



The Daily Star



REGD. No. DA 781 | Vol. XXX No. 88 | CHAITRA 28, 1426 BS | **Your Right to Know** | SHABAN 16, 1441 HIJRI | 12 PAGES PLUS TOGGLE PRICE : Tk12.00

BANGLADESH UPDATE **94** New cases in 24hrs **424** Total cases **27** Death **33** Recovery **GLOBAL UPDATE** **97,264** Deaths **1,622,167** Total cases

Cash aid for extreme poor

Under gov't third stimulus package, 34 lakh families to get monthly allowance through mobile banking; farmers to get loan at 3pc interest rate

REJAUH KARIM BYRON and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

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

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. 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



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

Death toll 27 as 6 more die

37 of 94 new Covid-19 cases are from Dhaka

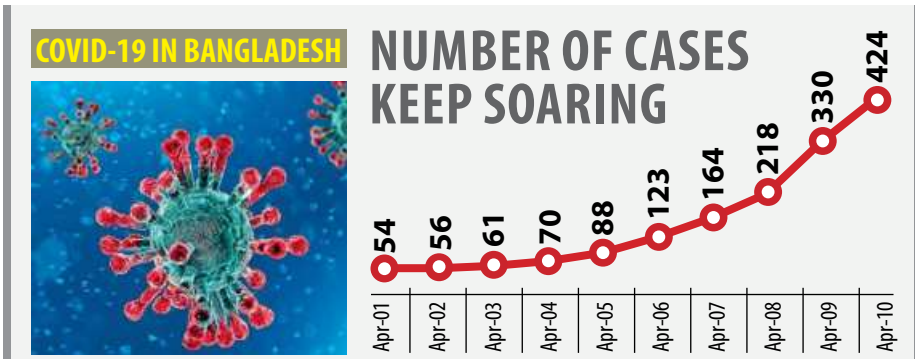
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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. "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.

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CORONAVIRUS INFECTION CURVE

For now, the only way is up



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 yesterday 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

COVID-LIKE SYMPTOMS 6 more die in 5 dists

STAR REPORT

At least six people died of Covid-19-like symptoms in five districts in the last two days, while four tested positive for coronavirus in four districts yesterday. Meanwhile, local administrations yesterday locked down three districts and two upazilas to prevent the spread of the virus. Health officials have collected samples of the deceased for tests, report our correspondent after talking to the officials concerned. 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-year-old man died of fever and diarrhoea at his residence in Saheberhat union under Kamolnagar upazila yesterday morning.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Don't go out after 6pm

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

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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 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

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A guard keeps watch at the gate on a road in the capital's Khilgaon Tilpapara yesterday. Police have locked the area down after a resident tested positive for Covid-19. Inset, locals put up a barricade on Hussaini Dalan road in Old Dhaka to stop traffic entering their area. A notice hung on the barricade says entry of outsiders is prohibited.

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

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TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Mountain Gorilla, Bwinda, Uganda.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Re-Visiting Africa

Recently 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 Bwinda 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 if anticlimactic moment. They appeared remarkably nonplussed

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 Bwinda. 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 Sifa 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 to fuse observations about flora and fauna with stories of the human condition like him, effortlessly moving from one to the other.

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'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 Anwar Hossain, Md Abdul Alim and Md Likhon Sheikh.

Shamsul Arefin, additional deputy commissioner of DB, told media the arrestees looted gold ornaments, cash and a laptop after cutting grille of a flat on March

31.

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 some medicine shops."

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

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 unit chiefs to perform duty with utmost professionalism so that crime incidents do not rise during this extraordinary situation.

CMP launches app to monitor home-quarantined 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 Rahman on Thursday evening at CMP Headquarters.

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

Apart from that, the app has a notification system and it will send notification and alert to both the home-quarantined 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.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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.

Not just clothes traders, 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 Murshida, president of Barishal Women Business Forum, demanded postponement of installment



PHOTO: TITU DAS

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 cancelled," she said.

Debosree Sarker, owner of online-based design platform Bangaliana, echoed her.

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 Itihash 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 Aameer Ali Hussain for the generous support.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

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 in misappropriating 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.



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".

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.

Table with 2 columns: Country, Cases, Deaths. 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.

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.



The government yesterday said it had 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.

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.

'You can't relax'

Vigilance urged as NY sees signs of progress

REUTERS, New York

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 US death toll surpassed 16,500.

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 being re-infected.

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.



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.

Yemen reports first case

REUTERS, Aden

Yemen reported its first case of the novel coronavirus yesterday as aid groups try to prepare for an outbreak in a country where war has shattered the health system and spread hunger and disease.

Around 150 Saudi Royals infected with coronavirus

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.

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 governorates 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.

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.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Police recruitment. Includes logo, text in Bengali, and a table with 5 columns: Sl. No., Name/ID, Application Status, Salary, and Remarks. The table lists various candidates and their application details.



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

FAVOURITE FAN MOMENTS

"I was surprised to know that they celebrate my birthday every year"

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.



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

Debutant directors affected by pandemic delay

SHARMIN JOYA

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, Momintul Haque, who accepted 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 Chalachitro 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.

Timeless melodies of Bangladeshi cinema to enjoy at home

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

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 lead 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 Khatay 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 *Putrobdhu* (1981) is also one of the most beloved tracks of all time. The song is picturised on Shabana.

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



Chumki Choleche Eka Pothe

celebrated duo Razzak and Kabori. The song is written by Abu Hena Mustafa Kamal and composed by Subal Das for the film *Dorpochno* (1980).

Tomare Legeche Je Ato Bhalo, is another cherished 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 Hoya Ele and *Nil Akasher Niche Ami*, two acclaimed tracks from the Narayan Ghosh Mita directorial, *Nil Akasher Niche* (1969), starring

this playlist. Composed by Alauddin 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. Picturised on Razzak and Nuton, the composition is sung by Subir Nandi and Anjumana 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



Shob Shokhire Paar Korite

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.



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.



#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.

Buttons come undone as Covid-22 pressures escalate

BY ERR, OR

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.



ILLUSTRATION: DOODLE BHAI

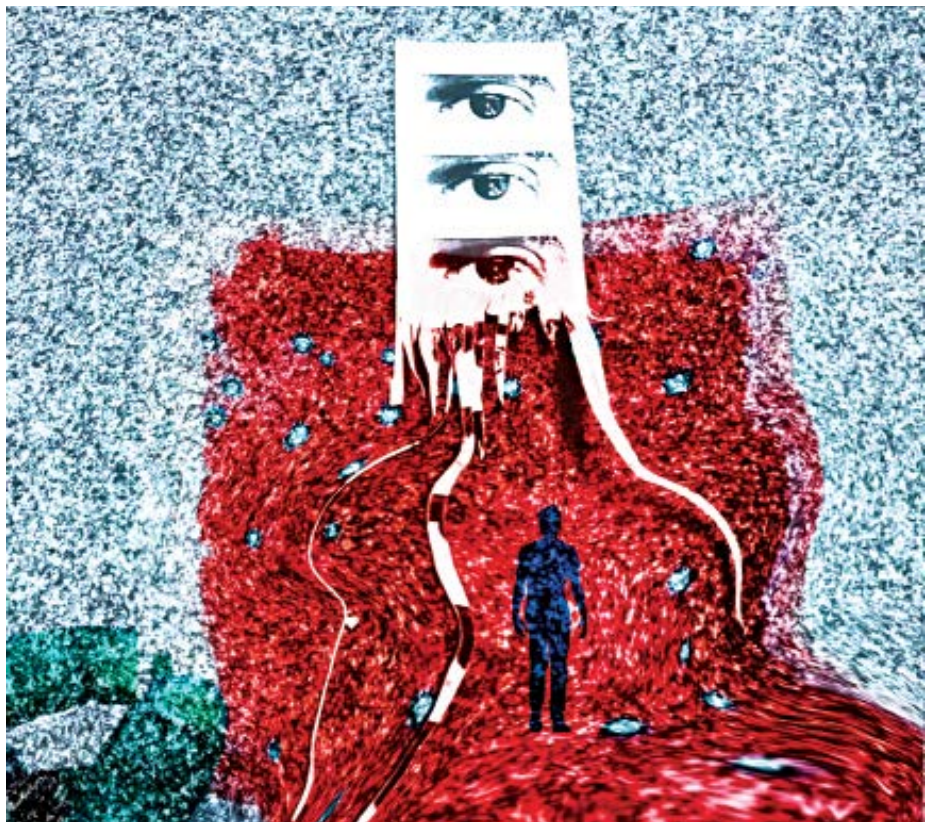


ILLUSTRATION: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

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 aunts.

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.

The Bloodfall at Ocean Drive

OSAMA RAHMAN

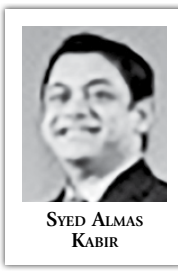
Cradled between the hill and the sea,
Is a Bloodfall,
Of all the kills you didn't see.
It's a brilliant red,
Glinting against the sun.
It smells a little of iron.
And of fresh bullets from a gun.
There's a Bloodfall at Ocean Drive, have you seen it?
It's a sight to behold, come on friends, I really mean 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

A new world after the coronavirus pandemic



SYED ALMAS KABIR

As 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 rat-race 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 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. Video-editing 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 home-appliances, 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

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).



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

PHOTO: ROSLAN RAHMAN/AFP

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 sought-after 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 video-chats. 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

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

Will there be light at the end of this darkness?

TANWIR NAWAZ

Is 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.

PHOTO: STAR

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, rickshawpullers, 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 tackling 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.

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 of ten 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 quarantine, 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 of his high school sweetheart, she took a 10 seconds pause and whispered, ‘I’m running away



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

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 Of 2006 on his way to school, shanti saw an effigy burning. people were throwing their

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.



FOOTBALL FOR DUMMIES

Belarusian 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 be donated toward fighting the pandemic. Dynamo Brest tested the idea during their 2-0 home victory over Shakhtyor Soligorsk on Wednesday. -- AGENCIES



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 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 year.

The internal fracture reportedly started in February this year when it was leaked that the club had a relationship with a third-party company, I3 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 handkerchiefs every home game."

In an explosive interview with Ra1 radio, Rousaud 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, I 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-of-contract 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 entitled to "walk away" 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."

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.



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 tiger-shaped 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 I 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.

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 re-watching 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

said that he too wanted our jerseys 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

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 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.



SHORIFUL ISLAM

play dart," sighed Akbar.

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

"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



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

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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 Malaysia.

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

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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

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.

Residents of these 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 to around two lakh Bangladeshis, mostly employed in the construction sector.

According to foreign ministry sources, at least 244 Bangladeshi migrant workers in Singapore have been diagnosed with coronavirus.

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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.

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



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, officer-in-charge of Ashuganj Police Station, told The Daily Star that the girl was playing near a rice mill in Sonarampur village. At that time, Liton came there and took her to a paddy field where he raped her.

"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."

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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 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.

Shabnam said misinformation is spreading in

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 11

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:35 12:45 4:45 6:24 7:45
JAMAAT 5:10 1:15 5:00 6:28 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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.

PHOTO: STAR

Indo-Pak border fighting escalates

REUTERS, New Delhi

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 nuclear-armed 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 belligerently to Indian Army's unprovoked firing," said Major-General Babar Ifkhar, of the public relations wing of the Pakistan Army.

Ifkhar 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

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