



## Virus eradicated, humans too

NISHAT TAHSIN

Chapasthan has apparently stopped the spread of the deadly morosnavirus, and they have supposedly done so a fair while ago. There has been radio silence from the country for the last six months as the world descended further into the war against the Morbid-19 disease and there was little time to look at news that was not about a given nation's own troubles.

But news trickled through that something utterly strange was afoot in Chapasthan when a migrant worker from that country returned to it via sea from his adopted country of Iwalked last month.

After reaching Chapasthan, he communicated with our agency over the satellite phone he had carried, which was a stroke of luck as all telecommunication in the country was down. The government had years back started to roll out a passenger-pigeon communication service fearing the spread of rumours on digital media.

This correspondent then too travelled went to Chapasthan to see if the migrant worker's horrific account of an empty ghost town, recounted over his satellite phone was anywhere close to true.

It was.

After three days searching most restaurants, hundreds of tea-stalls and all other popular hangout spots, no survivors were spotted. The virus had been defeated, but that was because there seemed to be no hosts left.

However, upon scouring newspapers that were piled up in big columns in front of a building, it was apparent that the massive human cost was not because a particularly deadly strain of morosnavirus had attacked Chapasthan. Reports dating back a year showed that Chapasthan was taking the same measures that most of the world had adopted back then -- social distancing, nationwide shutdown and testing as many as possible for Morbid-19.

About a month and a half later, people became restless just as the outbreak was approaching its peak. As an underdeveloped nation, Chapasthan could ill afford to keep their economy closed for long periods and particularly, forego export orders of their number one export -- buttons -- worth billions. So, the government had decided to open up factories, restaurants and other small businesses on a "limited scale". Only people who lived in Chapasthan's capital would be allowed to join work while others would remain "safe" in their village homes. Curiously enough,

the newspaper did not define the "limitations". They said social distancing guidelines must be followed, but the newspaper pages were filled with people cramming together to buy fish, climb foot overbridges, provide donations, go for Dryday excursions donned in new clothes and all.

A month after the opening up on a limited scale, both the infection rate and death rate spiked. The government was roundly criticised for delaying approval of testing kits made by local companies. They could have followed the example of European nation Kartaka's example and started contact tracing and testing for antibodies to identify who might be immune, therefore could go back to work and keep the economy chugging along, said an op-ed writer, whose obituary appeared on the next day's paper.

Chapasthan had self-identified as an autodemocracy -- a system of government where democracy happened automatically -- and so, the government, under increasing pressure, promised to show the world that they were far ahead of their more developed counterparts and would stop the disease dead in its tracks.

According to a news published three months ago, the Chapasthan government declared martial law and

ordered institutional quarantine of all 170 million people.

Newspapers came out for about a month after that, and carried news of how a half-baked research led to a ridiculous figure of the minimum income to be doled out to disadvantaged families and had left them starving, how domestic violence and murder had increased when abusive families were cooped up and of course, people dying at home without treatment with morosnavirus-like symptoms.

There was also news of how some rich people made it out by giving the law enforcers guarding their mansions, their mansions. But not much was heard about them afterwards.

The last official bit of info came from the information minister, who was in charge of sitting at home and enforcing the Insecurity Act, so had no contact with the outside world for six months. He was also the supposed last survivor.

"Everything is fine, no one is spreading rumours, my screen is blank. Sometimes I watch news of the good old days of bumper cucumber harvest on VTV and it makes me feel even more hopeful for the future. As part of my job, I am glad to announce we have beaten Morbid-19 well before any of the richer nations have," he had said.

## Domestic workers extend 'general holiday'; cite risks and how dirty people are

The bourgeoisie scramble for solutions, but obviously can't find one on their own

LUBNAN KHALEESI

In an unprecedented move, the Utopian Union of Househelp (UUH) issued an official statement pushing back their return to places of employment until September 2020.

Putting an emphasis on the current crisis and asserting that the move has nothing to do with bored housewives and hot irons, the association said it was simply a matter of safety.

The decision has created ripples across the country.

"There are growing piles of clothes in my house and no one to clean them. What will I do until September?" said a horrified aunty from the block, who was recently released from quarantine.

It is not merely aunts who are feeling the brunt of



this decision by the UUH. Young people, enraptured by the Marie Kondo method which was all the rage last year, are faced with a new conundrum.

Tasnu, a university student said, "What is the point of having so many pairs of jeans and t-shirts? But throwing these clothes away also means I am not being Zero Waste. If the maids were here, I could donate my clothes to them. Now I am just piling up all these clothes that don't spark joy."

When asked what they will do in the interim, a UUH spokesperson said, "We are creating a framework for our activities. A big part of that will be designing a campaign for alternatives to being cleaners in holy lands."

Lubnan Khaleesi has cracked the code for the right street-type jhalmoory, but is still on the hunt for the best halim in town. And don't even get started on her cheesecakes.

## The Writer's Block



## Government sets one-hour 'mingling window' for citizens amid lockdown

OSAMA RAHMAN

Frustrated with the absolute stupidity of people, the government of Bhangadesh today announced a one-hour window for citizens to go out and mingle with each other.

This came after their earlier plan to open shopping malls did nothing for the economy as few people had money to splurge on Eid dresses, especially at a time when even profit-making hospitals had decided to cancel the festival bonuses of doctors and nurses.

The mingling hour has been set from 11:00am to 12:00pm, a period when it has been historically proven that no bad things happen.

"Good boys and girls should not go out after the sun sets any way. This will also inculcate good habits among these westernised people," the country's health and apparently also the morality minister said.

"Look, these people are constantly gathering till 5:00pm anyway. I have seen them idling around vegetable sellers, passing vegetables to each other and asking



that those be smelled. We don't know why they are behaving this way, but there's not much we can do now," Petal Jamal, a minister hired because of his connections, said.

"None of us have any expertise on this or any other matter. Our health minister never even opened a biology book in his life. Our commerce minister is a loan-defaulter," another top official said on condition of anonymity.

With an entire state mechanism mired in incompetence, the ruler of the country also lashed out at their supporting cast yesterday.

"If I gave them toilet paper to distribute among the people, they would use those to make tant sari for themselves, which would be gorgeous but simple. Of course, until it started to rain -- the health minister would have a problem with that," they said.

Having failed to keep citizens

indoors, the government had to come up with the one-hour window, experts (maybe) said.

During the hour, all parks, restaurants and businesses will be kept open.

"This will save us all in the long run, please keep writing about that," said a glassy-eyed very, very high official of the finance ministry. "The world is about more than people, man," he added, before explaining whatever little he understood about "herd immunity".

"Why don't cows get coronavirus? Because herds, man," he said.

Meanwhile, citizens have been asked to use the window well and not make it a reason to spread the deadly infection currently plaguing the city, which is expected to worsen, because why shouldn't it?

"I am going to Cox's Bazar," a citizen told this correspondent when asked how he planned to use the time. When reminded that he could never make that journey in an hour, he said it was okay because the country's people had very strong immunity and something about the sun.