarters that there should not be any attempt to misinterpret the history of the Liberation War. If that happens, he fears, future generations will fail to get the correct picture.

their best to help the workers," he

countries of coronavirus pandemic

while cases of the virus infection in

many Middle Eastern and Southeast

Following the Covid-19 outbreak,

Asian countries are also on the rise.

the authorities in some of the

countries took some unprecedented

measures to contain the virus

countrywide shutdown, ban on

commercial passenger flights, closure

of land borders, suspension of on-

arrival and tourist visas and ban on

deployed security forces to strictly

enforce law, aiming to preventing

precautionary measures to contain

Talking with this newspaper on

Wednesday, Sheikh Mohammed

Tauhidul Islam, labour welfare

counsellor at Bangladesh embassy

in Bahrain, said many Bangladeshis

were facing food shortage and the

mission was trying reach them door

to door to provide with food and

other essential commodities.

unwanted movements of citizens.

Some of these countries have also

Bangladesh also took some

The measures included curfew,

Italy is one of the hardest hit

added.

transmission.

cruise ship docking.

the virus transmission.

Bangabandhu pays glowing tributes to the martyrs of the Liberation War. The blood of the martyrs will not be allowed to go in vain, he declares.

Bangabandhu recalls with gratitude the great help and assistance advanced by the people and government of India and the Soviet Union. He also records his thanks to the people of Great Britain, Germany, France, East European countries and also the US for their support to the cause of Bangladesh.

conclusion, Bangabandhu In hopes that the Speaker will maintain complete neutrality and will help establish a sound parliamentary convention. He assures the Speaker of all possible help and cooperation of the House in this regard. JAPAN WILL GIVE

#### \$8M IN AID

On April11, 1972 Japan decides to give Bangladesh humanitarian speech at the inaugural session aid amounting to eight million dollars. The assistance will be in the form of trucks, ferryboats and the hordes of Yahya Khan launched other transportation items. A recent

The Bangladesh mission in Manama has already reached about 150 Bangladeshi expatriates in two days and provided them with rice, lentils, vegetables and other essentials like face masks and hand sanitizers, he told this newspaper over phone.

Tauhidul also said they were expecting to reach about 2,000 to 3,000 Bangladeshis living in Bahrain throughout the month of April with food and other essentials.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh mission in Rome have floated a notice on social media on Wednesday that it received applications from 600 Bangladeshis living in the Mediterranean country for food assistance.

The mission received Tk 25 lakh from the wage earners' welfare board of expatriates' welfare ministry and was working to provide food assistance to the 600 applicants with spending the allocated money, it said.

Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad on April 5 said that the ministry allocated about Tk 4.5 crore as per demands from Bangladesh missions abroad as they had undertaken all kinds of safety measures for expatriate Bangladeshis currently living abroad including food and medical treatment.

SOURCES: April 10 & 11, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Ittefaq and Parliamentary of Proceedings Bangladesh Ganoparishad (April 10, 1972).

### Fight against FROM PAGE 12

two ways -- wrong interpretation of messages and wrong messages.

"So, while delivering any message through any medium, clarity should be ensured," she said.

She said the most important thing is that the credible media houses come forward with credible information to wipe out the rumours.

Rumours and misinformation are spreading via social media. People have to be careful about credible sources and "we all have to act whenever we see any rumour", she added.

Shabnam said if anyone took misinformation seriously and acted upon it, then the consequences could be dangerous.

"For example, we read that some people in a country died because they drank Savlon [an antiseptic solution], she said.

Shabnam suggested that a free flow of information should be ensured as rumours and misinformation thrive when there is a crisis of information or there is an ill motive.

The simpler the message the more communicative it will be, she said.

She put importance on reports of

### Singapore to give food

Of the five Bangladeshis diagnosed in the past few weeks, four have recovered and one is being treated, said a ministry statement.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and his Singapore counterpart Vivian Balakrishnan talked over the phone on Thursday, according to the statement.

"All sorts of construction activities have been halted in Singapore. However, the wages and other related facilities of Bangladeshi workers have been kept up. Besides, all workers have been provided with food and medical treatment free of cost," Balakrishnan told Momen during the conversation.

In the video message posted in dormitories. Any Bangladeshi migrant social media, High Commissioner worker can approach the team Mustafizur Rahman said the Singapore members, he said.

FROM PAGE 12 government has asked residents of the dorms to maintain social distancing,

stay inside the rooms as much as

possible, and minimise contact from one block to another. The workers' time for leisure and meals have been scheduled separately, he said. "These may be difficult, but must

into Kashmir typically picks up. An Indian security official said between 250 and 300 militants were estimated to be ready to cross over from Pakistan, citing intelligence reports.

"This is the time when our (border) fence is the weakest," with damage caused by winter snows, said the official, who sought anonymity.

On Monday, the Indian Army said in a statement it killed five Pakistanbacked militants at the LoC during a firefight in heavy snow, with five of its special forces soldiers also killed.

Pakistan denies giving material support to militants in Kashmir but says it provides moral and diplomatic backing for the self-determination of Kashmiri people.

Memo No. 8637

GD-733

### 2 girls raped

#### FROM PAGE 12 he said.

The OC added that legal action would be taken against Liton if the victim's family filed any written complaint against him.

The girl is undergoing treatment at 250-bed Brahmanbaria General Hospital.

In another incident, an 11-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her relative in Gaidghat village of Jashore's Bagharpara on Thursday evening. The accused is Abu Zafar Mollah, 60.

The girl and the accused are living in the same house. Zafar raped her when she was alone at home, said police.

The victim then notified her family of the incident. Her father filed a case against Zafar with Bagharpara Police Station at night.

Syed Al-Mamun, OC of Bagharpara Police Station, said the girl was sent to Jashore General Hospital for medical tests.

Police arrested Zafar after the case was lodged.

Our Brahmanbaria and Benapole correspondents contributed to this report.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer PWD Division, Barisal Tel: 0431-64801, Fax: 0431-2173232 e-mail: ee\_bari@pwd.gov.bd

Date: 05/04/2020

### Invitation for e-Tender

e-Tender is invited in National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following work given below:

SI.	Tender	Invitational Reference	Name of work	Tender closing
No.	ID	No.		date & time
01	452338	bari/pwd/Modernization/ Acoustic-38/2019-2020	Modernization of the Auditorium of SBMC including Acoustic works Stage Sound False ceiling & Ancillary works at Barisal.	23-Apr-2020 12:30

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (Email: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

> Gerald Oliver Guda Executive Engineer PWD Division, Barisal

a cowardly attack on the people of Japanese mission to Bangladesh was Bangladesh.

occurred in the first week of

a coronavirus lockdown that has seen schools move to

home-based learning.

reports.

Zoom Video

Communications Inc ZM.O

safety and privacy concerns

about its conferencing app which has seen a surge in

usage as offices and schools

around the world shut to try

curb coronavirus infections.

of Education) is currently investigating both breaches and will lodge a police report if warranted," said Aaron Loh of the ministry's educational technology

division, without detailing

"As a precautionary

measure, our teachers will

suspend their use of Zoom until these security issues

further advise teachers on security protocols such as

not sharing the meeting link beyond the students in

requiring secure log-ins and

Loh said that they would

the incidents.

are ironed out."

the class.

"These are very serious incidents. MOE (Ministry

has been plagued with

One of the incidents

involved obscene images

He says, "I immediately realised required" items to restore the articles denouncing the rumours with that the final [point] had [been] transportation system.

asked in Dhaka for these "urgently that those could regularly publish

credible media outlets and suggested counter arguments.

Singapore Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) Kotbari, Cumilla, Bangladesh stops teachers Development of Physical Facilities of BARD (1st Revision) Project using Zoom No. 47.63.0000.033.14.41.19-706 Date: 09-04-2020 Corrigendum Notice Home-based learning Extending Closing Date of e-Tender ID 438290 **REUTERS**, Singapore Due to unavoidable circumstances, this is hereby inform to all concern that the closing date Singapore has suspended and time of e-Tender ID 438290, Ref No. 47.63.0000.033.14.41.19-533, Dated: 10 March, the use of video-2020, is hereby rescheduled further up to 04th May, 2020 (14:30) conferencing tool Zoom Ranjan Kumar Guha by teachers, its education ministry said on Friday, after GD-732 Project Director "very serious incidents"

### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Additional Chief Engineer, RHD Chattogram Zone, Agrabad, Chattogram E-mail: acechi@rhd.gov.bd Phone: (031) 712811

### Amendment Notice

Name of work: Improvement work of Ekota Bazar to BNS Sheikh Hasina Base Road (Z-1125) (Chainage: 0+000 to 12+300) by Widening road embankment, Widening, Strengthening and Raising of existing road with Surfacing, construction of Rigid Pavement, construction of RCC Box Culvert and other ancillary works under Cox's Bazar Road Division during the year 2019-2020.

Invitation Reference No.: e-GP/Dev/BNS/WP1/CZ-07/Cox/CTG ZONE/2019-2020; Tender ID: 444146

This is to notify for all concerned that due to unavoidable circumstances the following amendments made for the abovementioned Tender published in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd). Interested persons/firms can see details by visiting the website www.eprocure.gov.bd.

01	Field Name	Amendments			
SI	Field Name	Existing	Corrected		
1	Decument last colling data 8 time	15/04/2020	26/04/2020		
<u>'</u>	Document last selling date & time	16:30	16:30		
2	Closing date & time	16/04/2020	27/04/2020		
4	Closing date & time	11:00	11:00		
3	Opening date & time	16/04/2020	27/04/2020		
2		11:00	11:00		
4	Last date & time for tender/proposal	15/04/2020	26/04/2020		
4	security submission	17:00	17:00		
		Md. Abdul Wahid			
ID No. 005109					
Additional Chief Engineer, RHD					
		Chattogram Zone, Agrabad			
GD-	734	Chattog	ram		

appearing on screens and strange men making lewd comments during the streaming of a geography lesson with teenage girls, according to local media

### \_\_\_\_\_ INTERNATIONAL



### Virus threat for global peace: UN

### AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned the UN Security Council that the coronavirus pandemic threatens international peace and security potentially leading to an increase in social unrest and violence that would greatly undermine our ability to fight the disease".

Guterres, who called for a ceasefire in all global conflicts on March 23, said the coronavirus pandemic had hindered all regional, national and international conflict resolution efforts "exactly when they are needed most".

"A signal of unity and resolve from the Council would count for a lot at this anxious time," Guterres told the divided body holding its first meeting on the crisis.

"The engagement of the Security Council will be critical to mitigate the peace and security implications of the COVID-19 pandemic," Guterres added.

He cited other pressing risks to global security from the pandemic: armed groups seeing an opportunity to strike, potentially with a biological attack; the erosion of trust in public institutions; economic instability; political tensions from postponing elections: uncertainty sparking further division and turmoil in some countries; and COVID-19 "triggering or exacerbating various human rights challenges".

### India ramps up coronavirus tests

More than 16,000 tests detects 320 cases, lockdown extension likely

### REUTERS, New Delhi/Islamabad

India yesterday said it ramped up coronavirus testing as documented cases there rose above 6,700 and topped 12,000 across South Asia. The epidemic has killed 206 in

India, data shows, with its capital Delhi and financial hub Mumbai emerging as hotspots, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is under pressure to extend a 21-day nationwide lockdown beyond Tuesday, when it is due to end.

### CASES AND DEATHS IN SOUTH ASIA

India has 6761 cases, 206 deaths Pakistan has 4,601 cases, 66 deaths Afghanistan has 521 cases, 15 deaths Sri Lanka has **190** cases, **7** deaths Maldives has **19** cases and no deaths Nepal has 9 cases and no deaths Bhutan has **5** cases and no deaths

**REUTERS**, New York

plotted on a graph.

of at least 100,000.

US death toll surpassed 16,500.

'You can't relax'

Vigilance urged as NY sees signs of progress

Americans must resist the impulse to ease social-separation measures at

the first glimpse of progress now being seen in the coronavirus battle,

state government and public health leaders warned on Thursday, as the

Calls for heightened vigilance, countering talk from the Trump

administration of reopening the economy next month, came as new

evidence emerged that stay-at-home restrictions were working to flatten

the arc of infections in New York state, the US epicenter of the pandemic.

second day, to 200. Governor Andrew Cuomo said it was a sign that social

distancing was succeeding, even though the number of coronavirus-related

deaths in the state rose by 799 on Wednesday, a record high for a third day.

of what we did yesterday," Cuomo said, referring to the slope of data when

contagious virus were also reflected in fresh computer models scaling back

the projected nationwide death toll to 60,000, down from earlier forecasts

COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the virus.

number of known infections at more than 465,000.

New York state has now recorded more than 7,000 deaths from

New York state alone has accounted for nearly half the total loss of

life in recent days across the United States, which leads the world in total

"You can't relax. The flattening of the curve last night happened because

The apparent progress in efforts to slow the spread of the highly

The number of newly hospitalized patients in New York dropped for a

In neighbouring Pakistan, where the official tally climbed to 4,601 cases and 66 deaths, a crowd of worshippers attacked police enforcing lockdown rules outside a Karachi mosque when the officials tried to stop them from offering a congregational prayer, said city police chief Ghulam Nabi Memon. Authorities earlier warned of tough

penalties if people went to mosques for Friday pravers. The lockdown rules allow only five people to pray at a time. Pakistan announced a cash transfer scheme worth \$900 million for 12

million families to receive 12,000 rupees a month for the next three months, in the largest such scheme in its history. India's lockdown of 1.3 billion

people has left millions out of work and forced an exodus of migrant workers from the cities to their homes in the hinterland.

The concern is especially grave in Mumbai, where more than 1,100 people have tested positive for the virus, including a growing number from the slums, where a total lockdown is impossible to enforce.



increased daily tests for COVID-19 on Thursday to more than 16,000 people from a previous daily average of 5,000-6,000 - but only 320 people were found

to be carrying the disease.w 'We are not finding many positives," senior health ministry official Lav Agarwal told reporters.

An internal assessment by a government body, the Indian Council of cluster of cases and not community Medical Research, forecast the number transmission, WHO has said.

The government yesterday said it had of virus cases would have hit 820,000 by mid-April without the 21-day lockdown. Meanwhile, The World Health Organisation (WHO) yesterday admitted an error in its "situation report" on the coronavirus spread in countries that showed India at the stage of community transmission. The organization has told NDTV that the error has been fixed. India has a

Recovered patients testing positive again in S Korea

### **REUTERS**, Seoul

South Korean officials yesterday reported 91 patients thought cleared of the new

coronavirus had tested positive again. Jeong Eun-kyeong, director of the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC), told a briefing that the virus may

have been "reactivated" rather than the patients peing re-infected.

South Korean health officials said it remains unclear what is behind the trend, with epidemiological nvestigations still under way.

being re-infected with the virus is of international concern, as many countries are hoping that infected populations will develop sufficient immunity to prevent a

just the beginning now," said Kim Woo-

joo, professor of infectious diseases at Korea University Guro Hospital.

South Korea on Friday reported 27 new cases, its lowest after daily cases peaked at more than 900 in late February, according to KCDC, adding the total stood at 10,450 cases. The death toll rose by seven to 211, it said.

#### WUHAN TO KEEP TESTING RESIDENTS

Meanwhile, China's Wuhan city, where the global coronavirus pandemic began, is still testing residents regularly despite relaxing its tough two-month lockdown,

with the country wary of a rebound in cases even as it sets its sights on normalising the economy

The country reported 42 new cases on Thursday, down from 63 a day earlier. Of the daily total, 38 were imported, down from 61 on Wednesday.

### **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC** LATEST UPDATES **MORE THAN 97,000 DEATHS**

Officials have recorded more than 1.6 million cases and more than 97,200 deaths in 193 countries, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally at 1400 GMT yesterday. The United States with 466,396 is the hardest-hit country in terms of cases, of whom 16,703 have died. Italy has the highest death toll at 18,279 followed by Spain with 15,843. France has 12,228 deaths and Britain 7,993.

### **EU AGREES ON ECONOMIC RESPONSE**

The European Union agrees to a 500 billion-euro (\$550 billion) rescue package aimed at reducing pain across the 27-nation bloc, especially hardest-hit Italy and Spain. However, they do not agree on proposals for pooled borrowing, which divide north and south.

#### **OIL PRODUCTION CUT ACCORD**

Top oil producers except Mexico agree to cut output in May and June by 10 million barrels per day, OPEC says, after marathon talks at a videoconference, as they seek to deal with a collapse in demand due to the coronavirus and a Saudi-Russian price war.

### 'GREAT DEPRESSION': IMF

International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Kristalina Georgieva anticipates "the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression" from the pandemic.

### **JOHNSON OUT OF INTENSIVE CARE**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is recovering in hospital after ending three days in intensive care for COVID-19.

### **HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE OFFER**

French pharmaceutical giant Sanofi says it will offer 100 million doses of hydroxychloroquine, a treatment for rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, to governments worldwide if studies show it can safely to be used to treat COVID-19 patients.

### **SPAIN SEES LOWEST DAILY TOLL**

Spain has recorded its lowest daily death toll from the new coronavirus in 17 days, with 605 people dying, the government said. The figures showed the death rate slowing to four percent, down from just under four percent on Thursday in line with a trend which began on March 25 when it stood at over 27 percent.

### FRANCE SEES LESS ICU PATIENTS'

The number of people in intensive care units (ICU) for coronavirus infection in France fell slightly for the first time since the start of the epidemic. An official said that the number of people in ICU fell by 82 or 1.1% to 7,066, five days after that number started falling in Italy, which now has 3,605 people in ICU, down from a peak of more than 4,000 six days ago.

SOURCE: AFF



### Yemen reports

**REUTERS**, Aden

Yemen reported its first case of the novel coronavirus vesterday as aid groups try to prepare for an outbreak in a country where war has shattered the health system

and spread hunger and disease. The news came after

a nationwide ceasefire prompted by the virus pandemic began on Thursday. A Saudi-led coalition fighting Yemen's Houthi movement announced it would halt military operations for two weeks, though the Houthis

have yet to agree.

in the southern oilproducing region of Hadhramout.

The case was diagnosed

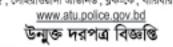
If the virus spreads in Yemen, the impact would be "catastrophic", as the health status of at least half the population is "very degraded" and the country does not have sufficient supplies, capabilities or facilities, its UN

humanitarian coordinator,

Lise Grande, told Reuters.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার বাংলাদেশ পলিশ এন্টি টেররিজম ইউনিট বাডি নং-৩৫ , সোহরাওয়ার্গী এন্ডিনিউ , ব্রক-কে , বারিধারা , ঢাকা-১২১২





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তারিখ-০৮/০৪/২০২০খ্রি "The Public Procurement Act-2006" & "The Public Procurement Regulations-2008" এবং এর তলীয সংশোধিত বিধি মোতাবেক এন্টি টেররিজম ইউনিটি, ঢাকায় রেশন সাময়ীর ২টি আইটেম ২০২০-২১ অর্থ সালের ১ম কোয়াটারের জন্য (জুলাই/২০২০ন্তিঃ হতে সেন্টেম্ব/২০২০ন্তিঃ পর্বছ), ৬টি আইটেম ২০২০-২১ অর্থ সালের জন্য ক্রয়/সরবরাহ প্রাধির নিমিত্রে এবং রেশন স্টোরের পুরাতন চট ও প্রান্টিকের বস্কা নিলামের বিরুয়ের লক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশী প্রকৃত ার/ সরবরাহকারী ফার্ম/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে প



The prospect of people

resurgence of the pandemic.

"The number will only increase, 91 is

first case

A distribution volunteer gestures as people in need queue to receive free food packets during a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of new coronavirus, in Bangalore, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

### 100 doctors died in Italy epidemic

#### Agencies

One hundred Italian doctors have died after contracting coronavirus since the pandemic reached the Mediterranean country in February, Italy's FNOMCeO health association said on Thursday.

The number of doctors who have died because of COVID-19 is 100 - perhaps even 101 at the moment, unfortunately," a spokesman for the association told AFP. Italian media reports estimate that 30 nurses and nursing assistants have also died of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

"We can longer allow our doctors, our health workers, to be sent to fight without any protection against the virus," FNOMCeO president Filippo Anelli said on the association's website. "It is an unfair fight."

Rome's ISS public health institute estimates that 10 percent of those infected with the novel coronavirus in Italy work in healthcare.

#### **UK APPLAUSE HEALTH WORKERS**

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab led a nationwide show of appreciation for health service workers on Thursday, standing in for his boss, Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In what has become a weekly event, organised largely on social media via the hashtag #ClapForCarers, people across Britain gave a round of applause at 8 pm for the National Health Service (NHS). The public display of support has become a moment of national unity and emotional release during the anxiety of Britain's lockdown.

### infected with coronavirus

Around 150 Saudi Royals

#### AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Dozens of members of the ruling Saudi royal family, as many as 150, have been infected with coronavirus in recent weeks, a news report said.

Saudi Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz Al Saud - the governor of the capital Riyadh who is in his 70s - is in intensive care after contracting the virus, according to The New York Times, which cited hospital communications, doctors in the country and sources familiar with the family.

King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) have retreated into isolation to avoid the outbreak.

Doctors at an elite hospital that treats royals are preparing 500 more beds for an expected influx of patients.

There are thousands of Saudi princes. Many travel regularly to Europe and some are believed to have contracted the virus abroad and brought it back to Saudi Arabia, the report said.

The kingdom of about 33 million people has reported 2,932 cases and 41 deaths.

The country, home to Islam's holiest sites Makkah and Madina, banned the year- have about 15,000 members.

round Umrah pilgrimage and sealed off the areas in early March.

Travel in and out of the country, as well as between provinces, has since been largely restricted, and four governates and five major cities have been placed under 24-hour lockdown

Authorities have yet to announce whether they will proceed with this year's Hajj, scheduled for the end of July. Last year, about 2.5 million people travelled to Saudi Arabia to take part in the Hajj, which all Muslims must perform at least once in their lives if able.

So far, mostly members of lower branches of the royal family have been infected, a source familiar with the situation told the Times. The vast majority of cases in the country have been in migrant labour camps and slums around Makkah and Madina.

A Saudi health minister on Tuesday warned the outbreak in the country may only be beginning.

"Within the next few weeks, studies predict the number of infections will range from a minimum of 10,000 to a maximum of 200,000," Tawfiq al-Rabiah said, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

The Saudi royal family is estimated to

۵.	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিকাগ			দ্যাই	দ্বাই মন্ত্রণালয়/জননিরাপন্তা বিষ্ণাণ।			
۹.	এচ্চেপি		এন্টি টেররিজম ইউনিটি, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, ঢাকা।					
٥.	সংগ্ৰহক হাতাৰ নাম			পুনিশ সুপর (প্রশাসন), পক্ষে-আঠিশনাল আইজি, এন্টি চোরিজ ইউনিট, চাঙ্গা।				
8.	দরণরের বিষয় (কাঙ্কের নাম)			১৬ন্য ক্রমিকে বর্ণিত।				
¢.	দরপর আহ্বানের সূত্র			ষ্ট্ৰি০১,০০০,২০২,৪০,২০,৩৫,১৯,২০২,৫৪০,২০২,৫৪৪				
ъ.	দরপর আহ্বানের তারিখ			০৮/০৪/২০২০খ্রি				
۹.	দরগর গছতি		উন্মুক্ত দরপর গন্ধকি।					
ь,		ও অর্থের উৎস		পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স হতে ব্যান্দকৃত অর্থ।				
8. 30.	দৰপত্ৰ বিজ্ঞন্ধি প্ৰকাশেন তাৰিখ দৱপত্ৰ সিঞ্জিইল বিজ্ঞব্যের শেষ তারিখ			০৮/০৪/২০২০খ্রি। বিভৱি প্রকাশের করিখ হকে ০৪/০৫/২০২০খ্রি তারিখ পর্বন্ধ প্রবি কার্যনিবসে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়।				
ss.	দরপর দাখিলের তারিথ ও সময়			০৫/০৫/২০২০স্টি তারিণ বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।				
<u>کې</u>	টিঙসি কর্তৃক দরপত্র বান্দ্র খোলার তরিখ		০৫/০৫/২০২০জ্ঞি তারিশ কেলা ১২,৩০ ঘটিকা।					
	ও সময়							
50.	দরপর সিঠিউল বিরুয়কারী অফিসের নাম ৫ ঠিকানা			এন্টি টেররিজম ইউনিট কার্যালয়, বারিধারা, ঢাকা।				
\$8,		দাখিলের ছান				গিন্ব, বারিধারা, ঢাকা		
۶¢.		রের যোগ্যতা ও দরপত				পত্ৰদিৰ ছাৰালিপি ১ম		
	দাখিলযোগ্য কাগজগতের বিবরণ			সত্যায়িত করে দাখিল করতে হয়ে ক) হালনাগান ট্রেড লাইসেল, নাগরিকতু সনদপত্র, গ) আয়কর ও ত্রাট সনদপত্র, ম) ন্যাংক কর প্রদেয় আর্থিক যাছলেতা সনদ (লেনদেন বিবরণীসহ), ফার্ম/প্রতিষ্ঠানের মালিকানা সনদপত্র, চ) সংশ্রিষ কাজের অভিজ সনদপত্র। এহাড়া অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী সিষ্টিউলে উল্লেখ আছে।				
¥в.	লট	কান্ধের	সরবরায	হা দ	রপর সিডিউলের মূল	দরণর জামানত	কাজের সময়সীয	
	मर	নাম/আইটেম	পরিমাণ	-	(অফেরতবোগ্য)	(বেদরতযোগ্য)		
	21	মন্চর ডাল সরবরাহ	গিটিউ মোতাৰে		920/-	¢¢,000/-	২০২০-২১ জ্ব সালের ১ম কোয়ার্টার	
	2,1	কোন্ধা সরাবিন তেল সরবরাহ	ά		920/-	-\000,90		
	.01	পোলাও'র চাল সরবরাহ	ঐ		¢00/-	\$000/-		
	81	জ্বলানি কাঠ সরবরাহ	<u>ک</u>		¢00/-	\$000/-		
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	91	চিনি পরিবহন	Ē	-	@oo/-	2000/-		
	p. i	সাধারণ পরিবহন (চাল, গম পরিবহন)	ħ.		¢00/-	2000/-		
	2	রেশন স্টোরের পুরাতন চট ও প্রাস্টিফের বন্ধ নিলামে বিক্রম	ঐ		¢00/-	\$000/-		
59.	সরপর আজানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম				বিবৃর রহমান।			
br.	দরপর আব্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার পলবী			প্রদিশ সূপার (এশাসন), পক্ষে-আরিশনাল আইলি, এণ্টি টেররিয ইউনিট, চাকা।				
<u>کې</u>	1.4 1.4	আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার বি	ঠকানা	বড়ি নং-৫৫, সোহরাওয়ার্দী এচিনিউ, রক-কে, বারিধারা, চাকা-১২১২				
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					ণক্ষে-অ্যান্তিশনাল য বাংলা			



(1) Kaushik Sankar Das (C) with the lead casts of the film 'Punch', Niloy Alamgir and Meghla Mukta. (2) The poster of 'Unoponchash Batash'.

# **Debutant directors affected** by pandemic delay

### Sharmin Joya

🌀 🕴 The Bally Star

As most people in Bangladesh are in isolation due to concerns over the coronavirus outbreak, so is the entertainment industry. In fact, the announcements regarding delays in releases of the films and suspension of shoots came earlier than the official announcement from the government. Meanwhile, directors who *just began their journey* in the film industry were affected the most by this unexpected barrier.

Kaushik Sankar Das has completed shooting for only 25 percent of his debut directorial, Punch. Under the banner of Zero Hour Films, Mominul Haque, who incepted the story of Punch, is the producer of the film. The dialogue of the film is written by Kaushik himself. "It is very upsetting, as the team has worked really hard for the film," says the director, who is a well-known



#### A scene from 'Bishwo Shundori'.

tele-fiction maker. The film, featuring Niloy Alamgir and Meghla Mukta in the lead roles, is an action movie that revolves around a national boxing champion and his life. The director wants to start the production of the film in full swing, after the situation is under control. "We have hired five specialised stunt directors from JAIKA Stunts Team, a stunt direction company based in

Thailand.

Kaushik also shares that he has been staying at home and helping his family with household tasks. He also started working on two new scripts for his upcoming projects -- one of which is based on the book Manush Pichash, by Hemandra Kumar Roy, written in 1939. Masud Hassan Ujjal's debut directorial film, Unoponchash Batash,

was supposed to release on March 13. 'Of course, a film is not more important than life itself. If we survive these critical times, we can make more films and keep our entertainment world alive," says Ujjal. "I am spending time making music, working on new scripts and helping the marginalised communities, who have been badly affected financially, due to this situation."

Bishwa Shundori, Chayanika Chowdhury's debut directorial, had its much anticipated release on March 27. However, due to the closure of the cinema halls and multiplexes, the film went into the 'postpone list'. "I would say that I am very happy that my film has been postponed," shares Chayanika "I respect the decision taken by the Bangladesh Cholochitro Prodorshok Samiti, Film Producer Distributor Association and the government. We have to maintain all kinds of awareness to prevent this deadly disease." The Siam Ahmed and Pori Moni starrer is on the waiting list, alongside the other films. Chayanika Chowdhury is now giving time to her family, and taking care of their health. "Arun has come back from Dallas on March 26, so we are maintaining quarantine," she says. "At the moment. I am taking care of the family by making healthy food for them, and instructing my house help to maintain hygiene". Chayanika hopes that after the situation is under control Bishwa Shundori, will see an auspicious release.

### **FAVOURITE FAN MOMENTS**

"I was surprised to know that they celebrate my birthday every vear" **Siam Ahmed** 

SHARMIN JOYA

Siam Ahmed, one of the busiest actors of the industry, started his career with television before stepping into films. He has garnered legions of adoring fans with his unparalleled performances in a short time. The actor shares how his fans make him feel special, with The Daily Star

A while back, I came to know that a group of young students have opened a Facebook fan page for me, where they post regular updates and stories about my projects. I was surprised to know that they celebrate my birthday every year. Recently, the group reached out to me and said that they have raised some funds and booked a venue to celebrate my birthday. I was overwhelmed.

After finding out about the group, I invited them to come and meet me. Unfortunately, owing to concerns over the coronavirus pandemic, I was stuck in Khulna with the team of Adventure of Sundarban and we just returned to Dhaka recently. Nonetheless, I have promised the fans that this year, I will celebrate my birthday with them





Timeless melodies of Bangladeshi

Priyanka Chopra and Shah Rukh Khan.

### Shah Rukh Khan and Priyanka Chopra to join 'One World: Together at Home'

#### PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, from New Delhi

An array of artistes from across the world will appear in 'One World: Together At Home', a global virtual concert, curated by pop star Lady Gaga to support and applaud frontline healthcare workers in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

'One World: Together At Home', organised by the World Health Organization and international advocacy organisation Global Citizen, will air on April 18, featuring real-life experiences of doctors, nurses and families living through the pandemic.

The line-up also includes stars such as Alanis Morissette, Billie Eilish, Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day, Chris Martin, David Beckham, Elton John, Idris and Sabrina Elba, John Legend, Kerry Washington, Lang Lang, Lizzo, Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder, Shah Rukh Khan and Priyanka Chopra.

The concert will be hosted by Jimmy Fallon of The Tonight Show, Jimmy Kimmel of Jimmy Kimmel Live and Stephen Colbert of The Late Show with Stephen Colbert.

The Co-Founder and CEO of Global Citizen Hugh Evans said that the programme will honour the heroic efforts of community health workers and it aims to serve as a source of unity and encouragement in the global fight to end COVID-19.

The special programme will be a multi-hour digital broadcast, streaming online on multiple global platforms, including Alibaba, Amazon Prime Video, Apple, Facebook and Instagram.

# cinema to enjoy at home

Bangladesh, a culturally rich nation, treasures an excellent dosage of romance, action, comedy and most importantly, music, in its films. With film music changing its course over time from classical to jazz, rock and metal, modern music, a genre most prominent in the Bengali film industry, has always been cherished by the audience since the mid 60s.

The black and white era of Bangladeshi cinema has not only gifted us with unparalleled stories on the silver screen, but also an array of timeless melodies. Here are a few such popular songs that are used as cellphone ringtones, played on the radio and included on most music lovers' playlists even today.

Chokh Je Moner Kotha Bole, picturised on Nayak Raj Razzak and Suchanda, is composed and sung by Khandakar Nurul Alam for Amir Hossain's film, Je Agune Puri (1970).

Ainate Oi Mukh Dekhbe Jokhon, is another timeless track sung by Mahmudun Nabi from the movie Nacher Putul (1971), featuring Razzak and Shabnam in the read roles. The film was produced by Azizur Rahman under the banner of Rana Films and directed by Ashok Ghosh.



Gaaner e Khatay Swaralipi

Gaaner E Khatai Swaralipi Likhe, one of the most popular melodies of the 70s from the Nazrul Islam directorial, Swaralipi (1970), is composed by Subal Das. Sung by Runa Laila, the song is picturised on Razzak and Bobita.

Chumki Choleche Eka Pothe is an all-time favourite from the film, Dost Dushman (1977), composed by Alam Khan and sung by Khurshid Alam. Picturised on Shabana and Wasim, the song gained popularity for not only its composition but also the video, where Shabana rides off on a horse carriage, as Wasim follows her on a bicycle, trying to pacify her.

Tumi Je Amar Kobita, a romantic track by Sabina Yasmin and Mahmudun Nabi, features the

Razzak, Kabori, Rozi Samad and Anwar Hossain in the lead roles, are composed by Satya Saha.

Jodi Bou Shajo Go, from the film Waada, is popular among the audience even today. Sung by Khurshid Alam and Runa Laila, the song, picturised on Bulbul Ahmed and Bobita, is written by Masud Karim and composed by Subal Das. Runa Laila's Eka Eka Keno Bhalo Lage Na, picturised on the actor Olivia in the film The Rain (1976) delivers a delightful musical experience. The song was composed by Anwar Parvez and released in Bangla and Urdu.

Yet another timeless track, Ektush Khani Dekho Ekkhan Kotha Rakho, from the film, Badhu Bidai (1978), directed by Kazi Zahir is the next number on

reality for villagers who migrate to the metropolis in pursuit of their dreams. The song is sung by Shammi Akhtar and Khondokar Faruq Ahmed. It features Anjana on the silver screen, alongside the Nayak Raj.

The soundtrack of Sujon Sokhi (1975), a trendsetting romantic film starring Farooque and Kabori became popular among the youth upon its release. The track Shob Sokhire Paar Korite Nebo, sung by Abdul Alim and Sabina Yasmin still appears on the playlists of retro music lovers. Sabina Yasmin's Shondhar Chaya Neme from the film Putrobodhu (1981) is also one of the most beloved tracks of all time. The song is picturised on Shabana.

Noyoner Âlo (1984), was a romantic blockbuster by Belal



### Chumki Choleche Eka Pothe

celebrated duo Razzak and Kabori. The this playlist. Composed by Alauddin song is written by Abu Hena Mustafa Kamal and composed by Subal Das for the film Dorpochurno (1980).

Tomare Legeche Je Ato Bhalo, is another chrished choice from the film Rajdhanir Buke (1960), directed by Ehtesham. In the song, composed by Robin Ghosh and Ferdousi Rahman, the 60's heartthrob Abdur Rahman expresses his love for Shabnam.

Gaan Hoye Ele and Nil Akasher Niche Ami, two acclaimed tracks from the Narayan Ghosh Mita directorial, Nil Akasher Niche (1969), starring

Ali, the song is sung by Sabina Yasmin.

Among the numerous tracks that gained popularity during the 20th century, Ore Holud Pakhi Bolo Kothay Tore Rakhi, from the film Bolda was one of the most beloved. Picturied on Razzak and Nuton, the composition is sung by Subir Nandi and Anjuman Ara Begum.

Among the many other popular tracks that were picturised on Razzak, the song Dhaka Shohore Aisha Amar Asha Furaise, from the film Ashikkhito (1978), depicts the

Ahmed. The film's music also managed to earn a place in the audience's hearts. The romantic track, Amar Buker Moddhekhane Mon Jekhane Hridoy Sekhane, sung by Samina Chowdhury, even won a National Film Award for best female playback singing. The song is picturised on Zafar Iqbal and Suborna Mustafa. With such soothing melodies available on YouTube and other online audio platforms, a dive into the musical experience can keep you entertained in these trying times, as you stay at home.

**Shob Shokhire Paar Korite** 





# Buttons come undone as Covid-22 pressures escalate

#### BY E R R, O R

The Button Sewers (BS) are back. All 10,137 of them from all across the country.

Last week they were all asked to stay home amidst fears of the Covid-22 virus.

On Tuesday, they were asked to come back to the capital city because buttons were popping everywhere and no one knew how to put them back. People are now finally realising the importance of this important yet overlooked group.

"We had to go into quarantine and now we don't have maids," lamented Fahreem, senior director of GibberishOnthePhone, the country's largest telco operator. "My wife has been making me wipe the floors. My pant buttons popped off the moment I bent down. I have never had to stoop this low," he ended in tears. All across the country, people simply cannot fit into their pants anymore. In the last one week, people have been stress eating all the food

they had stockpiled for a month. Samana, a sports writer for a national daily, lost an eye because of a button popping off his fat brother's pants.

"How am I going to play Pokemon anymore?" He cried pitifully like a sports writer who has nothing to do now because sports simply do not matter anymore.

The Button Sewers had to walk many excruciating kilometres from their homes. Many walked till their sandals tore and the factories they were going to sent them back, because "rules".

Community transmission of the virus is a big

worry now as they have nowhere to go and no sandals to wear.

One button repair factory owner Mrs Owlfowl had this to say: "We care for their welfare. We realise they need to go back and stay home because people on Facebook got really mad at us. We wish them happy, happy thoughts."

She declined to comment on where these poor workers would go back to mostly because she uses velcro and not buttons.

Meanwhile, Ms Robin A Hawk, privileged overseer of the BS Committee, served a petition to change the name from "Button Sewers" to "Button Sewerers" because the first one did not sound right. She sounded confident this will set things right while she stepped into her Lexus SUV.

## **#FreeToo breaks internet** as free speech goes viral

#### SAKEB SUBHAN

The Covid-22 outbreak continues to upend the world order.

Since the virus's outbreak was declared a pandemic in 2022, it has caused a massive loss of human lives, to the point that within a year, all international agencies had stopped keeping count and the world *en masse* gave up on data analysis.

It has since been up to the ordinary people to protect themselves.

That had an unintended benefit which by now has seen previously "third-world" or "under-developed" countries rapidly catching up with their "first-world" counterparts.

A feature of such countries were authoritative governments with little room for dissent from the subjugated.

The new normal had become everyone wearing caps, sunglasses, masks and gloves to guard against the transmission of the virus. In nations with authoritative governments and insecurity acts enshrined in the law, any form of public dissent led to disappearances, with journalists being hit hardest.

But by 2023, most of the public, including journalists, all over the world, started posting videos of themselves criticising the powers that be tagged with the hashtag #freetoo.

In the videos, people can be seen donning protective equipment so none of them can be recognised and therefore none can be punished.

Injustices exposed, ideas shared freely, tyrants' wings clipped, progress even amid crisis.

Of course, there was initial resistance from the powers that be. People claiming to be heads of states posted videos asking that none can post videos with their faces covered. But as the politicians had their own faces covered as well, no one believed it was actually them.



ILLUSTRATION: DOODLE BHAJI



# Aunty tests positive as she can't keep her nose out of people's business

### Rise in nose infections since factory closures and doctors allegedly not doing their jobs

### LUBNAN KHALEESI

A 46-year-old aunty, who ran the most successful tabloid in her daughter's school, yesterday tested positive for having the viral nose infection and being a total you-know-what.

She was admitted to a city hospital with the infection and was immediately put in the isolation ward as she could not stop talking about the nurses.

"She was admitted with verbal diarrhoea and very grand delusions about herself and other people. I knew the case was serious because as soon as I saw her, she began telling me about one of our doctors and how they had been ignoring her," Dr Pratik, the on-duty doctor said. "In these times, it is not only important to wear masks and gloves, but you must keep your nose out of other people's business. The very air can be contagious," he added.

The aunty, who we cannot name but have all met, has also been asked who she has spread her malicious gossip to. Steps are being taken to have all of them quarantined.

The latest case has left no one surprised. The number of nose infections caused by being nosy has increased in the city ever since some factories did something and some doctors did not do something. People have since not left those two professions alone, with everyone pretending they had a stake in both the sectors all along. The number of positive nose infections currently stands at 241. This number includes some 122 uncles, some young ones, and some aunties.

The youngest case is that of a three-year-old boy who would not stop spouting off about how bad the internet was and kept trying to tell Bangladeshi internet service providers how they should do their jobs.

And boy don't even get me started on the civil society numbers.

Lubnan Khaleesi is currently a power-tripping egomaniac (who internally blames her zodiac sign for it) and eternally a 10/10 stunner with an infectious laughter.

ILLUSTRATION: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

### The Bloodfall at Ocean Drive

#### **OSAMA RAHMAN**

Cradled between the hill and the sea, Is a Bloodfall, Of all the kills you didn't see. It's a brilliant red, Glinting against the sun. It smells a little of iron. And of fresh bullets from a gun. There's a Bloodfall at Ocean Drive, have you seen it? It's a sight to behold, come on friends, I really mean it. A beautiful sight, That cascading crescent. Come spend all your money here, A land welcoming The princes, paupers and peasants. A lord's blessing. A gift for a daughter to find her essence. It's a gift is what it is. So pure and untouched. A birthright for us.

Nothing unjust.

There's a Bloodfall at Ocean Drive, have

you seen it?

It's a sight to behold, come friends, I

really mean it.

Captured it and gave it a freedom as a token.

- Perhaps it was a beast and we poked it? And now it's woken. Still so fragile, so it must be broken. Tame it or rope it. Tie it up and dope it. Flood it with madness till its choking. Why is it still hoping? There's a Bloodfall at Ocean Drive, have you seen it? It's a sight to behold, come friends, I really mean it. But now it seems another floods about to burst. Pull up old blueprints, go on and dam it.
- Bloody blood, can you feel my thirst? There were folks starving elsewhere, maybe understand it.
- The Bloodfall is the beauty, the Bloodfall is mine.
- It makes the sound of a million screams, But look how it does shine!

There's a Bloodfall at Ocean Drive, have you seen it?



ILLUSTRATION: NANJIBA SHOILY



FOUNDER EDITOR LATE S. M. ALI DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 11, 2020, CHAITRA 28, 1426 BS

### **Domestic abuse** increasing during lockdown

### Local public representatives *must intervene*

T is a horrifying reality that with lockdowns being enforced all around the world incidents of domestic abuse, sometimes even leading to death of the victims have increased. For many women and girls, their homes are the most unsafe because their abusers are their partners or other family members living with them. As lockdowns have been enforced all around the world to contain the spread of coronavirus, incidence of domestic abuse has increased. The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has called on governments to take urgent measures in tackling a "horrifying global surge" in domestic violence fuelled by worldwide lockdowns that seek to curb the spread of the new coronavirus. Manusher Jonno Foundation MJF has made a statement recently highlighting the situation of Bangladesh.

According to MJF, many girls and women are being subjected to domestic violence while they are confined to the home during lockdown and have no way of reporting the abuse or getting access to legal action. MJF states that 36 rape incidents occurred in March in Bogura, Jamalpur and Cox's Bazar, while more than 300 incidents of domestic abuse and violence occurred in these three districts during the same period.

Reiterating the UN Secretary General's call to all governments to incorporate preventing violence against women as a key part of their national plans for combatting COVID-19, MJF has urged the Bangladesh government to do the same. One of the recommendations the organisation has given and one that should be implemented immediately is for local representatives to take proactive actions against such violence. The government can mobilise Domestic Violence Prevention Committees at all levels of local government to provide legal assistance to victims. Local representatives are taking many measures (for example through loudspeakers) to make people aware of how to protect themselves from COVID-19 and to stay at home during the lockdown. They therefore can also send messages through the same methods regarding the need to protect vulnerable members and warn people against domestic abuse.

At a time when women and girls are isolated even from neighbours and relatives, the local public officials can play an important role in sensitising communities about domestic abuse and intervening when necessary.

### **Regular patients being** denied treatment?

Protocol for patient management crucial during pandemic

**T**  $\land$  **T** E are appalled by the tragic death of a 43-year-old woman and mother of three, after her family's desperate efforts to admit her at various hospitals went in vain. There have been other reports of similar situations in which hospitals turned down patients fearing they had COVID-19 because of the symptoms they displayed. It reveals a lack of protocol for patient management during this crisis A victim of hypertension, diabetes and sciatica, on March 31 the woman was taken to a hospital with mild fever where the doctor declared that her vitals showed signs of collapse along with respiratory distress. Fearing she could be infected with COVID-19, the hospital denied further diagnosis and treatment. Referred to another hospital by IEDCR, the family, upon reaching there, learnt that it could not provide ICU support to the patient and suggested that she be taken home and treated there instead. After multiple failed attempts by the family members to convince a few other hospitals over the phone to take her in, they returned home, where the patient's condition deteriorated. Distressed, the family took her to yet another hospital in an ambulance and waited 40 minutes as it was void of any emergency facility. As nothing was being done, they decided to take the patient back to the first hospital they went to. Upon reaching, there was no doctor in the emergency. Thirty excruciating minutes passed by when finally, a doctor attended only to inform them that the woman is no longer alive. A day after her death, IEDCR's test revealed that she did not have coronavirus. Such tragedies are likely to continue as there are many patients with serious medical issues that need immediate hospital care. To tackle the ongoing crisis, it is essential that the government must enforce directives to all hospitals on the protocol of handling patients efficiently, which they must abide by. Lack of testing facilities and proper protective gear at various hospitals have become life-threatening obstacles. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that most, if not all, hospitals should be equipped to take the necessary actions instead of ignoring the wellbeing of patients, and the doctors on duty be alert around the clock. As COVID-19 cases go up we need more designated medical facilities like Kurmitola General Hospital and Kuwait-Maitree Hospital that specialise in treating patients who are COVID-19 positive or are symptomatic. Admittedly this is challenging given the scarcity of medical facilities. But the government must set up separate facilities in existing buildings that are empty on an emergency basis as other countries have done to accommodate the growing numbers of patients infected with the virus. Meanwhile other hospitals should be able to treat regular patients without the possibility of staff or patients contracting COVID-19. Patients requiring critical care must not be turned away under any circumstances



this pandemic a virus-driven Ice Age that will change the world the way Shamsad Mortuza we know it? Can we ever go back to

being normal? Or are we going to have "the new normal"?

Let's look at China where things are supposedly beginning to look normal. China was the first country to be hit by the disease tornado. The eye of the storm has shifted elsewhere, and China has begun to regain some of its composure. Large scale lay-offs is looming large as the country deals with the changes in its consumer behaviour, service sector and digital norms. Once we thaw from this frozen life, we too will be affected by these sectoral changes. Let us then pay heed to them.

Consumer behaviour has changed as more and more people now want contactless service. During the lockdown period, people have made cooking as part of their daily routine. They have realised the importance of spending more time at home with their families. In the process, people have changed their habits of eating out. It is predicted that 50 percent of the restaurants run the risks of being shut down. Of course, people will return to the eateries, but they are going to be careful and circumspect about being in a crowd. Social distancing is going to be an ingrained habit, and its impact will be felt everywhere.

The service sector has already redefined itself during this crisis. Uber in China shifted its gear to reach to the clients who were afraid of ride-sharing, but needed delivery service. The improvement and reliance on delivery service may change the nature of physical grocery stores. We have already seen how Foodpanda in Bangladesh has added "stores" and "contactless payments" to its features. The trend to bring service to your doors can be the other new normal.

The most important change has come in the digital sector. Technology has proved to be the greatest ally of man in isolation. Particularly, Information Technology has kept everyone connected during this period of quarantine. Sure enough there are going to be huge investments and

innovations in IT. The weakness of having to rely on physical labour during the time of epidemic will see further expansions in automation. All the signs suggest: we are at the threshold of redefining our human identity and nature. Where do we go from here? One fear is de-globalisation. The crisis exposed the raw nerves of global supply chains. Countries have to respond to long periods of economic selfisolation. The fear of the next pandemic and nationalistic reflexes in dealing with the crisis have given birth to a type of xenophobia, which can be the topic for another time. It is a forest out there. Let me rather focus on a tree: Bangladesh.

EDITORIAL

Understandably, all our efforts so far have been on the crisis management. We want to mitigate the onslaught of the disease by flattening the curves of infection and tackle the adverse economic impact from the lockdowns by providing some financial cushions. Such attempt has divided us into two groups: the essential workers and non-essential ones. Those who are at the front-line of the crisis will surely deserve more attention in the future. At the same time, there will be attempts to make the non-essentials a bit more productive in any future crisis. Having said that, it is equally important that we do an inventory of our essential workers.

We will do ourselves a favour by asking why and how the Hippocratic Oath of some of our doctors became a hypocritical one. What made some private hospitals and pathological laboratories close themselves at this time of need? How come some hospitals fired health staff and stopped offering services? Maybe time has come to rethink our health sector. I know how hundreds of people with dual nationalities fled the country at the first sign of crisis. They wanted to be in a country with reliable medical facility. I know that there are many who sought chartered planes to get out of the country hoping to get better treatment abroad. Each year, health tourists from our countries spend millions of takas abroad. After the series of petrol bomb attacks, we saw the development of an international standard burn unit. One can only hope that the nudge from the tiny virus will yield the improvement of our health sector. The right to medical care is guaranteed in our constitution under Clause 15. So are our other basic rights: "the provision of the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care.'

It is heartbreaking to see that our farmers and producers are not getting the right price during this crisis. Chicken are being killed or milk being thrown away. The production cost of a broiler hen weighing one kg is Tk 90, whereas the producers are forced to sell it for Tk 40. That does not stop the superstores from selling the chicken for Tk 150/kg or more. Surely, there could be an emergency distribution chain, where the government could have purchased these products as part of its food camps and distributed them among the protein deficient people who are being locked down.

In the clothing sector, the farce that the country witnessed, thanks to the whim of BGMEA, is beyond comprehension. Making thousands of people walk miles and forcing them to go back was a criminal callousness. The marathon of the workers however shows how desperate people are for their jobs. If the State fails to protect them, where will these people go? What survival methods will they adopt? And how will they affect the securities? For the security of the state, their jobs need to be secured. Will the threat of automation widen the wage gap further and push these downtrodden people to stare down the barrel? In response, the state may either beef up its security forces to oppress the mass or adopt a humanitarian approach involving both the workers who have returned from abroad and those who are working here. We need to enhance our manufacturing sector. The participation of the labour force in the manufacturing sector can only be enhanced once we start innovating products of our own. We need to think beyond the order of foreign buyers and cut-and-stitch according to the designs provided by the retail outlets. We need massive growth in R&D

Any five-year-old can produce hand sanitizers looking at a Youtube videoyet it became a national news when our premium educational institute did so. It shows how impoverished we are as a nation-intellectually. We did not sequence the virus. We did not research for remedies. We simply kept on forwarding memes and attachments. And found comfort in making sanitizers

The last sector, education, with which I am involved, shows signs of inefficiencies and incompetence that persist everywhere. We have failed to rise to the occasion (I do not count myself out of it). The public university system relies on aged, lecturebased approaches to teaching, entrenched

institutional biases, and outmoded classrooms. At the first sign of danger, the public universities resorted to a reactive stance: complete closures. Some of the private universities tried to be pro-active in offering a low-diet online support, using digital platforms as a temporary solution to the crisis. The University Grants Commission, as whimsical as BGMEA, first supported online classes and then backed off by saying there should not be any final exams based on online classes. Funnily enough, it is UGC experts who went round campuses to parrot World Bank mantra of quality education and preached about making formative tests such as quizzes, tests and assignments as part of the summative assessment. Not only that, instead of taking a pioneering role in making sure that institutions across the board have the digital interface to be plugged in with the global reality, UGC took a populist position of playing second fiddle to media reports-managing to instigate our students who are uncomfortable with the online system.

Of course the system has its ills. The stop-gap solution to migrate to a lowbandwidth online teaching suffered greatly from the country's internet penetration. Judging from the reaction of some of our students who went outside of Dhaka, we woke up to a new realisation that has been already foreseen by World Economic Forum: "the less affluent and digitally savvy individual families are, the further their students are left behind. When classes transition online, these children lose out because of the cost of digital devices and data plans.

The Ministry of Education has decided to use BTV to develop education materials for schools. One can only hope that UGC will come forward to develop an education platform and facilitate public private partnership. It will be foolish to hold on to pre-COVID categorisation. Time is ripe for UGC to bring in tele-companies, publishers, media outlets on board to build a resilient system that can withstand any future blow.

We are frozen. We are experiencing a virus-driven ice age that has forced us to cocoon ourselves. We want to come out of our shells and fly in the sky of a brave new world.

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## Credible media vital in fight against COVID-19 and fake news epidemic



turning increasingly to established media titles, as recent surveys have shown, newsrooms are seeing their resources gutted, and some are even being shut. In the United States, Gannett, the largest

delivered by private means...People would pay for a newspaper and (there was also) advertising revenue. The Internet has just knocked away both these pillars. So the newspapers produce the information.

public education campaigns tied to the pandemic can help make up for the fall in private advertising.

Making Big Tech pay: Technology platforms should be pressed, as France



million people and killing tens of thousands, news stories of lockdowns, social distancing and

overwhelmed hospitals have been making the headlines just about everywhere.

Newsrooms have been working overtime to keep the communities they serve updated. Audiences have surged. Apart from news reports, people are turning to analysis and commentaries, videos and explainers, to help them make sense of the fast-evolving and far-reaching crisis

Amid the welter of information swirling about on social media, professional newsrooms which have long invested in building expertise, have been meeting the public's hunger for objective reporting, based on journalists speaking to informed sources, providing context and perspective, drawing on historical knowledge and institutional memory.

These have also helped inoculate communities against that other virus that is on the rampage—fake news—which is sowing anxiety and confusion, as well as undermining the public's trust in the reliability of information they receive at this critical time.

In the process, some reporters have succumbed to the virus while on the job, having to be isolated and quarantined. Some newsrooms have had to evacuate hurriedly, with staff rushing home, laptops in hand, to try to keep their platforms updated and the presses rolling.

But here's the heart-breaking news: among the victims in the intensive care unit, gasping for breath, are some of the media organisations themselves, alongside many others from sectors that have also been hard hit, from aviation to retail.

Several, especially local and vernacular titles, might not be able to meet their financial commitments, or even pay staff salaries, in the months ahead.

Advertising is drying up, plunging by between 30 percent and 80 percent, according to a recent survey by the World Association of News Publishers. Revenues from media-related events, a new and growing source of funds, have also plunged, as social distancing measures are put in place.

Many newsrooms have also made content on the pandemic freely available, as a public service, thereby constraining their ability to grow revenues from subscriptions.

The upshot of this is both ironic and tragic: at a time when audiences are

American newspaper chain, announced last week plans to cut salaries and layoff some staff temporarily, while Rupert Murdoch's News Corp has said it will stop print editions of 60 newspapers in Australia, with similar measures being taken in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

This has heightened concerns about the emergence of "news deserts" communities with no access to local government and community news as media groups cease to exist there.

There is also much angst over "ghost newsrooms," titles which are snapped up by investors as they are still profitable, who then slash their reporting capabilities

Facebook and Google get the profit.

"And this has a very negative effect on the newspapers on which we have relied for our news...The amount of serious news, investigative journalism and foreign reporting is going down because that's expensive.

"This is a real problem for the journalism we need for democracy."

COVID-19, however, has mercilessly compounded this challenge and hastened both the shift to digital and the plunge in advertising.

So, is there an antidote to the virusinduced media malaise? Among the proposals that media leaders have been making urgently to their stakeholders are



#### Among the victims in the intensive care unit, gasping for breath, are some of the media organisations themselves. PHOTO: REUTERS

to boost margins, resulting in a lack of resources to produce local, original or independent content.

The implications of these developments for society are grave. At a time when communities are most in need of critical information, many newsrooms are increasingly hampered and finding it harder to deliver on their mission.

This has led the World Health Organisation to warn of a coming "infodemic," with misinformation spreading and undermining public trust at a crucial time.

To be sure, the financial struggles faced by newsrooms is hardly news. Oxford historian Timothy Garton Ash pointed to this in a keynote address at the St Gallen Symposium in Switzerland in May 2017.

He said: "Very simply, the Internet is destroying the business model of newspapers. For at least two centuries, we have had a public good-news, the information we need for democracy-

Declaring the media an essential service: to enable journalists to go about their jobs during lockdowns, keeping newsrooms functioning and news agents running.

Granting financial assistance: these include tax breaks or holidays, shortterm loans and wage subsidies to help newsrooms pay their staff and bills in the face of falling revenues. Denmark has set up a 25 million euro fund which will grant news outlets that have recently seen revenues fall by between 30 percent and 50 percent relief of up to 60 percent of their losses, while in Lithuania, state subsidies are also given for critical infrastructure such as broadcasting and printing facilities

Giving tax incentives for advertisers and subscribers: In Italy, advertisers are given tax deductions of 30 percent of their spending in newspapers and online, while Canada allows subscribers to news titles to claim tax relief.

Stepping up government advertising:

has done, to make more meaningful contributions to the news outlets they rely on for content.

But while these steps might see media groups through the crisis, they are not without risks. Not least of which is the damage that could be done to the credibility of the media if it becomes overly dependent on state funding. This is especially a concern in societies with painful experiences of governments seeking to muzzle the media, through cuts in funding and advertising, shutdowns of newsrooms and even arrests of journalists.

To safeguard against this, beyond the crisis, new business models will also have to be fashioned to ensure the media remains viable and sustainable for the long haul

Various experiments are now underway. While some big players like The New York Times and Financial Times are growing subscription revenues from readers, others such as The Washington Post, the South China Morning Post and Los Angeles Times, have been bought by wealthy business leaders, who have given these newsrooms a boost, by investing in journalism and technology.

Elsewhere, media groups have been given mandates by the state, with funding for public service broadcasts and journalism, as in France, Britain and the Scandinavian countries.

Some newsrooms have opted to be public trusts or not-for-profit companies, with a mission to provide public service journalism, such as the Guardian in the UK, and The Philadelphia Inquirer and The Salt Lake Tribune in the US, and also Japan's Nikkei group.

Which of these models works best remains unclear; nor perhaps is there likely to be one model that works for all, given the very different political histories and cultures that newsrooms operate in around the world.

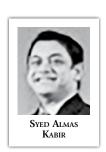
This much is certain: the coronavirus pandemic might have begun as a public health crisis. But some wrenching economic, social and political changes could follow in the months to come.

People and communities will need to make sense of developments unfolding around them as well as to figure out the way forward. To do so, citizens and voters will need news organisations they consider credible, which they can rely on, and trust.

Warren Fernandez is Editor in Chief of The Straits Times and President of the World Editors Forum (WEF), a network of editors that is part of WAN-IF-RA, the World Association of News Publishers. This opinion piece was signed and endorsed by members of the Board of the WEF, in solidarity with newsroom around the world

these:

# A new world after the coronavirus pandemic



S the indomitable Coronavirus continues its reign over the world, the lifestyle of mankind has changed drastically. People have been maintaining social distancing, started

working from home, finding time to engage more with the family, and slowing down on business activities. This change in lifestyle will have a lasting effect even in the post-COVID-19 world. The fear in people's mind, the time they have now to themselves, the pause in the ratrace will create a different world for the generations of the future.

The home-office concept will be the most enduring practice in the post-COVID-19 world. Businesses will encourage their employees more and more to work from home whenever possible. This will not only save the overhead of space, utility bills and other resources, but will also enable business owners to negotiate with the employees regarding flexible remuneration. From a bigger aspect, this telecommuting will help lessen traffic congestion reducing air-pollution as a result. This will also change some social norms improving familial relationship. To make this remote workplace a success, the demand for a robust internet infrastructure will be reinforced. Video-conferencing systems, collaboration tools, etc. will see an array of new features. The norms for meetings will change. Online meetings will not have refreshments, although they still may have remuneration/compensation paid to the attendees through electronic transfers

We shall see an increased number of online courses in the post-COVID-19 society. Digital classrooms will help the students to stay at wherever they are and participate in the classes. Online courses with pre-recorded lectures will enable students to access the resources at their own pace. The assessment or exam system will also see a big change, where an examinee will have the option to keep books or notes open yet will have to answer using his/her knowledge.

The demand of skilled professionals in 2D & 3D animation will rise significantly. Online courses, remote discussions will need more digital contents. Videoediting and multimedia tools will see new demands. Digital graphics rendering and editing skills will be sought-after. AI will be omnipresent and be used in many applications, including homeappliances, automobiles, machineries, health-services, agro-processing and entertainment. Although AI gone rogue is a real possibility, businesses will increasingly use Artificial Intelligence for

efficiency and cost-cutting. IoT coupled with Big Data and AI will be used to monitor the environment, be it a factory premise or the national weather. Such applications will result in more effective early warning systems against adversities making us more prepared in advance.

The social-distancing practiced by all during the ongoing pandemic situation will teach us to use distributed systems ever more. This will bring Blockchain technology into the forefront of all transaction related activities. The cogency and transparency of this technology will make it the gold standard in maintaining Health sector will experience a sea of change. The unpreparedness for tackling the COVID-19 will teach the health service providers a good lesson. Doctors, nurses, paramedics and most importantly the administrators will be extra cautious in the post-coronavirus era. Governments across the world will allocate a good portion of the annual budget for development of the health sector. Large corporates and philanthropists will come forward to build more hospitals. The healthcare workers will see an acute demand in countries like Bangladesh, where the patient-doctor or patient-nurse also become a new normal.

The entertainment industry will flourish in the post-COVID-19 society, although theatres and movie halls may see decline in the number of their patrons. Although online streaming will be the standard, television may experience a small comeback as people will go out less in public places. Interactive movies and network games will take over the entertainment industry. Gaming consoles will see a sharp rise, with new features. State-of-the-art games powered by AI and correlated to movies will become the new thing. Interactive



Visitors walk through temperature scanners at the Singapore Airshow, amid fears over the spread of the new coronavirus, in Singapore on February 13.

#### all databases.

The travel industry will see a big shift in the habits of the travellers and adventure-seekers. The practice of traveling to multiple cities in a week will stop. People will be using cars more for domestic travels to avoid crowd in an airport terminal or train station. Large cruise-ships may not be very popular anymore. Travelling in small groups will become more common. Trekking and other adventure sports may thrive as not many tourists are into it. Brick and mortar travel agencies will go out of business, while online travel sites may not be able to pull through the losses they will encounter during the current lockdown, unless they diversify and start offering customised packages. Larger hotels and hospitality industry in general will also see a slowdown. Although, smaller hotels may stand resilient to this change of behaviour of the travellers.

ratio is quite poor. It may be mentioned that, for every 10,000 people, Bangladesh has only 3 doctors and 1 nurse. The nursing profession will see a rise in social acceptance and become a soughtafter occupation. The health-equipment manufacturers will invest in R&D and will come up with lost-cost solutions. The hospitals will invest in more sophisticated equipment in detecting illnesses.

Telemedicine will thrive in the post-coronavirus days. People will take medical advices from doctors remotely more and more. To avoid the crowd in the hospitals or at a doctor's chamber, patients will seek virtual consultations from doctors over videochats. Physical pharmacies may see less and less customers, as they will prefer their medicines to be delivered at their doorstep. With recurring orders or subscriptions, delivery of medicines will PHOTO: ROSLAN RAHMAN/AFP

reality TV will be a new standard. In the post-coronavirus world, people will be hesitant to use touch-screens. Therefore, other methods of inputs, such as voice commands or gestures, will become more and more popular. This will apply to computers, tablets, phones, kiosks, remote-controllers—anything that requires touching or pressing buttons. Voice-recognition and text-to-speech and speech-to-text technologies will improve and will be able to function correctly across languages and dialects.

We shall be attending many events digitally. Celebrations, felicitations, award ceremonies, concerts, prayer congregations, even weddings will be happening online through various industry-standard interactive collaboration tools. Digital events will have no issues regarding physical capacity. Participants from all over the world will be joining these events, and this will be the new natural. While I don't foresee that in-person events will be changed entirely after COVID-19, I do believe event organisers will work out ways so that digital features can complement in-person events. I expect a sharp rise in hybrid events where portions of the event will occur in person, and others will happen online.

Popularity and acceptance of online shopping will soar big time. Consumables, such as medicines, groceries, etc. will be purchased mostly through digital commerce. AI and Big Data will play a big role in online selling catering to the choice and requirements of the buyers. 2D and 3D graphics will also change the shopping experience. Holograms will be incorporated to give a realistic view of the product people will be buying. People will prefer contactless methods of delivery too. Drones and robots will be incorporated in the delivery services. Courier companies will deploy more of these machines to do their job. Most brick & mortar shops will also have online channels to complement their businesses as more and more consumers will be preferring not to shop in-person

Contactless payments will see a new surge in the Post-COVID-19 world. People will prefer not to touch physical money anymore following the bitter experience of contamination. Digital transactions, mobile financial services and touchless biometric solutions will be introduced by banks. Voice commands will eliminate the need of pressing buttons of an ATM. All biometric scanning for authentication will be contactless to save the user from possible contamination.

Besides all the above predictions, is this the end of capitalism? Capitalism that isn't engrained in moral values is untenable. In this current pandemic situation, governments all over the world are planning stimulus packages involving large-scale cash distribution not very different from what a socialist country would do. It is also ironic that in the ongoing election campaign in the most capitalist country in the world the US, democratic socialism emerged as an alternative. So, is socialism our future?

The COVID-19 contagion might be challenging on our lifestyle and our work habits, but it is also making us more resilient. As the saying goes, "necessity is the mother of invention", we shall see new innovative ideas and systems in all aspects of our life. I earnestly hope that the lessons we are learning from combatting the coronavirus will help us create a better world for the future.

Syed Almas Kabir is President, Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services (BASIS).

# Will there be light at the end of this darkness?

#### TANWIR NAWAZ

S there light at the end of this COVID-19 darkness? In a world reeling from the unexpected and unrelenting hit from COVID-19, this is an apt question. The whole world including some 2018 countries so far are in shock from a strange virus that seems to have originated from the Wuhan province in China and have spread to far ends of the world, sparing neither class, nor religions, rich or poor, caste nor ethnic groups. In ferocity it has hit such diverse countries like Iran, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Other countries like South Korea, Japan, India and Pakistan and Bangladesh have not been spared either. The scale and the speed of spread and the inflicted numbers have varied. But the end game is not anywhere in sight. No one knows when and how this will end. It is as if the world is in an abyss with no end in sight. But surely there has to be and there will be an end to this storm, this despair and sufferings. Humanity has to survive. It has to survive with faith, determination, technology, research, will and cooperation and mostly love and care. We need each other.

Today on the second week of April, over 1.4 million people have been affected; more than 72, 000 people have died. 335,000 people have been deemed to have recovered worldwide. The worst affected people have been USA where the effected numbers are the largest, over 365,000, and over 9,000 dead, Italy next with more than 17,000 people dead, Spain with more than 13,000 people dead and UK with more than 7,000 people dead.

In lesser developed countries where it has not peaked yet, 155 people are dead in India and 20 people in Bangladesh where the confirmed people as of April 7. Many areas of Bangladesh including Narayanganj, parts of Dhaka are now in lockdown. Other parts of Dhaka and rest of the country are in what is being called



People trying to board a truck at Mawna intersection in Gazipur on April 4 in a bid to return to Dhaka.

partial lockdown.

More countries all over the world are getting infected and those infected are getting worse. The only good news so far has been from China, where no new cases have been reported for the last three days and the lockdown in Wuhan is gradually being lifted. Where and when the whole Pandemic will end nobody knows for sure, or how far it will go before it ends. We are praying for its end.

Bangladesh, where its impact initially was moderate, is beginning to pick up the infected count. In numbers infected it has trebled in only the last three days. It is also suffering, both from its impact and fear. Schools, colleges, universities and businesses have been closed. People have been asked to isolate and quarantine themselves and to stay at home, except for hospitals, pharmacies, and kitchen groceries. On declaration of the closedown, people have left Dhaka in hordes for their villages and rural homes. Some people on returning from abroad have been asked to quarantine themselves in their homes for a period of two weeks. It is not known how many have obeyed and how many have neglected. There was and is a potential danger that some of the returnees from abroad who may have been infected and came back to Bangladesh and were allowed to return to their homes unsupervised, might have spread the virus among their families and friends. We will not know how badly the situation is for at least another two weeks.

On the economic front and on the commercial side, the effects are just beginning to be felt. Large numbers of garment industry orders are known to have been cancelled or postponed. By this time approximately USD 3.2 billion worth of orders may have been lost. But the industry will recover in time, with will and determination. Small and medium business have been badly hit. We shall not know the extent of the damages until later. Day labourers, rickshawpullars, slum dwellers have no job, no income and are left bewildered from the shock. Many are crowding the roads and alleys in hope of food assistance. Some social relief have been provided by the government and other people.

As an Urbanist who has been working in the areas of urbanisation, migration and urban transportation in Bangladesh for over 25 years, I am very scared when the controls on movement will be lifted. Greater Dhaka is a metropolitan area of 20 million plus people (worldometer). The density is one of the highest in the world. Because of Corona fear more than 12 million people left in a hurry. As of now the return date deadline is April 16. This should be extended to April 30. The gestation period will give us time and a much wider and deeper picture of the situation and a means of tacking the issues. Once the restrictions are lifted,

those who have moved out of Dhaka on March 27 through March 30, will start pouring back in through launches, trains and buses in huge numbers breaking all the good work of social distancing practiced in the past three weeks. The close proximity and (GadaGadi) mingling will definitely bring in close physical contacts with those incubated in the interim (both in the city and those returning), but still showing little or no signs of diseases with those not yet affected. We must avoid this by staggering the returns over at least two further weeks to lessen the overcrowding. The lifting of restrictions on travel may be done district by district over a period of two weeks. Factories should be opened in stages; offices should be opened in phases. Schools, colleges and universities should remain shut till after Eid. Mosques should not lift ban on gatherings till after Eid. All prayers including during the Ramadan should be performed at home and not in close gatherings. There will be financial and economic losses. However, lives are more important than financial and economic losses. We shall recoup the financial losses in time. The nation will be better for it.

In the end small and large powers must end all biological experimentations worldwide. SARS MRAS, Ebola have caused the world immense sufferings. The world must learn a lesson from COVID-19 disaster and must come to an agreement to end these kinds of biological experiments. Otherwise, we will all die at some point in a bigger disaster.

The people in this nation should come together spiritually. The nation must come together in love. We must see the end of this thing through together, as we have seen the end of many a disaster. The world will see this thing through, through mutual cooperation, determination and simple doggedness. There shall be an end to this nightmare. There will be light at the end of this darkness.

Tanwir Nawaz is an architect and urbanisation specialist.

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PHOTO: STAR



DSLitEditor@gmail.com

### The Daily Star DHAKA SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2020 10 CHAITRA 28, 1426 BS 10 Baishakh at the Wake of Covid 19

SOHANA MANZOOR

It all started with someone responding to a Facebook post on Coronavirus-wishing that all the problems would be over before the Pahela Baishakh, situation would return to normal, and we would be able to celebrate the Bengali New Year at Ramna Botomul. I had been watching the Magnificent Century, the famous Turkish TV series on YouTube for quite sometime, and after reading the post my immediate response was, "Ameen." Then I squirmed in embarrassment. There was no way we could have a regular Pahela Baishakh in 2020. It was definitely gone in the wake of COVID-19. With the world facing a pandemic with the entire country quarantined, who would be even thinking of celebrating the occasion? Some zealous ones might invite a few friends over and have a semblance of the auspicious day with hilsha curry, five instead often different types of *bhorta* (due to scarcity of vegetables), and other delicacies. Assuredly, I am not so brave, hence in all probability, I will stay at home and sleep (which I have done on *Eid-ul-Adhas* all through my teenage years).

But then I have a problem. As the Literary Editor of The Daily Star, I usually produce a page celebrating Pahela Baishakh at this time of the year. Usually, I also ask some of our writers to write for the Baishakhi issue. This year, however, the entire focus has been on an unwelcome and uninvited guest who has diminished our regular programs and activities at all levels. Like everybody else, I too, had been worried over life and death, about safety and sanctity. I do not know if the situation will change drastically in another week, but right now, the corona situation seems to be in better shape in Bangladesh than the rest of the world. But from what I see on Facebook, I feel bad for my housebound students and younger cousins, worse for their parents who suddenly find their children a handful. Some female friends and colleagues are not sure what to do with the character called "husband" who is suddenly at home all the time and acting like an oversized puppy, or worse, an overgrown teenager. Everybody is posting crazy stuff on the social media. Some are hooting like unknown animals, a few screeching like nocturnal birds, and I even saw a video clip that showed someone who had hung a swing in his bedroom, the ceiling fan resting on the floor. People surely are experimenting and have ample time to do so. Having watched these for more than a week, I found myself wondering if COVID does not have some other side effects beside cough and fever.

Anyway, thoughts on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh sent me rummaging through my email and Facebook inboxes. I came across cautionary messages, video clips and jokes on COVID-19. By the tenth day of the guarantine, I have had at least three messages that claimed Coronavirus as bogus and encouraged people to fight it by taking a long trip. The very idea sent a cold shiver down my spine because the worst that can actually happen for us is to resume our regular activities and thus help spread the virus. We have already observed what has happened in China, Italy, Iran, and finally, in the US. Many claimed that the virus was in check and then the number of the victims just doubled and tripled within weeks. And still some actually are thinking that it is a mere plaything and people are overreacting?

My inspection of the inboxes also disclosed something else. I knew that Bengalis are emotional people and they write poems on all occasions. Now that they are stuck at home with Corona knocking on the door, things have taken a totally new direction, albeit not unexpected. Many have become prolific poets. Believe it or not, I have not come across such a variety of verses in my entire life and all address the same muse—COVID-19 or Coronavirus. And since they cannot directly address their muse, they leave these at my doorstep with no mercy for this poor editor.

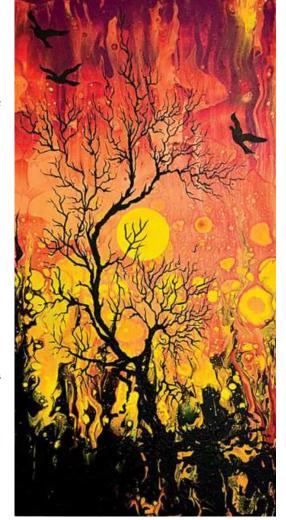
As I was wallowing in self-pity and wondering how to deal with this massive body of "poetry," I received a phone call from my part-time *chhutabua* whom I have told not to come until the quarantine period is over. The poor girl sounded terrified and I asked, "What has happened? Are you ill? Are your children okay?" In reply she said that they were all fine. But she had a problem.

"Aunty, are you sure you don't need help? My mother said I should go to work, otherwise, I might lose my job."

I yelled at the top of my voice, "Have you gone mad? You want to be beaten by the police or something? For God's sake stay at home and don't get out. Do you need money?"

She sobbed, "No, I have money. But ma said...." "Forget about your ma. Just stay at home," I said firmly with a hint of steel.

After talking to her I sat before my laptop shaking my head over the problem of *buas*. Next came another call from our old *bua* in Muktagachha. She had left us a few years back and currently resides with her daughter's family. *"Afa,"* she said sobbing. *"Afa,* we are in poor



shape. My son-in-law is sitting at home for the past eight days. No work. And no money. They're beating up people in the streets. Can you send us some money? Otherwise, we'll starve."

I was dumbstruck for a while. Yes, I read the news and saw pictures of workers lying with their baskets and tools. The lockdown has effectively locked people in their houses, and hopefully, the virus too? But no work means no food. There have been a few random incidents when distributing relief too– the have-nots beating up the ones that did get relief, or the regular irregularities in the system that allowed only the "known faces" to get the rationed food. The supply is indeed inadequate considering the number of people.

I have been ordering grocery items online but as

the orders arrive, I discover that many of the items are missing. I have been taking note of my stock of boxes of rice, noodles, coffee and other items in the kitchen. And I am worried. But honestly, the trouble I am facing is insignificant compared to what is out there. We are missing out one or two items like cilantro or bread. We feel restless and we are bored. We are writing bad poetry and mediocre prose. We are exercising this and that. I am writing this piece on the tenth day of the lockdown. For me, it means I am working from home. I am teaching online. I am writing for the newspaper online and all these guarantee that I am going to get my paycheck at the end of the month. For a vast majority of the people, however, that is not the scenario. They work on a day-to-day basis; they eat from hand to mouth. Boredom is the least of the issues here. If measures are not taken right away, we will see people dying on the streets. But maybe we won't because we are all quarantined at home and we have social media to entertain ourselves.

The sky that I see through my window is cloudless and blue. The lockdown seems to have its positive effects too—the air is clean and the surroundings peaceful. If this was a regular year, I would be getting ready for the *Pahela Baishakh* with new sarees and preparation of different kinds of food. But now my mouth is parched, my throat dry. I cannot sing but mutter the lines:

"Muchhe jaak glani, ghuche jaak jora (let weariness dissolve, let decrepit age begone)

*Ognisnane shuchi houk dhor!"* (Bathed in fire, let the earth be purified).

The only problem is *ognisnan* is a fearful process. In mythical stories, only the pure survived the ordeal of fire. And those that did, faced even more appalling situations. A friend of mine recently reminded me cheerfully that the European Renaissance came at the wake of the Great Bubonic Plague—the Black Death. So, we should feel hopeful. Perhaps, the quarantine is a good time to analyse and comprehend our inner spirits and that might lead to a new beginning. Nevertheless, right now the concern is more about how terrifying the fire storms are going to be and how many of us will survive it. And those that will, what will they find in a world where all the previously known order might have gone awry?

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

### 🤣 POETRY

# shanti, the playboy of satkhira

### (to kaiser haq, william carlos williams & queen)

### MD MEHEDI HASAN

Based on a true story ('...poets, as everybody knows, are not to be entirely trusted.')

#### i. shanti in his deathbed

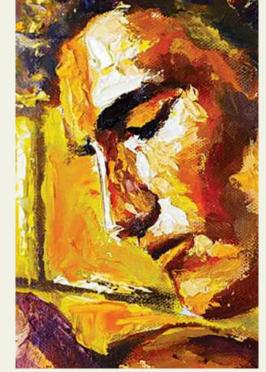
death is more capricious than bangladesh railway, doctor. have you ever listened to 'bohemian rhapsody' just after having the second orgasm in a row?

i am not so aesthetic as you in sexual activities, mr shanti.

escapes are exigent from this valley of the shadow of death, i fear chaos: for no one's with me. you treat cancer i'm suffering from it i can sense— it's near so leave me to be the same hedonist i am

#### ii. sweet satkhira accent

shanti's father passed away early & mother—got away. once one of shanti's friend showed him a bollywood song of emraan hashmi. that day he discovered a pungent way to escape—kiss! to where he was escaping did not want to know; oneday while sucking the life out ofhis high school sweetheart, she tooka 10 seconds pause and whispered, 'I'm running away



with bhutto bhai; but whenever I'll hear sweet satkhira accent, I'll remember you, shanti' at first he wanted to report child marriage but it was easier to find a girlfriend than facing the police

#### iii. saddam and bush in satkhira

in an early winter morning 0f 2006 on his way to school, shanti saw an effigy burning. people were throwing their slippers at it and shouting: 'free saddam Hussein!' shanti asked his friend: who's saddam hussein? 'a muslim' then who's that burning man? 'bush' who's bush? 'the enemy of muslims' shanti's friend replied with such anger in his eyes iv. song of early youth

ate loved, made love (or screwed, whatever) slept and if he wrote a doggerel by chance he felt immortal & alive—when his lovers used to say: 'your words make my lips dry, make them wet!' but between weed & woman he should have chosen wisely

### v. prison dairy of shanti

in the streets of satkhira you may hack your lover's husband to death, if you wish you may tease, even can you piss but you can never kiss

Md Mehedi Hasan's writings have been published in The Daily Star, The Daily Observer, The Independent, The Wagon Magazine (Chennai, India), and Arts & Letters- Dhaka Tribune.

## Love, Love Again...

### MITALI CHAKRAVARTY

Perhaps, the time has come to Love, Love again

the Earth, the water, the sand, the little creatures beyond the land.

Love the trees Amaltaz heavy with bloom, Gulmohar brightening the noon, Angsanas spreading out to the skies.

The parakeets that noisily fly in broods; the golden orioles, the butterflies that flit, the honeybirds that sing

The river that quietly flows

The sun will rise again untainted and glow. The Death core will dwindling go...

Mitali Chakravarty's poetry has been published online and as part of anthologies. Some of her poetry has recently been translated into German and read in a PEN International symposium.

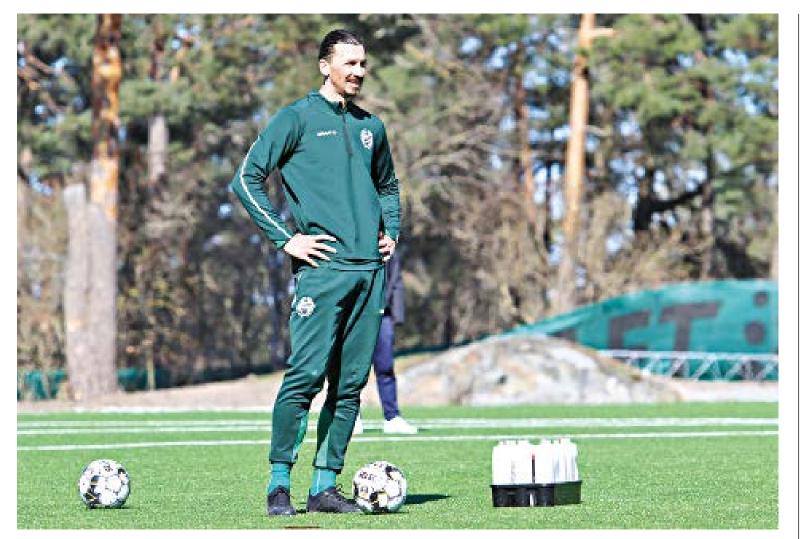


e-mail: sports@thedailystar.net DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 11, 2020, CHAITRA 28, 1426 BS

### FOOTBALL FOR DUMMIES

Belarussian side FC Dynamo Brest are filling their stands with mannequins sporting cut-out portraits of fans to boost match-day atmospheres while supporters stay home due to the coronavirus pandemic. The club found a creative solution to the lack of in-stadium support by inviting fans from around the world to buy virtual tickets online. In return, the fans' photos were pasted onto the top half of a fashion dummy sitting inside the stadium, and the fans themselves receive a matchday magazine sent to their home address. The money raised will b donated toward fighting the pandemic. Dynamo Brest tested the idea during their 2-0 home victory over Shakhtyor Soligorsk on Wednesday. -- AGENCIE





Zlatan Ibrahimovic was unable to stay away from football, and trained with his own team, Hammarby, after having returned to his native Sweden. Manager Jesper Jansson said that the AC Milan striker "felt he wanted to touch the ball again", adding that he was always welcome to train with them. PHOTO: TWITTER

### Behind the crisis at the Nou Camp

#### Abdullah Al Mehdi

The heat in the corridors of the Camp Nou offices went up a  $\odot$ few notches with six Barcelona board directors handing in their resignations on Thursday night. A chasm had opened up between club president Josep Maria Bartomeu and his board members resembling hit TV drama series Game of Thrones, as was explained by an ESPN source who also claimed that many in the board were vying to position themselves ahead of the presidential elections next vear.

The internal fracture reportedly started in February this year when it was leaked that the club had a relationship with a thirdparty company, 13 Ventures, that had been discrediting players, potential presidents and club legends on social media. Bartomeu, eager to quell any apparent division, held talks with senior players.

The players, in the media at least, said they believed the explanation that Bartomeu offered, but not before Messi said that he found the situation in Barcelona to be 'weird'. The six-time Ballon d'Or winner had before that come out and hit back at sporting director Eric Abidal for suggesting that players were behind the sacking of former coach Ernesto Valverde in January.

The crisis deepened last month when negotiating a wage cut with the players due to the coronavirus pandemic. Again there were suggestions from the players' side that

the board was using local media to transmit lies. Messi said that there were some in the board who "tried to put us under the magnifying glass and add pressure to do something that we always knew we would do" after confirming the players were going to take a 70 per cent pay cut.

When the club's biggest names hit out at the processes and how the club is run, it usually does not bode well for the management. As a result, Bartomeu has decided to re-model his board. According to reports, he asked the vice presidents Emili Rousaud and Enrique Tombas and directors

Silvio Elias and Josep Pont to resign. "To be honest, I feel betrayed by Bartomeu. And what riles me the most is this is not the moment [during Spain's coronavirus-enforced lockdown]. Do it face-to-face, not hidden [behind a phone]," Rousaud told Marca. "And the board is not the most suitable to take on these challenges. Especially a board in complete crisis, with the players confronting them and with fans waving white hankies every home game.'

In an explosive interview with Rac1 radio, Rosaud went further the following morning. "I think someone has had their hand in the (club's) till," he said. "You pay one million euros (to I3 Ventures) for a job that has a market price of 100,000 euros. Who? Definitely someone on the board, don't know who, but you can have your suspicions...

Meanwhile, Bartomeu increasingly finds himself alone.

**Players** can 'walk away', says PFA advisor

#### AGENCIES, London

A leading sports lawyer who is advising the Professional Footballers' Association says out-ofcontract players in England can ignore FIFA proposals and leave their clubs at the end of June, even if the season has not resumed.

Nick De Marco QC, who has represented sports governing bodies, players, clubs and agents since 2002, says players will be walk away entitled to

### Reminiscence: My first match

In these times of social distancing, we must be safe while remembering that we do not get too used to the world being at a standstill. We were meant to go watch matches together, agree with a few of our neighbours and disagree with the rest. So, we are taking turns talking about our first live experience at a sports venue.



### Akbar & Co find respite in memories from WC

#### NABID YEASIN

In these times, while being held prisoner at your own home behind closed doors due to the coronavirus pandemic, one may try to find relief by recalling the best memories from back when normalcy prevailed. Sports fanatics are reliving the best moments by watching highlight reels and rewatching the matches that left them with goosebumps.

Sporting activities around the globe have come to a halt and the players much like their fans, are confined indoors with hopes of things getting back to normal once again. And during this time, even the players are trying to recall the sweet memories from back when they were at the field or with their teammates during a tour or playing in an overseas competition. The best moment for Bangladesh cricket, till date, arguably came when the Bangladesh under-19 side brought home the nation's first ever World Cup trophy after beating reigning champions India by three wickets in Potchefstroom in February this year. It is obvious that Akbar Ali and Co created a lot of memories, both on and off the field, during their more than a month's stay in South Africa. And those memories now give them relief during this crisis. "We were based in Potchefstroom and the room where all of our meetings were held was the one used by the Spain football team during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. All their autographed jerseys, pictures were there and one of our coaching staff

and pictures to be there at the end of the tournament," recalled under-19 skipper Akbar.

He also remembered how he, along with his troop, used to make themselves feel relaxed before matchdays.

We used to have team meetings the day before a fixture. After the meeting we all used to play games for fun. We used to do acting and bits and there was a dart board so we used to

said that he too wanted our jerseys time we won the tournament, it had caught on among everyone so well that even our head coach [Naveed Nawaz] and our bus driver also started doing that," chuckled Shoriful as if he was still living those memories while sharing those over phone.

Shoriful, who claimed to be the funniest one in the group, also mentioned how he was vested with the responsibility of making everyone laugh. It was his responsibility that no one had a gloomy day.

Shoriful might have played the role of an entertainer off the field but

from clubs if their contracts expire on June 30.

Earlier this week, FIFA proposed that contracts are "extended until such time that the season does actually end", and asked for the same principle to be applied to contracts due to begin when the new season starts. But De Marco says their recommendations cannot be enforced under English employment law.

"Legally, they cannot be forced to continue to play for the club," De Marco, of Blackstone Chambers, told Sky Sports News. "Nobody can force them to do so; FIFA, the FA, the club or anybody else. If they want to walk away, that's a matter for them but it will really be a matter of whether, financially, that makes sense for them.

"What you're most likely to see as a preferred option is probably very short-term extensions of contracts based on existing salary terms. That won't suit everyone, and it can't be forced on anyone in England.

"For example, if you're a player coming towards the end of your contract and, perhaps, the end of your career, maybe you only have one more contract left, you may be very reluctant to sign a contract for only a few weeks or an indeterminate period of time.

"If the players are out of contract then, so far as the law is concerned, they're no longer employees and they're free to walk away, he explains. "The real issue is, 'Do the players walk away or not?'. That will depend on the circumstances of each case.

"If you're a lower league club, financially stressed, you won't be wanting to pay players beyond June 30. So, a one-size-fits-all solution isn't going to work. It's going to depend on each case. The key is going to be agreements.

FAHIM IMTIAZ from Chattogram, 2014

It was late spring of 2014 with mocks underway and final exams looming over the horizon. Bangladesh was given the honour of hosting the ICC T20 World Cup, and at that time we felt very proud of our nation.

My hometown of Chattogram came alive with lights and monuments at various points in the city dedicated to the tournament. Big screens were set up at different points of the city so everyone could watch the games. That year's catchy theme song "Char Chokka Hoi Hoi" caused quite a sensation, which added to the anticipation and excitement as the clocks counted down the days.

Crowds gathered in front of the large screen in GEC circle and outside of TV showrooms to watch the wonderfully organised display of performances and fireworks during the opening ceremony.

As the tournament started, streets were filled with discussion and debate about players and teams. You could ask anyone "who are playing today?" and they would be happy to tell you. Our whole nation was unanimous in the hope that we would bring world cup glory home, despite the odds.

I vaguely remember my friend getting us free tickets to watch the England vs South Africa game. To me it was an excuse to have some fun and spend time with my friends, as I wasn't a big cricket fan unless Bangladesh were playing. We joined the long queue in front of the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium. Some had their faces painted, some were carrying placards in the shapes of fours and sixes, others binoculars, and tigershaped balloons. Our seats were high up in the stands, but I preferred that view over having the backs of people gathered below obstructing the view, albeit closer to the field.

There was an infectious energy all around and it was impossible not to give in. Nearby was a slab where the man with tiger stripes painted all over his body was waving the red and green flag with a passion. Some of us took turns taking selfies with him, the digital memories now lost and all but forgotten.

The atmosphere was contagious and I found myself adding my voice to the crowd as an England bowler made the run up and our screams crescendoed when he bowled the first ball of the game. I would have braced myself had known I would bear witness to a batting masterclass by none other than the AB de Villiers himself.

My memories of that day are all but faded but I will never forget how devastating the South African captain was that day. It seemed like anything that came off his bat was turning into boundaries. He made it look easy, as great players often do. His unbeaten 69 runs off just 28 balls earned him the man of the match award. The crowd cheered, "char chokka hoi hoi" played in the background, and I joined in on the dance despite myself. It was very different from watching on TV. The noise, the atmosphere, the energy within the stadium culminated in a different kind of experience to what I had expected.

I didn't really care much for the result because the two teams weren't in our group, and I remember leaving early, but I went home that day with a newfound appreciation for the sport. I will never forget that powerhouse performance from the batting maestro, and the precious togetherness that my friends and I shared. Looking back, those times were more precious than we realised.

And especially in these times, I find myself longing for that day in 2014 when I was part of a sea of humanity crying out in one voice.



play dart," sighed Akbar.

Meanwhile, pacer Shoriful Islam recalled some funny incidents from the tour.

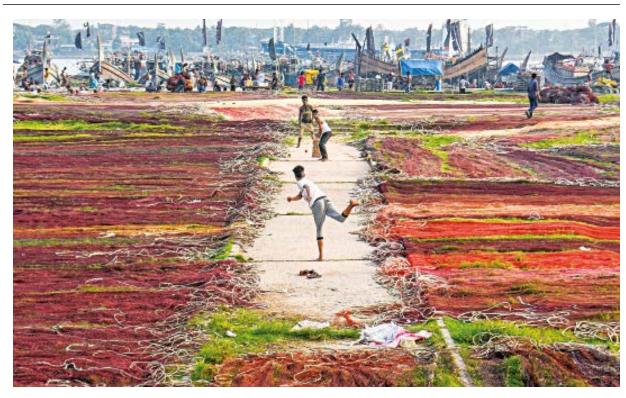
SHORIFUL ISLAM

"All of us had a favourite dialogue. It was from the Bangla series Bachelor Point Season 2. There was a character named 'pasha bhai' in the series and his trademark dialogue was to make an intimidating noise. We used to do that among ourselves all the time. When we were on the bus on our way to practice or even during practice sessions or matches, we used to say that dialogue among ourselves. By the

the 18-year-old was as serious and aggressive as anyone could be when on the field. The left-armer also admitted that the aggressive celebration which he pulled out after dismissing India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal on 88, was something very much well rehearsed.

"Actually when we lost to them [India] in the Asia Cup final, they celebrated vigorously. So I planned that when I get a wicket [World Cup final], I would celebrate in a way to trigger them a bit. I actually rehearsed it beforehand. I had come up with a number of celebrations and later stuck with the one which I thought looked the best and fitting. It was something which said that we lost to you a number of times but it is time for us to win and for you to stay in our pocket," explained Shoriful.

While sharing all those memories from time in South Africa, both Shoriful and Akbar mentioned how desperately they would like to get back to the field and perhaps make more lasting memories as they pursue more accolades in their professional career.



This photo, taken by The Daily Star staff photographer Rajib Raihan on December 23, 2019 was shortlisted among eight photographs for the Wisden-MCC Photograph of the Year award recently. Although the photograph, showing three youths playing a game of cricket in one of the few spots in a field not covered by drying fishing nets at Fishery Ghat in Chattogram, did not get the top award, it did make the cover of British newspaper The Guardian's story titled: 'Catches, tea and nets: Wisden-MCC Photograph of the Year'. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

The Daily Star



### Hard times for expat workers

Thousands face shortage of food, essentials amid Covid-19 pandemic

### RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

Several thousand Bangladeshi migrant workers in the Middle East, Italy and some Southeast Asian countries are facing acute shortage of food and other essential commodities as their income sources remained shut amid shutdown enforced by the countries to contain coronavirus spread.

The Middle East and Southeast Asian countries include Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Brunei and Malavsia.

Against this backdrop, the Bangladesh missions in those countries have come forward with food assistance after being instructed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said sources at the mission offices.

Golam Moshi, Bangladeshi ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said the prime minister asked the foreign ministry to extend support to Bangladeshi expatriates in different countries.

As per the instruction, the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry has so far allocated about Tk 4.5 crore, he told this newspaper over phone on Wednesday

The Saudi embassy received about Tk 80 lakh from the allocation and bought food packages for 1,000 Bangladeshis living in Riyadh and Jeddah, he said.

With each package a person would be able to survive for 20 days, Moshi said, adding the Saudi mission would gradually extend the food assistant initiative to other major cities in the Gulf country.

The ambassador said the mission already circulated on SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Ignoring the advice of social distancing to slow the spread of coronavirus, buyers and sellers, both wholesale and retail, crowd a street near Karwan Bazar in the capital around 7:00am yesterday.

PHOTO

ANISUR RAHMAN

### Many Rohingyas gather at border to enter Ukhiya

BGB steps up patrol **OUR CORRESPONDENT**, Cox's Bazar

Some couple of hundred Rohingyas have allegedly gathered across the Myanmar border on the other side of Naf river to enter Bangladesh.

The Border Guard Bangladesh said they came to know that a group of Rohingyas were trying to enter Bangladesh through Ukhiya border on Thursday night, said Lt Col Ali Haider Azad Ahmed, commanding officer of BGB-32 battalion.

BGB members have beefed up patrolling along the Anjumanpara border as no new Rohingya will be allowed to enter Bangladesh, he said. Meanwhile, local people took position on several points of Ukhiya and Teknaf border in Cox's Bazar to assist the border guard members. Palongkhali Union Parishad chairman M Gafur Uddin Chowdhury said some Bangladeshi fishermen reported to the local representatives after seeing several hundred Rohingyas waiting in the Myanmar territory to enter Bangladesh. Saiful Islam Saif, upazila nirbahi officer in Teknaf, said they would take necessary steps in this regard.

### FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES 'All shades of opinion will be considered'

Bangabandhu speaking at the inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly of **Bangladesh on** April 10, 1972.

### 2 girls raped in Jashore, B'baria 2 suspects held

STAR REPORT

Two minor girls were allegedly raped in Brahmanbaria and Jashore on Thursday, and two suspects were detained in these connections.

In Brahmanbaria, a nine-year-old girl was allegedly raped in Sonarampur village of Ashuganj upazila on Thursday evening.

Police later detained Liton Mia, 25, a rickshaw puller, in this connection. Javed Mahmud, officerin-charge of Ashuganj Police Station, told The Daily Star that the girl was playing near a rice mill in Sonarumpur village. At that time, Liton came there and took her to a paddy field where he raped her.

### STAY HOME, STAY WELL

Fight against the 'infodemic'

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Falsehoods and rumours thrive during a crisis and even more when the crisis revolves around a threatening disease.

Much like the virus itself, misinformation is spreading quickly during the coronavirus outbreak.

Media experts say misinformation is so dangerous that it could threaten people's lives.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is warning of an "infodemic" after an influx of misinformation online about the novel

MIGRANTS IN ISOLATION Singapore to give food, free treatment, salaries JAMIL MAHMUD and PORIMOL PALMA

The Singapore government has promised food, wages, and treatment costs of Bangladeshi migrant workers who are in isolation in the country's dormitories.

The decision comes after a surge in coronavirus cases at the workers' dormitories.

"We are maintaining regular contact with various departments of the Singapore government regarding your [workers] overall condition. They have assured us of the three things," Bangladesh High Commissioner in Singapore Mustafizur Rahman yesterday said in a video message to the workers.

Singapore saw 287 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, a record for the country. About 70 percent of the infections were linked to foreign workers' dormitories, reports The Straits Times.

The Singapore government declared five dorms -- Tampines Dormitory, Sungei Tengah Lodge, S11 Dormitory in Punggol, Westlite Toh Guan and Toh Guan -- as isolation facilities to prevent the spread or possible outbreak of Covid-19.

of these Residents lodgings were ordered to remain in their rooms for 14 days.

The number of Bangladeshi workers living in those dorms remain unknown.

Singapore is home around to two lakh Bangladeshis, mostly employed in the construction sector.

According to foreign ministry sources, at least 244 Bangladeshi migrant Singapore workers in have been diagnosed with coronavirus SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

APRIL 10 & 11, 1972

Shamsuddoza Sajen

GONOPARISHAD OF BANGLADESH COMMENCED The first Constituent Assembly of

Bangladesh commences its session on April 10, 1972, with a promise to give the new nation a constitution on the basis of four pillars of the state policy: nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism. Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who is also the leader of the house, tells the house that all shades of opinion will be taken into consideration in framing the constitution. The discussion will SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

"The accused fled leaving the victim in the field. On information, victim's mother rescued her in a critical condition and took her to the police station," SEE PAGE 4 COL 2 coronavirus.

The WHO described it as "an overabundance of information -- some accurate and some not -that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it".

Recently, a number of rumours have surfaced on social media platforms. To prevent this, law enforcers have started working at the field level.

"Rumours and hoaxes promising false cures cause panic amid uncertainty," Shabnam Azim, associate professor of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at Dhaka University, told The Daily Star.

PHOTO: **STAR** 

Shabnam said misinformation is spreading in SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



**PRAYER TIMING APRIL 11** Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esh AZAN 4-35 12-45 4-45 6-24 7-45 JAMAAT 5-10 1-15 5-00 6-28

#### SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOU

### VAT offices to remain open April 12-15

Only to facilitate submission of VAT returns, says NBR STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) will keep its VAT offices open from April 12 to April 15 to facilitate submission of VAT returns for the month. A NBR press release

made the decision public yesterday, hours after the government extended general holiday for the third time to slowdown the spread of Covid-19.

The NBR directive will prompt over 370 VAT offices to remain open across the country.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) urged NBR to extend the deadline for VAT returns submission without penalty on Thursday.

The apex trade body said it would not be possible for many business entities to furnish VAT return on due time because of SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Although there is fear all around over coronavirus, farmers are not confining themselves indoors. They are growing crops to feed the nation. In this picture taken on Thursday, a farmer is seen spraying pesticides on his paddy in Mohanpur village of Dinajpur.

**Indo-Pak border** fighting escalates

**REUTERS**, New Delh

Indian and Pakistani troops in disputed Kashmir are engaged in their most frequent cross-border fighting of at least two years, official data shows, even as both nucleararmed rivals battle surging coronavirus outbreaks.

Kashmir has long been a flashpoint between the neighbours but tension was renewed after New Delhi withdrew the autonomy of the Himalayan region last August and split it into federally-administered territories.

Both countries claim the region in full, but rule only parts, and often accuse each other of breaching a 2003 ceasefire pact by shelling and firing across the Line of Control (LoC), an informal border in Kashmir, and of killing dozens every year.

Indian Army data reviewed by Reuters shows 411 ceasefire violations by Pakistan's military in March, the highest number in a single month since at least 2018. That compares with 267 violations in March last year recorded by the Indian Army.

"(The) Pakistan Army never initiates ceasefire violations along LoC, but it has always responded befittingly to Indian Army's unprovoked firing," said Major-General Babar Iftikhar, of the public relations wing of the Pakistan Army

Iftikhar said Pakistan's military had recorded 705 ceasefire violations by the Indian Army since the beginning of the year.

The Indian Army data showed 1,197 Pakistani violations during the same period.

Reuters is not in a position to independently verify the competing claims.

Four Indian army officials said the heightened border activity was a cover to help militants from Pakistan-backed groups infiltrate into Indian Kashmir, as some troops help to run health camps and hand out food in the battle on SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

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