



The Daily Star

www.thedailystar.net

REGD. No. DA 781

Vol. XXX No. 128

Jaishta 9, 1427 BS

Your Right to Know

RAMADAN 29, 1441 HJRI

12 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



CYCLONE-HIT AREAS IN SOUTH

Gone with the storm

With homes, belongings destroyed, they suffer for scanty relief, shortage of food, drinking water



STAR REPORT

Yusuf Hawlader does not know where he will live now as his homestead has been washed away by onrushing water triggered by Cyclone Amphan. "Everything is gone. The cyclone has taken away everything from us," said the 62-year-old farmer while wiping tears off his cheeks.

Yusuf is a resident of Pankhali village in Dacope upazila of Khulna, a district badly hit by the fierce force of nature, which has left a trail of destruction in the country's coastal areas. More than a dozen people have been killed.

Around 250 families, including that of Yusuf, took refuge at Pankhali Cyclone Centre in the upazila, hours before Amphan made landfall on Wednesday with a wind speed of more than 150km per hour.

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Desperate to go to their village home ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, people rush to board a ferry at Shimulia Ferry Terminal in Munshiganj around 8:00am yesterday, hours after law enforcers allowed home-goers to leave the capital by cars and other light vehicles amid the Covid-19 shutdown. Police earlier had imposed a ban on leaving the city to contain the spread of the virus. *Bottom*, people get on a pick-up on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Manikganj Bus Stand area to travel to southern districts via Paturia.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, ZAHANGIR SHAH

BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,694

New cases in 24hrs



30,205

Total cases



432

Deaths



6,190

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



333,489

Deaths



5,128,492

Total cases

Deaths, new cases climb

24 more die; positive cases top 30,000; many still ignore health safety, distancing in city

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

While the number of Covid-19 positive cases as well as deaths keep rising every day, with Dhaka worst affected, many are still indifferent to maintaining social distancing and health safety guidelines.

Take, for instance, Azmat Bepari, a jaundice patient. Rubbing hands with quicklime, Azmat leant before a quack who poured some water onto his head. And with his bare hands, he gently massaged Azmat's head.

When the quack, Abdul Alim, aged around 60, was showing his "miracle" in treating jaundice patients in the capital's Jatrabari, 20 people had crowded around to be treated in a similar fashion.

Most of them had no masks and had gathered in such a way that it would be hard to imagine that they were in the midst of a pandemic caused by the highly transmissible Covid-19 virus, which has killed over 3.35 lakh people globally in less than five months.

The country yesterday recorded its highest death toll -- 24 -- in a single day. The overall death toll now stands at 432.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Friend in need is a friend indeed

Little-known foundation protects about 3,000 drivers of CNG three-wheelers from pandemic



SYED ASHFAQUIL HAQUE

Upside down is their world now: from daily earners to dole-expectants.

'No work, no pay' was the harsh reality for the daily earners, who made up 20 percent of Dhaka's 20-million population before the coronavirus pandemic broke loose in Bangladesh. And, they have been without work for nearly two months since the ongoing lockdown was enforced, slipping gradually along with their families from the poor to extreme poor. They are not begging, yet they are not far from doing it.

About 13,000 drivers of CNG-run three-wheelers in the country are among this vulnerable group. They have mostly remained out of the radar of aid. The government's

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

BORO HARVEST, PRICE

Farmers happy, yet experts worry

High paddy price, stockpiling may affect retail market of rice

DWOHA CHOWDHURY and SOHEL PARVEZ

Anticipating an increased demand for food grain, a section of rice millers and wholesalers are exhibiting stockpiling tendencies, pushing up the price of the recently harvested Boro paddy.

Since the coronavirus pandemic led to a countrywide shutdown, people have been buying more rice, feeling insecure about its future availability.

To cash on this behaviour, rice millers and wholesalers are buying Boro paddy in large volumes at Tk 250 to Tk 400 per maund (40 kg) -- more than what they paid last year.

Though high paddy prices are making farmers happy, it may affect the retail price of rice, making the staple unaffordable to millions of low-income people, who lost their income during the pandemic, experts fear.

To keep the rice market under control, economists have urged the government to increase its food grain stock by purchasing more paddy.

WHAT FARMERS SAY

Talking to farmers from districts with higher Boro production, our correspondents reported that the paddy price is ranging between Tk 650 to Tk 800 per maund. Last year, around this time the paddy was selling for an average of Tk 500 per maund.

Farmer Ratiranjana Das from Madhyannagar of Sunamganj's Dharmapasha upazila is seeing good production after several years of bad yield and low prices.

"The price is ranging between Tk 650 to Tk 780 taka per maund in the local bazaar depending on the variety, quality and moisture content of paddy," he informed.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Thousands leave city amid relaxed travel curbs

Eid-ul-Fitr likely tomorrow

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and RASHIDUL HASAN

Thousands of people continued to leave Dhaka yesterday as the government apparently relaxed travel restrictions ahead of the Eid.

The authorities at Shimulia-Kathalbari and Paturia-Daulatdia ferry terminals resumed services after three days, allowing people to head for 21 south-western districts.

Although Rab Director General Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun yesterday said that only those using personal vehicles will be allowed to travel to their hometowns, many people travelled on pickups and three-wheelers, spending two to three times the usual fare.

The Rab DG told reporters through video conferencing that no public transport could be used for the journey.

Eid-ul-Fitr, the largest religious festival of Muslims, will be celebrated on May 24 or 25, subject to the sighting of the moon.

The cabinet division on May 14 said movement of people will be restricted across the country and no one would be allowed to leave the city where they work from May 17-May 28. This was an additional restriction over the nearly two-month long suspension of public transport aimed at slowing the spread of coronavirus.

Police set up check posts on key highways to enforce the restrictions, but failed to stop the home goers.

In a desperate bid to stop people from travelling, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Hasina phones Mamata, asks about Amphan damage in WB

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and enquired about the damages caused by Cyclone Amphan.

"The prime minister phoned the West Bengal chief minister around 11:10am and enquired about the damages due to the cyclone in the state," PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim said.

He said the PM expressed sympathy to Mamata over the loss of life and property caused by the cyclone and hoped they would overcome the loss very soon.

The West Bengal chief minister thanked the Bangladesh PM for expressing sympathy.

Amphan made landfall in India and Bangladesh on Wednesday evening, causing huge damage to West Bengal and coastlines of Bangladesh.



Firefighters spray water on the wreckage of a Pakistan International Airlines aircraft after it crashed at a residential area in Karachi, yesterday.

Dozens die as Pak plane crashes on houses

40 bodies recovered out of 99 on board; 2 survive; pilot's distress call suggests plane lost both engines

AGENCIES

At least 40 dead bodies have been recovered after a Pakistani plane crashed with nearly 100 people on board in the southern city of Karachi yesterday, according to rescue officials, with dozens more feared dead.

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane was close to landing when it came down among houses, sparking an explosion and killing several people on the ground.

"We have recovered 40 plus bodies so far," Major Mohammad Mansoor from the Pakistan Rangers, who was overseeing the rescue operation, told AFP.

Faisal Edhi, who heads the charitable Edhi Foundation that was assisting rescuers, gave a slightly higher figure saying at least 42 dead bodies had been recovered from the area.

"As per our estimates there are around 50 more dead bodies under the debris," he said in a live television broadcast.

At least two passengers survived the crash, according to Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, the information minister in Sindh province where Karachi is located.

Plumes of smoke were sent into the air as rescue workers and residents searched the debris for survivors and firefighters tried to extinguish the flames. An AFP reporter witnessed charred bodies being loaded into ambulances.

Seemin Jamali, a director from Jinnah Post Graduate Medical College in the city, said eight dead and 15 injured people had been brought to the facility.

"They were all from the ground, no (plane) passengers have been brought here," she said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PHOTO: AFP

ATROCITIES ON ROHINGYAS

Nothing credible done to improve situation in Rakhine

Say Asean parliamentarians as Myanmar set to submit first report today to ICJ in genocide case

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Myanmar has done nothing credible to improve the situation for the Rohingya in Rakhine state of Myanmar, said Asean Parliamentarians for Human Rights yesterday, a day ahead of the deadline for Myanmar, as asked by UN top court, to submit its first report today on actions taken to prevent genocide against the Rohingya.

"We have still not seen any credible evidence of Myanmar improving the situation for the Rohingya at all," said Asean (Association of South East Asian Nations) Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) in a statement.

Those inside Myanmar are still living in apartheid conditions and subject to the same – if not worse – restrictions they have lived under for years now, including those on their freedom of movement, access to health, education, and livelihoods, it said.

"After all the pressure Myanmar has faced on this issue, how are we still at this point?" said Charles Santiago, APHR Chair and a member of Malaysian parliament.

In the preliminary ruling of the Gambia versus Myanmar case on 23 January, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that there is a serious risk of genocide against the Rohingya and ordered Myanmar to implement provisional measures to prevent all acts of genocide.

It also requires Myanmar to preserve evidence of crimes that could amount to genocide. These provisional measures are legally binding and require Myanmar to provide a report on their progress by 23 May, and a follow-up every six months thereafter.

The Gambia filed the case against Myanmar late last year, more than two years after some 750,000 Rohingya fled a brutal military crackdown in Rakhine and took shelter in Bangladesh since August 2017.

Myanmar on April 8 issued two presidential directives to ensure that its staff, military or security forces

and others under its control "do not commit" acts defined in the Genocide Convention. The orders also prohibit destruction or removing any evidence of genocidal acts.

Charles Santiago said Myanmar's directives mean nothing if there are no concrete measures being implemented on the ground to dismantle the system of apartheid and discrimination against the Rohingya.

"If Myanmar is serious about complying with the ICJ, an absolute start point must be lifting the government-imposed internet blackout in Rakhine and Chin states," he said.

Presently, APHR said, all civilians living in Rakhine are caught in the midst of the intensifying conflict between the Tatmadaw and Arakan Army, in which hundreds have been killed and wounded, and more than 157,000 people displaced.

APHR has also called on Asean to urge Myanmar to protect civilians in the conflict, and tackle the root causes of the crisis by taking a rights-based approach and to implement the recommendations from the Kofi Annan-led Advisory Commission on Rakhine.

Asean must urge Myanmar to cooperate with international accountability mechanisms to ensure justice for the Rohingya, APHR said.

"After decades of oppression, violence and restrictions on the rights of the Rohingya, the international community cannot continue to watch the Myanmar authorities act with impunity. It may be years before the ICJ comes up with a final judgment, so in the meantime, Asean leaders must urge Myanmar to implement genuine reform," said Chamnan Chanruang, an APHR member and former Thai MP.

Meanwhile, AP reported, Myanmar says it will submit a report due today outlining its claims of compliance with an order from the ICJ to protect members of its Muslim Rohingya ethnic minority, but refused to discuss its contents before submitting it.

Deaths, new cases

FROM PAGE 1

said the Directorate General of Health Services.

Addressing the regular briefing on the Covid-19 situation, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of DGHS, said 1,694 people tested Covid-19 positive in 24 hours since Thursday morning.

Since March 8, some 30,205 people have been infected with the novel coronavirus in the country, she said.

Shafiun Shimul, an associate professor of Health Economics at Dhaka University, said if the current trend continues, the infection rate in the country will increase until the end of June.

An effective lockdown for at least two weeks can bring down the infection rate, he opined.

RISK FACTORS

The government, health experts, and campaigners have been asking people to maintain social distancing and hygiene, but it seems to have fallen on deaf ears as many do not follow it.

Dhaka city has the highest number of Covid-19 cases, and Jatrabari ranks as the second-most affected area where these quacks con people every day.

"They are fooling people. But what is more alarming is the crowd and the method used to treat jaundice patients," said Raju Ahmed, who was present at the spot near Shahid Faruque Road.

Raju, who works at an RFL showroom, said this increases the risk of spreading coronavirus.

Quack Alim said he has been treating patients for a long time and nothing has happened. "There is no possibility

of spreading coronavirus from here," he claimed.

People also go to salons -- which also carries the risk of spreading the virus.

Md Sumon, owner of a salon in Swamibagh, said he opened his shop last week. "I clean scissors regularly," he claimed when asked about maintaining hygiene.

Besides, people were also seen violating social distancing directives at some kitchen markets in the capital. Eid shoppers also ignore the directive.

Prof Muzaherul Huq, former adviser (Southeast Asia Region) of the WHO, said awareness campaigns were not being conducted properly.

"We could not motivate and convince them to maintain hygiene and social distancing," he said.

He suggested following the social distancing directive strictly.

BRIEFING

During yesterday's briefing, Prof Nasima asked people to act responsibly and refrain from visiting relatives during Eid.

"It's a war-like situation. We need to show mental strength," she said, adding, "When you are travelling to your near and dear ones, you are also increasing their risk of being infected."

Some 9,727 samples were tested in the past 24 hours, she said.

Around 588 more people have recovered.

Of the 24 dead, 15 breathed their last at hospitals and eight at home. One died on the way to a hospital. Thirteen were from Dhaka division, nine from Chattogram, and one each from Barishal and Mymensingh.

Dozens die as Pak plane crashes

FROM PAGE 1

The plane had developed a technical fault, interior minister Ijaz Ahmad Shah said, adding that the pilot issued a mayday call after the craft lost an engine.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said there were 91 passengers and seven crew on board the flight, which lost contact with air traffic control just after 2.30pm (0930 GMT). An aviation authority spokesperson said the number of crew on board was eight.

"The aeroplane first hit a mobile tower and crashed over houses," witness Shakeel Ahmed said near the site, a few kilometres short of the airport.

The Airbus A320 was flying from the eastern city of Lahore to Karachi in the south just as Pakistan was resuming domestic flights in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, according to the aircraft tracking website FlightRadar24.

The crash happened on the eve of the Muslim festival of Eid, when Pakistanis traditionally travel to visit relatives.

The plane was on its second attempt to land after cancelling a previous one in a routine manoeuvre known as a go-around, one person familiar with the investigation said.

The pilot told air traffic controllers he had lost power from both engines, according to a recording posted on liveatc.net, a widely respected aviation monitoring website.

"We are returning back, sir, we have

lost engines," a man was heard saying in a recording released by the website. The controller freed up both the airport's runways but moments later the man called "Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!".

There was no further communication from the plane, according to the tape, which could not immediately be authenticated.

Residents near the scene said their walls shook before a big explosion erupted as the aircraft slammed into their neighbourhood.

"I was coming from the mosque when I saw the plane tilting on one side. The engines' sounds were quite weird. It was so low that the walls of my house were trembling," said 14-year-old witness Hassan.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said he was "shocked and saddened" by the crash, tweeting that he was in touch with the state airline's chief executive.

"Prayers & condolences go to families of the deceased," he wrote on Twitter.

Pakistan has a chequered military and civilian aviation safety record, with frequent plane and helicopter crashes over the years.

In 2016, a Pakistan International Airlines plane burst into flames after one of its two turboprop engines failed while flying from the remote north to Islamabad, killing more than 40 people.



Locals repair an embankment on the Khulpetua river in Satkhira's Shyamnagar upazila yesterday, a day after Cyclone Amphan damaged the structure.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Farmers happy, yet experts worry

FROM PAGE 1

In Mymensingh, the price of paddy has gone up to as high as Tk 800 per maund, said Ali Asgar, a farmer of Chargobindapur of the district.

"The price of Boro paddy is around Tk 600 to Tk 700 per maund depending on variety. It was around Tk 400 to Tk 450 last year," said farmer Abdul Gani of Dolua Dogachhi village of Nilphamari Sadar upazila.

However, farmers of Moulvibazar and Netrokona are not getting very high prices yet.

"In local bazaars of Moulvibazar, the price is ranging between Tk 550 to Tk 600 per maund," said Mosabbir Ali, a farmer of Bhukshimol of Kulaura upazila in the district.

In Netrokona's remote areas, buyers are deducting the cost of transportation from the purchase price so farmers are getting less money, said Dilip Talukder of Chakua village in the district's Khaliaghuri upazila.

Abidur Rahman Kayes, a rice trader of Kazirbazar in Sylhet, said, "The price of new rice from the fresh Boro harvest is ranging between Tk 1,400 to Tk 1,500 per maund and is increasing because of the rising paddy price."

Compared to last year, the price of new rice is higher, he added.

WHAT MILLERS SAY

"Millers, wholesalers, middleman, small traders -- everyone with money is buying paddy now to make profit as the demand is likely to increase due to the

coronavirus pandemic," said Ashrafur Rahman Chowdhury, general secretary of Sunamganj Rice Mill Malik Samity.

He said around 4,500 millers under the Samity are buying at least 500 maunds more rice than last year.

Although a bumper harvest of the Boro paddy is expected this year, Md Tareq Anam, national sales manager (rice) of Rashid Group, one of the biggest rice millers in the country noted that recent rainfall affected the crop in some areas in Jashore.

Besides, harvest is not yet complete because of labour shortage, he added.

"The supply of rice has reduced in the market because of humanitarian aid by individuals and groups. Some consumers are also stockpiling fearing uncertainty. As a result, traders are refilling their stock," he said.

KM Layek Ali, general secretary of the Bangladesh Auto Major and Husking Mills Association, said millers are buying paddy to supply to state godowns as per the contract with the government.

Besides, cultivation of fine grain appears to be less this year compared to the previous season. As a result, millers, who market fine rice such as miniket, are buying more to build stock for the whole year.

GOVT MEASURES NEEDED

Although the government doubled its paddy procurement quantity this year and has started buying eight lakh tonnes of paddy, 10 lakh tonnes of

parboiled rice and 1.5 lakh tonnes of sunburnt rice, experts opine it should be increased further.

"The government is purchasing around 10 percent of the total production of Boro. But to influence the market price during the pandemic, the stock must be increased," said Professor Jasim Uddin Ahmed, chairman of Agricultural Economics and Policy department of Sylhet Agriculture University.

This year, the targeted production of Boro paddy is 2.04 crore tonnes from 47.54 lakh hectares of land, as per the Department of Agriculture Extension.

"As the government can't build new storage overnight, they should rent unused buildings. The more paddy in government storage, the more the market will be in control," said the professor.

However, Md Amzad Hossain, director of Supply, Distribution and Marketing Division of the Directorate General of Food, said,

"We are facing an unpredictable situation due to the coronavirus pandemic and some people are buying paddy to stockpile for profit."

He added, "It is too early to comment on what will happen in future as it all depends on how long we will be in such a pandemic situation."

[Our Nilphamari Correspondent EAM Asaduzzaman, Mymensingh Correspondent Aminul Islam and Moulvibazar Correspondent Mintu Deshwara contributed to this report]

Friend in need is a friend indeed

FROM PAGE 1

assistance or wealthy people's financial help have hardly reached them. Having exhausted meagre savings and loans from relatives, they're bracing themselves for the seemingly inevitable.

But, hope and help manifest in many forms and in unexpected ways. Nearly 3,000 drivers were able to keep their families afloat amid this crisis after a little-known private foundation (SAAF) of businessman Anis Ahmed and his wife Suhana brought them under its wings.

"I couldn't look my children in the eye. There was no food at home for three days," recalled Ramzan Ali, who lives at Shahjahanpur Colony with his family of five, to The Daily Star on Thursday.

Though not solvent, the 45-year-old used to live a decent life with a daily average income of Tk 800, driving CNG three-wheelers for Obhai, a ride-sharing start-up popular among the lower-middle income group. But whatever comfort he had, it went out the window within two weeks of the shutdown which started on March 26.

"I wish no parents have to see their little children starve."

It was in those desperate times that he got a phone call from the foundation, telling him that Tk 3,750 had been sent to his bKash account as donation. "A divine act, isn't it?" asked Ramzan.

Mohammad Ripon, a CNG driver in Chattogram, yesterday got the second instalment of the support from the foundation, Tk 7,500 in total. Financial

crisis was not much of an issue for his family of five due to the additional income from his wife Ayesha Begum, a garment worker. The young couple spent what they earned. So, they were soon to see the other side of the coin.

Support is the hardest to get when everyone is mired in a crisis. "[House] rent is not paid; but we could eat with this help," said Ripon over the phone, adding that he would send some money to his mother in Noakhali for the first time after two months.

Driver Rafiqul Islam, on the other hand, had the additional responsibility of supporting his elderly parents. They had been compelled to cut back to one meal a day when he received the call of support in April.

"I could not believe something like this could happen. Today, I have food to provide for my family, and can afford a peaceful night's sleep," said Rafiqul, expressing his gratitude to the foundation.

In Sylhet, Mohammad Manik could not even believe this could happen after getting the financial assistance from the foundation. "A very big help for us to pass this crucial time," said Manik. "We can have an Eid meal too!"

The 25-year-old believes that the critical phase of this crisis is now over, and he would soon be able to go out with his three-wheeler and be on his own.

There are hundreds of other drivers of the Obhai ride-sharing start-up who

felt like Manik: a timely intervention by the foundation kept them afloat.

Contacted, Anis Ahmed, the co-founder of the Suhana & Anis Ahmed Foundation (SAAF), wrote back through WhatsApp, stating that they have so far disbursed Tk 1.84 crore to 2,953 drivers in the last two months.

Although not new to charity, the foundation had entered serious public discourse earlier in the month when it teamed up with the Bidyanondo Foundation, pumping in Tk 1.05 crore fund to provide support to 22,000 families in the rural areas.

In a way, the foundation's support for the riders might appear as a family affair to some critics since the Obhai start-up is a subsidiary of MGH Group, a conglomerate owned by Anis Ahmed.

However, the riders are not employees of Obhai, which, like Uber and Pathao, only arranges trips for them. And, the reality of the is that employees are generally not being fully looked after by their employers.

"We could have chosen so many other charitable paths. But [it is] very satisfying is that we've chosen this one and acted in time. We provided them help when they needed it most," said Anis.

Legally, drivers are not the responsibility of Obhai. Yet, unlike its famed fellow ride-sharing companies Uber and Pathao, Obhai found a way to stand by those who served it before this unprecedented crisis.

Eid congregations in mosques only

DMP Issues 14-point instruction; asks devotees to perform ablutions at home

STAR REPORT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday issued a 14-point instructions for devotees and mosque committees for observing the Eid-ul-Fitr and attending Eid prayers.

It also called upon all to celebrate Eid with family members at home and advised all to refrain from visiting relatives, neighbours, and entertainment spots amid the risk of transmission of coronavirus.

Eid is likely to be held on May 25, depending on the moon sighting.

This year, Eid congregations would be held in mosques instead of open spaces to curb the spread of the virus.

The devotees and mosque authorities have been asked to follow the instructions considering the risk of Covid-19 transmission. The mosques can arrange a number of Eid jamaats (congregations) if deemed necessary, according to the instructions.

The instructions, signed by DMP Commissioner Shafiqul Islam, also said devotees would have to perform their ablutions from home before coming for Eid prayers, instead of using ablutions room of the mosques.

Every devotee who goes to a mosque for Eid prayers must wear a mask and carry their own jainamaw (prayer mat) and tupee (cap) instead of using those in the mosque.

Carpets cannot be rolled out in mosques during Eid prayers and the whole mosques need to be cleaned using disinfectant ahead of congregations.

Soaps and hand sanitisers should be kept at the mosque entrance for devotees to clean their hands before entering the mosque premises.

Social distancing measures and health directives must be followed when standing in the jamaat for Eid prayers, the instructions read.

The DMP also asked the devotees to avoid shaking hands and exchanging hugs with others at the end of Eid jamaat and requested the mosque committees for separate arrangements for entering and leaving mosques of the devotees.

For the people leaving Dhaka to celebrate Eid with their dear and near ones in villages, DMP suggested using auto lock systems on the main doors of their houses and to lock doors and windows carefully before leaving.

They have also been advised not to keep valuables in empty homes and instead keep those safe elsewhere.

Market and shopping mall owners have been suggested keeping close contact with local police stations and outposts for ensuring security.

'Serial rapist' killed in gunfight with Rab in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

An alleged serial rapist was killed in a "shootout" with Rapid Action Battalion at Madhumita rail track area in East Tongi at Gazipur early yesterday.

The deceased Abu Sufian, 21, hailing from Faridpur district, used to reside at a rented house in Tongi, said Lt Commander Abdullah Al Mamun, company commander of Gazipur Porabari camp.

Sufian was an accused in several rape cases, including one filed with East Tongi Police Station for killing and raping a seven-year-old, Rab personnel said.

On information that a group of terrorists were staying in front of Madhumita rail track area, Rab-1 team conducted a drive there around 12:30am to arrest them, said the Rab official.

She also said they did not get any relief and fresh water in the last two days. They have to drink saline water.

Contacted, Mohammed Masud Alam Siddique, deputy commissioner of the district, said, "Reaching relief materials to such remote areas is a challenge. We, with the help of navy, are trying our best to provide them with food and water."

Replying to a query, Shah Kamal, senior secretary at the disaster management ministry, said it takes time to clear and repair damaged roads and restore utility services whenever a fierce natural calamity like Amphan hits.

"You know roads have been damaged, many villages are still under water. So, it takes time to reach relief to people," he said. "We must have patience."

Shah Kamal claimed that the stock of relief materials in the affected areas was adequate.

"The problem is our people cannot go the affected people as roads are damaged and villages inundated."

"Our main challenge now is to restore the disrupted communication and remove fallen trees from roads," he said, adding, "We hope the situation will improve tomorrow or the day after tomorrow."

(Our correspondents from Barishal and Khulna Divisions contributed to this report)

TANGENTS
BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Coucal

When my father passed away twelve years ago, he left behind a plantation where, for forty years, he had grown many types of plants. These included trees he had collected from various places in Bangladesh as well as species local to Sylhet area - including Aual, Rita, Bonak, Jhaoa etc. After his death I set about documenting his life's work in photographs. I photographed his plants for several months, but realized that to make it a complete document I should include creatures his plants supported. And so I started chasing butterflies, lizards, spiders, insects and monkeys with my camera. From there it was a natural progression to birds.

Most of my early bird photos were of common ones such as Doel, Tuntuni, Shalik and Bulbul, though I often caught tantalizing glimpses of unknown birds in the trees. One day I saw a new bird, slightly smaller than a crow, rust coloured on top with black head and tail and red eyes. It was hopping from leaf to leaf, branch to branch, of a large bush, close to the ground, sort of creeping through the foliage, picking out insects to eat. Then it landed on the grass and foraged from the ground. When it saw me it flew - rather weakly I thought - to a low-hanging branch and stayed out of sight. By that time I had taken a picture which I used later to identify it as a Greater Coucal.

Most birders in Bangladesh have seen it many times, but for others its unusual colour arouses curiosity. Coucals are closely related to cuckoos. There are 26 species of Coucals in the world. Their global range extends through Southern and Eastern Asia and parts of Africa. Bangladesh has



Malagasy Coucal with Chameleon.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

two of these: Greater and Lesser Coucal (*Boro Kúbo* and *Bangla Kúbo* in Bangla.) At 32 cm., the Lesser Coucal is a full 10 cm. smaller than the Greater Coucal, and in my experience, much more elusive.

Our Coucals can be seen in light forests, grasslands, shrubs and bushes as well as tea plantations. They prefer to walk on the ground and forage rather than fly. They are likely to be out during early morning and twilight. During every trip to Sundarban that I have made, I have seen at least half a dozen Greater Coucals, close to the edge of the forest or foraging along the shore of the rivers.

My best Coucal experience was in

Madagascar. I was in Lake Alarobia in the capital Antananarivo where hundreds of ducks and other birds can be seen. The lake is surrounded by a dense wall of tall trees. As I was walking around the lake on a trail, I saw a Malagasy Coucal land on one of these trees, high up. I immediately took a picture. Seeing me, it took off quickly.

It was only later when I looked at the picture that I realized that the bird had caught a chameleon. The poor chameleon's camouflage had failed when the Coucal came looking!

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabar on Instagram.

No need for curfew-like measures now

Says Rab chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite rising Covid-19 infections and deaths, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) Director General Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun yesterday said there seems to be no need for a curfew-like situation.

"We are, however, implementing the system where necessary," he said, while addressing reporters through video conference from Rab headquarters.

Meanwhile, the government has allowed people to travel to village homes using personal vehicles ahead of Eid.

Asked about risks of the journey, DG Mamun said, "The government has taken the decision thinking about the people's welfare. The restriction on public transport has not been lifted, however."

Regarding Eid prayers, he said mosques will hold multiple jamaats, and detailed security plans were adopted, like separate exit and entry to ensure social distance.

The Rab DG also said no one can gather at entertainment centres this Eid.

It is unfair: Momen

Foreign minister laments cancellation of RMG product orders by Western brands

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Cancellation of readymade garment orders by Western brands is unfair, said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen as he called upon expatriate Bangladeshis to stand against such actions.

"We seek support from the expatriate community for sensitising the societies about the unfair action by the brands," he told a video conference with Bangladeshis living in Ireland on Thursday.

Western brands have recently cancelled orders of Bangladesh's RMG products reportedly worth over \$3 billion. Also, there are reports of prices of products being slashed that's taking economic, health and social tolls across the globe, but developing countries face the brunt on a larger scale.

Bangladesh has been urging the brands as well as governments to honour the orders that they had placed.

Bangladesh is also facing major challenges of job creation at home as overseas jobs decline and several lakhs of Bangladeshi migrants could return home over the next months as the pandemic cripples the economy.

The foreign minister expressed gratitude to the Bangladeshi expatriate community for their support during the Covid-19 crisis.

He flagged that Bangladesh government has always worked for the benefits of Bangladeshis -- both in Bangladesh and abroad.

The foreign minister said the government is working to set up an embassy in Dublin.

Saida Muna Tasneem, Bangladeshi high commissioner to the UK and accredited ambassador to Ireland, attended the videoconference.

BYLC ramps up online education programme

Offers free courses on new digital platform

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC) had unveiled a new platform of its online learning academy, BYLCx, with 45 free courses making online learning more accessible to youth across Bangladesh.

The courses will be available on <http://x.bylc.org> till December 2021 as part of BYLC's response to Covid-19, says a press release.

It will offer students and young professionals self-paced learning opportunities on leadership and professional development skills, including data analytics, project development, communication, and more.

New content will focus on preparing youth for the post-pandemic world, emphasising the need to be tech-savvy, resilient, and adaptive.

In addition to its free digital courses, BYLC will continue supporting the youth of Bangladesh by offering its advanced blended (online and instructor-led) programmes at minimum cost on the platform, added the release.

Selected students under these programmes will also be offered career placement support. Moreover, BYLC will also be offering their signature Building Bridges through Leadership Training (BBLT) and BBLT Junior programmes online with added financial aid for students affected economically due to Covid-19.

Addl secretary dies from Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An additional secretary, who contracted Covid-19, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

Taufiqul Alam, who was on post-retirement leave, breathed his last around 10am at the ICU of the Covid-19 unit, said DMCH Director Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin.

Taufiqul, who had served as secretary of the Information Commission, was first admitted to the ICU of DMCH's burn unit with Covid-19 earlier this month.

As his condition improved, he was later shifted to the cabin room but was taken to the ICU again, as his condition deteriorated few days ago, said hospital sources.

Bangladesh Administrative Service Association expressed their condolences over death of the administrative cadre official.

Earlier on April 6, another administrative cadre official, also a director of Anti-Corruption Commission, died from Covid-19.

195 Bangladeshis return from Canada

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 195 Bangladeshis stranded in Canada, due to the pandemic, returned to Dhaka yesterday by a special chartered flight of Qatar Airways.

"Carrying the passengers, the flight landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) at 7:41am," a duty-supervisor at HSIA told The Daily Star.

The flight departed from Toronto on Wednesday night (Canada time) and took one-hour technical stopover in Doha.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada M Mizanur Rahman and Bangladesh Consul General in Toronto Nayem Uddin Ahmed saw off the passengers at Toronto international airport, Bangladesh High Commission in Canada said in a press release.

The travelling passengers include mostly Bangladeshi students studying in different colleges and universities in Canada, Bangladeshis who went there on tourist and business visas and some expatriate Bangladeshis.

Bangladesh foreign ministry in coordination with Bangladesh High Commission in Canada arranged the flight, following request of the stranded Bangladeshis.

Bangladesh extended ban on regular passenger flights across all countries except China till May 30.

The government so far repatriated stranded Bangladeshis from different countries -- including Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, India, USA, Australia, UK and South Korea.

No Eid joy for beauticians

Parlour sector hit hard by Covid-19; most staff who are from Garo community struggling to survive

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Bobita Dalboth was supposed to stay busy with customers during this time of the year. Pre-Eid is the most profitable time for beauticians like her. On the busiest days, clients would have to line up and wait for their turn to get some last minute grooming done.

The revenue from this pre-Eid bonanza is a major boost for both owner and staff. Every year, Bobita waits to get Eid bonus with which she used to pay off her loans and shop for her family. For her employer, the profits meant business growth.

Not this year. In her 10 years of working, this is the first time Bobita is out of a job. Her husband used to work as a private car driver, but he too is out of work, and now the couple doesn't know how to provide for their daughter and son, let alone celebrate the Eid.

She has already racked up two months of unpaid house rent, totaling Tk 16,000. The family



Beauticians in protective gear tend to a client at an otherwise empty parlour in the capital.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

is now living on loans from acquaintances, which is only adding more stress for the future.

"I don't know how long I can survive in Dhaka. We might need to pack up and head for the village," said the Mohammadpur resident. "I was last paid for March. My employers said they will call me when business reopens. I was

supposed to get a bonus (around Tk 20,000) for Eid, but now there's nothing at all," she said.

The beauty parlour sector in Dhaka is full of stories like Bobita's. Most staff are members of the Garo community, working to support their families back home. They live mostly in Mohammadpur, Old Dhaka,

Farmgate and Nodda areas. The lack of income due to Covid-19 pandemic is putting the entire community in deep uncertainty.

Besides Bobita, this correspondent spoke to Topoti Ruram, a Garo beautician working in a parlour at Farmgate.

Out of work for two months, Topoti is now Tk 21,000 in debt for house rent at the grocery store.

"I thought I could clear the dues with Eid bonus; I don't know what to do," said Topoti.

The situation isn't any better for parlour owners. Besides a boost in income, sales during Eid helps them cover up losses round the year, which means the stoppage in business hurts doubly bad.

Arnika Chiran owns a beauty parlour in Uttara. Each month, she has to pay Tk 60,000 in rent and Tk 55,000 to her employees.

"I have three months' rent due. I was forced to send my beauticians back to villages. I gave them small amounts, but couldn't

pay salaries since April," she said. "This hurts more because we are all from the same community."

"I used to earn nearly Tk four to five lakh every Eid," she said.

Initiatives to help Garo beauticians during the crisis have been sparse. Manusher Jonno Foundation organised a crowdfunding initiative to help 500 Garo beauticians. Community leaders are trying to raise funds, but said it is not possible without the government's help.

Subhajit Sangma, Nokma (chief) of Dhaka Wangala Celebration Committee, said, "We are trying to help our community by crowd-funding as well as by through NGOs. But unless the government comes forward, it won't be possible for the Garo community to survive this crisis."

Various local cooperatives are selling food packages at a minimal price to lower-income Garo families. However, this will not suffice, he added.

A double struggle

Home ministry official afflicted by dengue and Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"I'm trying to stay upbeat and move forward in the struggle of life with vigour. God help me win this battle," read a Facebook post by Sharif Mahmud Apu, public relations officer of the home ministry yesterday, after he was diagnosed with both dengue and the novel coronavirus.



"This time, I have to fight dengue and corona together. Only God knows what the consequences will be. But I'm not dejected. I have to live for my two children and the public who I serve," he wrote in the post.

Apu said he was infected with dengue a few days back, and then tested Covid-19 positive on top of it yesterday. He's now in home quarantine, spending his time bedridden and trying to shoulder the shock of his ailments, Apu told The Daily Star.

He went into isolation four days ago as he was feeling feverish. To be on the side of caution, he sent samples for Covid-19 test, which came out positive yesterday.

Apu said he was working in the corona cell of the home ministry even after being diagnosed with dengue.

"Other than office work, I also went out to provide relief in Burichang, Cumilla -- my village home. The coronavirus must have caught up amidst all of this," he said.

Apu is currently being treated at home as per doctors' advice. He has urged all to keep him in their prayers for quick recovery from both diseases.



AMBIDEXTROUS ... Sadia Begum holds her toddler in one arm and shows a pair of slippers to a customer at her shop with another. Since her husband lost his job due to the coronavirus pandemic, her small business in the capital's Tejkhani Para is solely supporting the family of five, including two schoolgoers. Despite the sparse number of customers, Sadia opens her shop every day, and continues to balance her work and family like a champion. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Five mutation points found in coronavirus genome in the region

Researchers in Ctg find after sequencing patient samples

ARUN BIKASH DEY, CTG

Researchers have found five points of mutation in the genome structure of novel coronavirus (SARS-Cov-2) in Chattogram.

They came up with the findings after sequencing the virus's genome from patient samples collected from Chattogram city and different upazilas.

Researchers of Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (CVASU), Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) and Bangladesh Jute Research Institute have jointly sequenced the genome for the first time in Chattogram.

Contacted, Dr Zonaeed Siddiki, a pathology professor at CVASU and a research team member, said, "Genome of seven samples have been sequenced. We have found the genome structure to be similar to those found in Australia, Singapore, Russia and Middle Eastern countries."

"Mutations were observed in five points of the 30,000 genome base pairs, which means the virus in this region has mutated five times," he said.

Contacted, Prof Shakeel Ahmed, in-charge of BITID laboratory and also a member of the research team, said, "Genome sequencing is important to know the character of a virus, its nature and mode of operation."

"After observing mutations, researchers get an indication of how the virus alters itself in changing environments," he added.

"This process will also help produce a vaccine against the virus," he continued.

"If we find the virus structure in our country is similar to that in another country, the vaccine introduced in that country would also be effective here."

Journo held

FROM PAGE 12
member of Habiganj Press Club. Recently, Sushanta Dasgupta's newspaper ran several false reports on Abu Zahir."

"I felt that the reports directly affected the image of the press club also. That's why I filed the case," he told The Daily Star.

Lawmaker Abu Zahir said, "My public image has been compromised because of those false reports."

Meanwhile, a Habiganj court sent Sushanta to jail on Thursday after he was produced before it in connection with the case, said police.

[Our Moulvibazar correspondent contributed to this report.]

Improve business

FROM PAGE 12
in Bangladesh," Ando said. Recommendations of the Jetro representative also include the resumption of smooth operation at Chattogram port, extension of banking hours, permission from the government to lay off employees from Japanese companies and easy access to the stimulus packages announced by the government.

"We would like to request the government to deal with the challenges and issues for existing companies. Unless and until the government resolves the issues, new investments cannot be expected because investors compare the current investment climate with other countries, like ASEAN and other South Asian countries," Ando said.

"As a trade and investment promotion agency, we are doing the best to promote FDI to Bangladesh and we appreciate the government for all their efforts, on the other hand, we are working together to improve the business environment more. There is no end in improvement," Ando said.

Meanwhile, the government and Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) have recently approached Japan for more investment in the post-Covid period.

FBCCI in a letter to JETRO Dhaka office on May 12 urged the Japanese investors in China to consider Bangladesh as a potential destination.

Ministries of foreign affairs and commerce discussed the issue at a meeting held at the secretariat on May 20.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told journalists after the meeting that some Japanese investors in China have already communicated with Bangladesh.

Bangladesh embassy in Beijing in a letter to the foreign ministry sent on May 20 informed that 34 out of 690 Japanese companies in China want to relocate their manufacturing plants to other countries. The Daily Star obtained a copy of the letter.

The list of the companies includes Mazda Motor, Koito Manufacturing Company, Kasai Kogyo, Iris Ohyama, Sony Corporation, Ricoh Corporation, Asics, Sharp Corp., Nintendo Co., Kyocera Corp. Casio, Seiko, Panasonic, Aisin Seiki Co, Toyota Boshoku Corp. and Fujitsu General Ltd, the letter said.

Facebook, Amazon chiefs see wealth balloon: report

AFP, Washington

The fortunes of US billionaires rose 15 percent in the two months since the coronavirus pandemic hit, a study found, with Amazon boss Jeff Bezos and Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg seeing massive gains.

The more than 600 billionaires in the United States became even richer as tech stocks rose during virus lockdowns, an analysis of data by two think-tanks published Thursday said.



A rickshaw carrying chai, a local fishing gear made of bamboo, in Daharpara village of Jhalakathi's Nalchity upazila on Thursday. People use this gear to catch fish in shallow waters during the rainy season.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Blood banks on verge of drying up

FROM PAGE 12
"Earlier, we used to collect blood from around 30 donors daily. Since the lockdown, we can collect blood from hardly 14 to 15 donors [daily]," she told The Daily Star.

Besides, many of their patients and donors from outside Dhaka are unable to reach the hospital due to transport problems during the shutdown, she said, adding that they have around 4,000 registered patients.

Sayedra said their regular blood collection through donation camps at different universities and colleges have been totally suspended since March 26, following the countrywide shutdown.

They now depend on the Quantum Voluntary Blood Donation Program (QVBDP) and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society for blood, she added.

Bangladesh Thalassemia Foundation also suspended their blood collection through camps since March 26.

The organisation is requesting patients to complete transfusion from nearby hospitals instead of coming to their facility in the capital's Shantinagar area.

Aminul Islam, advisor of the foundation, said, "Earlier, we would complete blood transfusion of around 60 to 70 patients daily. But now, we can only provide support to some 15 to 20 patients. We need to check for

Covid-19 symptoms before blood transfusion."

Quantum, providing support to thalassemia patients, are also facing a blood donor crisis for the last one month.

Between January and April this year, they collected 16,395 bags of blood. Last year, during the same time, they had collected 19,819 bags of blood, according to QVBDP data.

"Most of our donors' family members are not allowing them to come out only for blood donation in fear of Covid-19 infection. As a result, the collection has fallen sharply," said Moniruzzaman, coordinator of QVBDP.

He said they are providing transport support to people, willing to donate blood.

Moniruzzaman urged young blood donors to come forward during this pandemic to help save the lives of those who need blood.

Echoing his appeal, Tarek Hussain, director (blood programme), Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, said that their organisation's collection has declined by about 60 to 70 percent as outdoor collection is suspended for the last one and half months.

However, their mobile blood collection vans are going to different areas of the capital to collect blood since the end of March, he added.

Reconstruction

FROM PAGE 12
calls on Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today and inform him about the progress of the project.

UNROD CHIEF PRAISES BANGLADESH'S RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT

Outgoing UNROD (UN Relief Operations in Dacca) Chief Tony Hagen praises the reconstruction effort of the Bangladesh government. He says that the government has successfully completed repair works of several important rail, water and road networks and thus revived transportation across the country. Expressing his confidence in the leadership of Bangabandhu, the UN high official says that Bangabandhu would be able to resolve all the major reconstruction issues within a short period. Referring to the food crisis, he stresses on the importance of increasing import of food from abroad.

The newly appointed UNROD Chief Victor Umbricht calls on the prime minister today at his official residence.

RIVER TRANSPORT PLAN FOR HAOR REGION
The Inland River Transport Authority

is preparing a plan to resolve the transport crisis in the Haor region, namely in Sylhet and Mymensingh during the dry season. Under this plan, the Surma and Kushiara Rivers and their tributaries will be dredged to ensure navigability. The project will cost Tk 8-10 crores. It will also contribute to the development of agriculture in the region.

DISCIPLINARY MEASURES AGAINST ABSENT GOVT EMPLOYEES

Show-cause notices are issued against several government employees who were found absent during the prime minister's surprise visit to the secretariat yesterday.

ACUTE SHORTAGE OF MEDICINES AND EQUIPMENT IN CITY HOSPITALS

An acute shortage of medicines and equipment in the city hospitals has plunged the health delivery system into a deep crisis. Many hospitals run out of even basic medicine such as saline, glucose injection and their medical equipment such as suction and X-ray machines are out of order due to unavailability of tools and parts.

SOURCE: May 24, 1972 issue of Dainik Bangla.

Thousands leave

FROM PAGE 1
suspended operation of ferry services on the Padma river on Tuesday.

Hundreds of people stuck at the terminals then crossed the river by small boats while many others returned to Dhaka.

FERRY SERVICES RESUME, HIGHWAYS SEE RUSH

Ferry services between Shimulia and Kathalbari terminals resumed after 12:00am yesterday and 13 or 14 ferries operated across the Padma, a BIWTC employee told The Daily Star.

Ferry services on this route were first suspended around 3:00pm on Monday amid crowds of thousands of people. Officials resumed the services for four to five hours early Tuesday before suspending them again.

Ferries between Paturia and Daulatdia terminals also resumed after three days.

Dhaka-Aricha Highway and the Paturia Ghat saw a mad rush of home goers begin yesterday morning, reports our correspondent from Manikganj.

People were traveling in cars, microbuses, pickups and motorcycles.

Akkas Ali, a shopkeeper in Dhaka, told our correspondent that he reached Manikganj by rickshaws and pickups.

"People who have their own vehicles can travel easily. But people like us are suffering the most to go home," he added.

Cars, microbuses, SUVs and motorcycles were increasing on roads since yesterday morning, reports our Tangail correspondent.

Besides cars, many people were seen heading to their villages on foot and battery- or CNG-run three wheelers, reports our Gazipur correspondent.

Police on Dhaka-Chattogram Highway, however, intensified checking on different entry and exit points to restrict movement of people, reports our Cumilla correspondent.

CRASHES MAY RISE

Crashes and fatalities have peaked during the Eid holidays in recent years.

Analysing road crashes during Eid from 2017-2019, Kazi Shifun Newaz, assistant professor at Accident Research Institute of Buet, said buses were involved only in 30 percent of the crashes and mostly cars were involved in the rest.

Many car owners are likely to operate their vehicles to earn some money, taking advantage of the government decision. And many inexperienced drivers are likely to be behind the wheels, resulting in more crashes, he said.

At a time when the medical facilities are struggling to cope with the Covid-19 outbreak, the crashes would put further pressure on them, he said.

During Eid last year, at least 224 people were killed and 866 others injured in 203 crashes across the country, according to Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity.

Around 27.4 percent of the crashes involved buses, 26.33 percent motorcycles, 16.4 percent trucks, pickups, lorries and trailer trucks, 7.82 percent cars and microbuses, and 13.52 percent auto-rickshaws and other vehicles, it said.

TOUGH ON ERRANT GOODS-LADEN VEHICLES

The Road Transport and Bridges Ministry on Thursday warned of tougher actions if goods-laden vehicles carried people.

On the same day, the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) wrote to the Inspector General of Police, additional IGP (highway), all deputy commissioners and superintendents of police, and director (enforcement) of BRTA to take stern action against the offenders.

The warnings came hours after 13 people, including two children, were crushed to death when a truck overturned and plunged into a ditch in Gaibandha's Palashbari.

In its letter, the BRTA said carrying passengers on goods-laden vehicles was punishable under the Road Transport Act-2018.

Coronavirus roils world economy

FROM PAGE 12
'GREAT UNCERTAINTY'

In the world's largest country by population, China, the news was also grim.

Premier Li Keqiang told the opening of the National People's Congress that, given the "great uncertainty" caused by the pandemic, Beijing will not set a growth target but "give priority to stabilising employment and ensuring living standards".

In Washington, Trump -- with an eye on his re-election prospects in November -- made it clear he hopes more US state governors will move towards a loosening of anti-virus restrictions.

"We did the right thing but we now want to get going... you'll break the country if you don't," he told African-American leaders in Michigan.

Another 2.43 million Americans were put out of work last week, the Labor Department said Thursday, bringing the total of newly jobless to 38.6 million since lockdowns were put in place.

The US leader also talked about reopening places of worship, something he had initially hoped would be done by Easter Sunday, saying it was important to the nation's healing.

"People want to be in their churches," Trump said. "They're so important in terms of the psyche of our country."

Deaths are still mounting in the US, with the total surpassing 94,000, and Trump ordered flags at federal buildings be flown at half-mast for three days for the victims.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has worked non-stop since the novel coronavirus emerged, informing its 194 member states of its evolution and providing technical advice, its director-general said yesterday.

RETURN TO NORMAL

Across the Atlantic, much of Europe pressed on to get life rolling again, with Cyprus lifting curfews and allowing outdoor restaurants, barber shops and beaches to reopen.

But the Mediterranean island's airports and hotels remain closed.

"I want my work back and my life back," said Sakis Siakopoulos, a restaurant owner in the capital Nicosia.

In Denmark, the exit from lockdown also picked up pace as museums and zoos began reopening and health officials said the spread of the virus was slowing.

France, one of the countries hit hardest by the outbreak, saw its daily death toll dip to 83, providing a shred of optimism.

But on the economic front, forecasts remained dire.

A closely watched survey by IHS Markit indicated the eurozone economy has now "likely bottomed out", sparking hope that a recovery is to follow.

'IT DOESN'T STOP'

While many European countries have significantly curbed the contagion, Latin America is becoming a new hotspot with cases on the rise.

Brazil -- now home to the third-highest number of cases in the world after the US and Russia -- has recorded more than 20,000 deaths and hit a record 24-hour toll of 1,188.

Grave diggers at a cemetery outside Sao Paulo are scrambling to keep up.

"We've been working 12-hour days, burying them one after the other. It doesn't stop," said one worker at Vila Formosa, wearing a white protective suit, mask and face shield.

Peru, Mexico and Chile have also seen steady increases in infections.

The economic crisis caused by the pandemic has left an extra 11.5 million people unemployed in Latin America, the United Nations and the International Labour Organization said Thursday.

The new estimate from would mean a total of 37.7 million people in the region are now unemployed.

Biggest haul

FROM PAGE 12
following a moderate downpour. They first come across the sample eggs at 3:00am earlier yesterday.

Mohammad Elias, a seasoned egg collector of Halda River at Ramdasmunsir Hat of Hathazari upazila, told The Daily Star that few eggs were seen in the morning.

"With tide on the river, the amount of eggs began to increase giving us the record haul in recent years," he said.

Egg collectors descended on the river with 280 boats and got seven to eight buckets of eggs each, he said.

"Halda River has given us hope for better days," he added.

Eminent Halda researcher Professor D Manzoorul Kibria told The Daily Star that few factors played a role in the high egg yield this year.

First stopping of tobacco farming, then the shutdown of two polluting factories near the river and third the quick response of Hathazari upazila administration and surveillance by IDE, an NGO working to protect Halda River all combined to create a better environment for fish to lay eggs.


He said the last big haul was in 2006. That year the amount was 32,000kgs, but this year's amount was the highest in 14 years.

"If there was heavy shower with gusty wind and thunder, there would have been more eggs," he said.

Ruhul Amin, upazila nirbahi officer of Hathazari upazila, told The Daily Star that throughout the years his administration seized illegal nets, dredgers and boats.

"Halda finally paid off. Our effort and labour finally found meaning," he said.


OBITUARY
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Your dedication, diligence and contribution will continue to guide us. You were our source of inspiration, strength and nurturer. Your fond memories will always be cherished by us.

In reverence & remembrance
The Management and all Officials of-
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Over 660,000 displaced during pandemic

More than 660,000 people have been displaced from their homes in conflict zones around the world since March, despite a UN call for a global ceasefire during the coronavirus pandemic, a top international aid group said yesterday. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) said its figures showed that armed conflict around the world had continued during the pandemic, even as much of globe went into lockdown. This was despite a call on March 23 by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for a global ceasefire for the pandemic. The NRC said a total of 661,000 people have been displaced in 19 countries since then, with the highest number by far in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Lanka lifts weddings ban

Sri Lanka yesterday lifted a ban on wedding receptions as part of an easing of coronavirus restrictions, but grooms may not kiss the bride -- at least in public. The country's well-heeled usually hold wedding celebrations with thousands of guests, and the festivities can last for days with much eating, drinking, dancing and singing. But under the new guidelines there should be no more than 100 guests, all of whom must stay a metre (three feet) apart and wear masks -- including the happy couple. Sri Lanka imposed a nationwide curfew on March 20 that ruled out gatherings of any sort, but the restrictions have been eased in many districts that are not considered high-risk. Religious gatherings remain banned while only the bereaved family are allowed at funerals. Sri Lanka has reported 1,055 virus infections with nine deaths since the first case was found on January 27.

Myanmar editor jailed for 2 years over virus error

A Myanmar news editor has been jailed for two years after his agency reported a coronavirus death that turned out to be false, his lawyer said yesterday. The country has only 199 confirmed cases of coronavirus and seen six deaths, although the low numbers tested mean experts fear the true figures are far higher. Chief editor Zaw Ye Htet was arrested April 13, the same day his online news agency Dae Pyaw published an erroneous article alleging there had been a death due to the COVID-19 in eastern Karen state. On May 20 he faced trial, an unusually swift process in a country where suspects often languish for months behind bars before being convicted. Myanmar is drafting new legislation on the control of communicable diseases that would make it even easier to criminalise reporters deemed to be causing public panic.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Residents salvage their belongings from the rubble of a damaged house in the aftermath of Cyclone Amphan, in South 24 Parganas district, West Bengal, India, yesterday. Several thousand people have been left homeless after the most powerful cyclone in more than a decade hit India and Bangladesh this week, officials said, as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the affected area yesterday and pledged aid.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

UPDATES

MORE THAN 332,800 DEATHS

The pandemic has killed at least 332,870 people worldwide since it surfaced in China late last year, according to an AFP tally at 1100 GMT on Friday based on official sources. There have been at least 5,109,296 officially recorded cases in 196 countries and territories. The United States has recorded the most deaths at 94,729. It is followed by Britain with 36,042, Italy with 32,486, France with 28,215 and Spain with 27,940.

CHINA HAILS 'ACHIEVEMENTS'

China praises its own response to the coronavirus outbreak, Premier Li Keqiang saying Beijing has made "major strategic achievements". Li says China now faces "immense" economic challenges -- it has not set an annual growth target for the first time in decades.

INDIA SEES RECORD CASES

India registered some 6,000 new cases of the novel coronavirus yesterday, the country's biggest jump in 24 hours, as New Delhi eases a nationwide lockdown. The country reported a total of over 118,000 confirmed cases yesterday. Included in the total are 3,583 deaths.

LATIN AMERICA DEATHS SURGE

Brazil's death toll -- the sixth highest of any country -- has doubled in just 11 days. The epicentre of Latin America's outbreak has now recorded more than 20,000 dead. In Chile, coronavirus deaths have increased by 29 percent over the past 24 hours. The United Nations says the economic crisis caused by the pandemic has left an extra 11.5 million people unemployed in Latin America.

FRANCE TO HOLD DELAYED POLLS

France will hold a second round of municipal elections on June 28 after they were called off in March because of a lockdown, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe says.

RUSSIA'S ECONOMY PLUNGES

Russia's economy is forecast to shrink by 9.5 percent in the second quarter of 2020 compared with the same period last year, while yearly GDP will fall by five percent, economy minister Maksim Reshetnikov says.

QUARANTINE IN BRITAIN

Britain is to introduce a quarantine period of 14 days for those arriving in the UK, Northern Ireland secretary Brandon Lewis says. UK retail sales dived by a record 18.1 percent in April with clothing sales by volume in particular plunging by more than half compared with the previous month.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Fight to 'liberate Palestine' 'Islamic duty': Khamenei

AFP, Tehran

Iran's supreme leader said it was an "Islamic duty" to fight for the "liberation of Palestine" in a landmark speech yesterday amid rising tensions with regional arch-enemy Israel.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei lashed out at Western governments and their Arab "puppets" for supporting the Jewish state, in his first ever address marking Quds (Jerusalem) Day.

The 80-year-old leader also appeared to confirm for the first time that Iran has helped to provide Palestinians with arms.

The remarks came at the end of a week that saw Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu launch a Twitter tirade against Khamenei and reports that the two sides carried out cyber attacks on each other.

"The aim of this struggle is the liberation of the entire Palestinian land" and "the return of all Palestinians to their country," Khamenei said in the speech broadcast live

on state television.

Every year since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has marked Quds Day on the last Friday of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, in solidarity with the Palestinians.

In his speech, Khamenei also criticised the UN for failing to do its job in Middle East trouble spots.

Jordan threatened Thursday to review its relationship with Israel if the Jewish state goes ahead with controversial plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank.

"We will not accept unilateral Israeli moves to annex Palestinian lands and we would be forced to review all aspects of our relations with Israel," Prime Minister Omar al-Razzaz told the official Petra news agency.

His comments came days after Jordan's King Abdullah II warned that if Israel "really annexes the West Bank in July, it would lead to a massive conflict with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan".

Khashoggi family forgive killers

REUTERS, Riyadh

The family of slain Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi yesterday said that they had forgiven the men who murdered their father, paving the way for a legal reprieve for five defendants sentenced to death for the October 2018 killing.

"If a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah," Khashoggi's son Salah tweeted. "Therefore, we the sons of the martyr Jamal Khashoggi announce that we pardon those who killed our father".

In Saudi Arabia, which lacks a codified legal system and follows Islamic law, forgiveness from a victim's family in cases of murder can allow for a formal pardon.

However, Khashoggi's fiancée Hatice Cengiz said that no one could pardon his killers. Khashoggi was last seen at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on Oct 2, 2018, where he had gone to obtain documents for his impending wedding. His body was reportedly dismembered and removed from the building, and his remains have not been found.

The murder caused a global uproar and tarnished the image of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Some Western governments, as well as the CIA, said they believed he had ordered the killing.

Saudi officials denied he played a role.

CONTROVERSIAL NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

'Death knell for Hong Kong autonomy'

US slams China; Beijing says laws needed for security

REUTERS, Hong Kong

A Chinese proposal to impose national security laws on Hong Kong could see mainland intelligence agencies set up bases there, raising fears of direct law enforcement and what US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called a "death knell" for the city's autonomy.

Communist Party rulers in Beijing unveiled details yesterday, a day after proposing the legislation that critics see as a turning point for China's most free-wheeling city.

Pro-democracy activists and politicians in the former British colony have for years opposed such legislation, arguing it could erode its autonomy, guaranteed under the "one country, two systems" agreement under which Britain returned Hong Kong to China in 1997.

Some pro-democracy lawmakers denounced the plans as "the end of Hong Kong". Hong Kong activists called for people to rise up against the proposal, aimed at tackling secession, subversion, terrorism, and foreign interference, that has sent shockwaves across the business and diplomatic communities.

Foreign diplomats fear establishing new Beijing agencies in Hong Kong could give

mainland security and intelligence officers enforcement powers that could potentially put rights and freedoms, protected in the handover agreement, at risk.

Calls have emerged for flash mobs at night across the territory and democracy activists plan to meet the press to announce "street action".

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said her government will "fully cooperate" with

the Chinese parliament to safeguard national security, which she said would not affect rights, freedoms or judicial independence.

US President Donald Trump warned Washington would react "very strongly" if Beijing went ahead with the security law.

In his annual report to parliament, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said China would establish a "sound" legal

system and enforcement mechanisms to ensure national security in Hong Kong and Macau.

Li Keqiang yesterday also left out the word "peaceful" in referring to Beijing's desire to "reunify" with Chinese-claimed Taiwan, an apparent policy shift that comes as ties with Taipei continue on a downward spiral.

Democratic Taiwan has shown no interest in being ruled by autocratic China.

US plans to quit 'Open Skies' treaty

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump announced Thursday he plans to withdraw the United States from the Open Skies Treaty with Russia, the third arms control pact Trump has abrogated since coming to office.

The US leader said Moscow had not stuck to its commitments under the 18-year-old pact, which was designed to improve military transparency and confidence between the superpowers.

Yesterday, Russia said it will continue to observe the treaty that allows spy planes access to other countries' air space even if the US pulls out.

The Open Skies treaty allows its 34 full members to carry out unarmed surveillance flights over other member countries at short notice.

Aircrafts can survey the territory below, collecting information and pictures of military installations and activities. The idea is that the more rival militaries know about each other, the less the chance of conflict between them.



A family wearing face masks eat next to a stall in Wuhan, in China's central Hubei province yesterday. China took the rare move of not setting an annual growth target this year after the coronavirus battered the world's second-largest economy and ravaged global growth, Premier Li Keqiang said.

PHOTO: AFP



Hong Kong pro-democracy lawmakers holding up placards are blocked by security as they protest during a House Committee meeting concerning the second reading of a national anthem bill, at the Legislative Council in Hong Kong, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়

বেগমগঞ্জ, নোয়াখালী

Email: begumgani@uhfpo.dghs.gov.bd



স্বাস্থ্য সেবা

স্বাস্থ্য সেবা

স্বাস্থ্য সেবা

তারিখঃ ১০/০৫/২০২০

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

| | | | | |
|----|---|--|--------------------------------|--|
| ০১ | মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ | স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়/স্বাস্থ্য সেবা বিভাগ। | | |
| ০২ | সম্প্রদায়িক/স্বত্বাধিকারীর নাম | উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, বেগমগঞ্জ, নোয়াখালী। | | |
| ০৩ | অর্থায়নের উৎস | রাজস্ব/জিওবি/বোকা/অতিরিক্ত/বিশেষ বরাদ্দ। | | |
| ০৪ | আধানকৃত দরপত্রের স্মারক ও তারিখ | স্মারক নং-উপজেলাঃ স্বাস্থ্যকমঃ/বিঃ/নোয়া/২০/১০৭৬ তারিখঃ ১০/০৫/২০২০ | | |
| ০৫ | দরপত্রের নাম/কাজের বিবরণ | ২০১৯-২০২০ইং অর্থবছরে উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, বেগমগঞ্জ, নোয়াখালী এর এম.এস.আর সামগ্রী সরবরাহের দরপত্র (গ্রুপ নং-"ক"-ঔষধপত্র সামগ্রী, "খ"-সার্জিক্যাল যন্ত্রপাতি সামগ্রী, "গ"-লিঙ্গেন সামগ্রী, "ঘ"-গজ, ব্যাডেজ, কটন, "ঙ"-কেমিক্যাল রি-এজেন্ট সামগ্রী এবং "চ"-আসবাবপত্র ও ক্রিটেন সামগ্রী। | | |
| ০৬ | সম্প্রদায়িক স্বত্বাধিকারীর জেলা | নোয়াখালী। | | |
| ০৭ | ক্রয় প্রক্রিয়া | পিপিআর ২০০৬, ২০০৮ ও (সংশোধিত ২০১৯) মোতাবেক উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র। | | |
| ০৮ | দরপত্রদাতাদের যোগ্যতা | যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন সকল সরবরাহকারী/বাজারজাতকারী/আমদানীকারক/উৎপাদনকারী/এজেন্ট/হিসাদার। | | |
| ০৯ | দরপত্র তফসিলের মূল্য (অফারতথ্যযোগ্য) | প্রতিটি সিডিউলের মূল্য চাশানের মাধ্যমে কোড নং-১-২৭১১-০০০০-২৬৮১ এ বাংলাদেশ/সোনালী ব্যাংকে, টৌমহনী শাখায় জমাদানপূর্বক উপজেলা হিসাবরক্ষণ অফিস, বেগমগঞ্জ, নোয়াখালী কর্তৃক চাশানের সি.টি.আর সহ মূলকপি হিসাবরক্ষকের নিকট জমা করে দরপত্র সংগ্রহ করিতে হইবে। | | |
| ১০ | দরপত্র জামানত/বাছনদার | গ্রুপের নাম | সিডিউলের মূল্য (অফারতথ্যযোগ্য) | দরপত্র জামানতের পেমেন্ট/ডিউরি পরিমাণ |
| | | "ক"-ঔষধপত্র সামগ্রী | ১০০০ (এক হাজার) টাকা | ৪৮,০০০/- (আটটিগুণ হাজার টাকা মাত্র) |
| | | "খ"-সার্জিক্যাল যন্ত্রপাতি সামগ্রী ও মোরামত | ৭৫০ (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা | ২৮,০০০/- (আটশ হাজার টাকা মাত্র) |
| | | "গ"-লিঙ্গেন সামগ্রী | ৫০০ (পাঁচশত) টাকা | ১৪,০০০/- (চৌদ্দ হাজার টাকা মাত্র) |
| | | "ঘ"-গজ, ব্যাডেজ, কটন | ৫০০ (পাঁচশত) টাকা | ১৪,০০০/- (চৌদ্দ হাজার টাকা মাত্র) |
| | | "ঙ"-কেমিক্যাল রি-এজেন্ট সামগ্রী | ৫০০ (পাঁচশত) টাকা | ৫,৫০০/- (পাঁচ হাজার পাঁচশত টাকা মাত্র) |
| | | "চ"-আসবাবপত্র ও ক্রিটেন সামগ্রী | ৫০০ (পাঁচশত) টাকা | ৫,৫০০/- (পাঁচ হাজার পাঁচশত টাকা মাত্র) |
| ১১ | দরপত্র তফসীল বিক্রয়, দর প্রস্তাব গ্রহণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম ও ঠিকানা | উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, বেগমগঞ্জ, নোয়াখালী। (দরপত্র পুস্তিকা ক্যাশিয়ারের নিকট হতে সংগ্রহ করিতে হইবে)। | | |
| ১২ | দরপত্র সংগ্রহের স্থান | ১। উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, বেগমগঞ্জ, নোয়াখালী ২। সিভিল সার্জন অফিস, নোয়াখালী ৩। উপজেলা নির্বাহী অফিসারের কার্যালয়, বেগমগঞ্জ, নোয়াখালী। | | |
| ১৩ | দরপত্র তফসীল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ, দিন ও সময় | ২৮/০৫/২০২০খ্রিঃ অফিস চলাকালীন সময় (০৮-০২.৩০ মিনিট)। | | |
| ১৪ | দরপত্র তফসীল দাখিলের স্থান | উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, বেগমগঞ্জ, নোয়াখালী। | | |
| ১৫ | দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় | ৩১/০৫/২০২০খ্রিঃ দুপুর ১.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত। | | |
| ১৬ | দরপত্র ব্যয় খোশার তারিখ ও সময় | ৩১/০৫/২০২০খ্রিঃ দুপুর ১.৩০ ঘটিকা। | | |

ডায় অসীম কুমার দাশ

উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পঃ পঃ কর্মকর্তা

বেগমগঞ্জ, নোয়াখালী

জিডি-৮৮৮৬



Ahsan Habib's artwork.



Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy's artwork.



Sadatuddin Ahmed's artwork.



Shishir Bhattacharjee's artwork.

Cartoons: A dive into wit and satire

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Cartoons, an art form packed with humour and wit, have been engaging audiences since centuries. They have the ability to express grave issues in light-hearted ways. However, not all cartoonists opt out for only serious messages.

"Even a straightforward message, based on a simple theme but well supported with background and environment, can communicate in effective ways," shares renowned cartoonist Ahsan Habib, the Editor and Publisher of the monthly satire magazine, *Unmad*. He also talks about the importance of maintaining subtlety while creating such pieces. "Everyone has their own freedom, and cartoonists are no different. However, when a cartoon, or any such creation, especially those that belong to the genre of lampoon satire, offends someone, then that piece loses its fun essence," he explains. "Being able to present issues in ways that do not distort the relevance or importance of the message and also manages to keep a sense of decency and mindfulness are two creative skills a good cartoonist should have."

Apart from political satire, cartoons highlight social reformation in various other forms. "There are several types of cartoons that are published by print media. We see popular political satires in editorial and opinion-oriented cartoons, but social issues are better expressed with pocket cartoons. While journalistic reports with photographs present issues in very serious tones, pocket cartoons like Rafiqun Nabi's *Tokai* put forward social issues in subtle tones," mentions renowned cartoonist Shishir Bhattacharjee.

Expression and form are very important in fine arts, and cartoons are no different. "While idea begets expression, being able to express ideas



Biplob Chakroborty's artwork.

in a humorous way is a challenge for most of us," mentions Niaz Chowdhury Tuli, Senior Cartoonist at *ProthomAlo*. "Caricatures are very popular, especially when it comes to political and social satires. However, over doing one's facial expressions, attitudes, or accessories may hurt the sentiments of the person, their peers or even the audience. Representation of characters through proper figures has been an important lesson for me over the years."

The preference and perception regarding cartoon has changed over the past few years. "In recent times, illustration based cartoons are gaining popularity," shares Biplob Chakroborty, Staff Cartoonist, *The Daily Star*. "This sort of artistic creations helps shed light on economic issues besides social constraints."

Drawing cartoons is a full-fledged job for many today. "Over the years, I have seen a progress in this profession. Artists start by creating cartoons, then move towards comics and graphic novels, and finally work towards 2D and 3D animation," adds Ahsan Habib. "They have chosen this profession and inspired others to follow in their footsteps."

Emerging artists are faced with both

opportunities and challenges in this profession. "Cartoonists of the current generation draw inspiration from older works, but speaking from my personal experience as an art teacher, I often find them accustomed to filtered forms of expression," asserts artist Sadatuddin Ahmed, a lecturer at Institute of Fine Arts, University of Chittagong. "While this helps them understand the limitations and social boundaries and keeps them from harming the sentiments of others, it also makes them less observant towards the skills and intelligence applied by the artist to present things in a subtler manner."

On the other hand, there has been



Morshed MISHU's artwork.

a remarkable growth when it comes to delivering social messages. "Previously, we had to be aware about revealing things on national mediums. However, with time, social media has become a place where people have to be constantly cautious of their activities. This change has forced a form of self-censorship into young minds. Working with such filters is definitely a challenge," says Syed Rashad

Imam Tanmoy, Founder of Cartoon People and Associate Editor of *Unmad*. "Cartoons can connect with the public and raise social and global awareness. As a result, aspiring cartoonists, who are tech savvy, can flourish in this line of work."

At times, artworks can go beyond positive changes. To that end, Assistant Editor of *Unmad* and Forbes Asia 30 under 30 nominee Morshed MISHU, feels that there is a fine line between instigation and rebellion. "Before revealing an artwork, three things should be thought about - the creation itself, the subject matter of the creation and the possible responses to the creation,"



Niaz Ahmed Tuli's artwork.

he shares. "Heinous crimes like rape demand protest. But putting forward things about a specific organisation or person repeatedly, will only instigate others against it."

Potraying wit and humour with enough subtlety is the hallmark of a great cartoonist, and is a feat that deserves more credit than it gets.

Eid-Ul-Fitr specials on television

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Concerns over the coronavirus pandemic forced television producers and directors to stop productions at once, since the nationwide shutdown began in March. As a result, a number of television projects were put on hold.



The Little Engine That Could



Baghbondi- The Mind Game

Despite such hindrances, top television channels of the country have included some exceptional shows and films in their Eid-Ul-Fitr schedules. Below is a list of programmes that will be aired on different channels throughout the festive season.

Written by Pantho Shahriar and directed by Arif Khan, the eight-episode television drama *Rekha*, featuring Aupee



Mone Mone

Karim and Afzal Hossain, will be aired from the first day of Eid-Ul Fitr on Channel i at 6:10 pm.

The telefilm, *Mone Mone*, starring Farin and Shajal in pivotal roles and directed by Chayanika Chowdhury, will be aired on the fifth day of Eid on Maasranga Television at 7:30 pm.

Featuring Asaduzzaman Noor, Ali Zaker, Shahiduzzaman Selim and

Mehezabien among others, the seven-episode television drama, *Baghbondi: The Mind Game*, directed by Redoan Rony, will be aired from the first day of Eid on Desh TV at 9 pm.

Ghorbondi Shomoyer Golpo, produced by Shahriar Shakil, features seven made-at-home short films. These are: Gias Uddin Selim's *Quarantine*, Nurul Alam Atique's *Coronar Phul*, Animesh Aich's *Eka*, Shihab Shaheen's *Lockdown*, Shafayet Mansoor Rana's *Moddho Nayok*, Sumon Anwar's *Kagojer Pakhi* and Gautam Koiri's *Khola Janala*. They will be aired on Deepto TV at 9:30 pm, starting from the first day of Eid.

Duronto TV will broadcast five movies, dubbed in Bangla, for kids. These are: *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet Frankenstein* (Eid Day, 10 pm), *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet the Wolfman* (Day 2, 10 pm), *Antz* (Day 3, 10 pm), *Chicken Run* (Day 4, 10 pm) and *The Little Engine That Could* (Day 5, 10 pm).



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

these critical times, the government has no proper plan for the creative industry," Nipun stresses.

The overall consumption of internet and media has increased, as people have more free time on their hands. From playing games online to streaming music to participating in live talk shows on social media, people are spending more time with virtual screens. Under such circumstances, it will be difficult for the film industry to bring audiences back to cinema theatres, even after this ordeal ends, as single-screen theatres are already running out of fashion. Compared to other visual media, it is likely that the film industry will suffer the most.

The chronicles of quarantined recording

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Expensive gear, intricate DAWs and state-of-the-art noise cancelling – is what a top-tier musician is used to while recording. Due to the unfortunate events after the Covid-19 outbreak, however, these luxuries have been unattainable for many, barring the most fortunate of musicians. Home recordings are the new norm for artistes, as they come to terms with the limitations, and innovate to overcome them.

"From the fourth day that I started self-isolating, I was swarmed with work," says



Kona

me," she says. "Since phone recordings have undesirable noises, he told me to lock my room and go under my blanket to give my voice takes. It works like a charm!"

Kona recorded over 25 projects – including voiceovers and entire songs – during self-isolation. "I eventually bought a microphone and a selfie-stand for videos, since I know that this will go on for a while. I do miss the times in the studio," she adds.

"It can, at times, be a painful experience to edit and mix some of the voice samples that are sent from home," says singer-composer Khaiyam Sanu Sandhi. "The results are varying, since everyone has a different phone, and a different way of singing." Sandhi has solved the problem by asking singers to sing a few words at a time, as opposed to entire lines. "Even though I know that the artiste has the capability of doing the entire song or voiceover in one take, I ask them to do two to

three words at a time and send them to me. It is easier for me to edit that way."

Chirkutt's fiery vocalist, Sharmin Sultana Sumi considers herself lucky in that regard. "All of our band members are very technologically savvy," she says. "Thanks to the isolation period, I have learned a lot more about apps on smartphones that can make audio and video recordings easier. Moreover, since we all live in the same area, we visit our studio from time to time – with necessary precautions, of course."

Chirkutt's newest project, *Aalor Gaan*, invites singers to record videos of themselves,

our exposure to it."

Nemesis frontman Zohad Reza Chowdhury asserts that home recordings are yet to reach the level of a proper professional studio's intricacy. "I own a home recording setup, and we can get by with it. However, I cannot be fully satisfied with the sound, as we are used to the rollicking of live drums and pitch-perfect guitar tones," he explains. The singer is taking the time to record songs from outside his comfort zone. "I have collaborated for an electronic track, which will be out very soon," adds Zohad. However, he looks forward to getting back on the stage

par quality sounds, so all it takes is an extra twenty to thirty minutes for me to mix those samples," he explains.

The AvoidRafa frontman and successful composer feels like technology will slowly allow people to have the flexibility to record properly from homes. "I have done entire recordings in my iPad with apps like Garageband, and recently shot a music video with an app named Triller," he adds. "There is no reason to back down without direct access to a studio. Your work can be mixed and mastered in one with better equipment, but that, too, can be done remotely."



Khaiyam Sanu Sandhi

Kona. "Since I can't directly go to the studio anymore, I had to resort to recording on my phone." Even though the artiste was uncomfortable with the limitations at first, she soon got the hang of it. "Sound designer Ripon Nath suggested a valuable trick to



Raef Al Hasan Rafa

singing on their balconies and rooftops, and submit the videos to Chirkutt's page. "Since we are indoors, we tend to be deprived from light. This is why we are featuring young artistes, to motivate them during this time, and highlight the importance of 'Aalo' and



Sharmin Sultana Sumi

with Nemesis. "Billie Eilish won Grammys with home recordings," says Raef Al Hasan Rafa, who thinks that 'socially distanced' recordings will be more commonplace even after the pandemic ends. "I am used to handling sub-



Zohad Reza Chowdhury

There is no doubt that the local studio landscape has changed drastically over the years – however, the Covid-19 pandemic has worked as a catalyst in artistes trying to perfect the art of recording at home.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



How to Make Piyaju in Six Parts and Three Steps

TAREQ ADNAN

-I- I have two favourite t-shirts. One of them is blue. If given the choice, I would wear these t-shirts on any given day, for any occasion. This blue one has this image of a sunset on it, framed by brick red outcrops. The other shirt is also blue but it's a different shade gone slightly grey and to be honest, while it does have a spot in my heart, it's in a worn corner, in the smallest cockle.

There is also a third t-shirt that I would count as my favourite. It is black and I would wear it over the blue ones if I could ever find it. On the days I do, the world conspires to force me into wearing a button down. And with the resignation that comes from foresight, I pick out my despised gingham, knowing that I won't find this black shirt again. Weeks will pass and one day, there it will appear, in the dryer, freshly laundered and never worn.

I say this to you not because this is a personal essay but because I want to share with you the realization that sadness can be small but still significant. In nature, colours are often interpreted in shades of blue, grey and black because most animals are colour blind. Which explains why dogs love us so much; their monochrome world bestows a sort of uniformity to us. For true equality, you need to see the world like a dog. I read that somewhere.

Sometimes, your feelings are not lies.

-II- The correct way to make a piyaju is to first contemplate the recipe and to decide to thoroughly compromise with the ingredients and instructions.

Your mother asked you to get two types of lentils, the orange ones and one of the innumerable yellow daals. The thing is, you can't spell khesari in Bangla and while Google will come to your aid, the series of decisions that led you to this point in your life— alone in a kitchen with nothing but your thoughts— is not a good indicator of sound judgement. You have a jar of orange lentils of uncertain provenance and a year-old bag of yellow daals. Lentils are ancient grains, right? If they can survive the test of time, they can survive your cabinet. They haven't gone bad. And they're yellow. In nature, colours are often an indicator of texture and danger. Something about how luminous tropical frogs exist in a world of stark survival. I read that somewhere.

The lentils need to be soaked for at least four hours and while you know that there is obviously a reason for it you only just started and seriously, this is daal. You've made daal before. This is fine.

There was a time in your life when you needed nothing but the certain knowledge that your mother loved you.

Nostalgia can be torture.

Step 1: Wash the lentils over running water. Deposit them in a dark blue plastic bowl and let them soak for approximately 20 minutes. The volume of the water you soak them in, I leave to you and your God.

-III- I have precisely six good pictures of myself. I think it's because I am the human equivalent of a Shetland pony; one of nature's more experimental monsters. I suppose in this era, with its profusion and obsession with images, six is a paltry number.

One picture is from a decade ago. I was tan then, well a darker shade of brown; burnt by a low sun in the lowlands. I was wearing a t-shirt that I no longer own, from a brand that I would now eschew, patterned yellow on black. I admit, even in that disaster of a shirt I looked good. I am not looking directly at the camera; I think it was at a farewell party.

The second picture I cannot accurately date but I think I'm nine in it. There's a dolphin, rising up

out of a pool of water. The water is the slate grey of curdled dreams. A man, colourfully dressed and braver than I could ever hope to be, is blowing a whistle. I think the dolphin listens to him because of how brightly coloured he is. In nature, colours are often symbols of power. Whales are blue and they're bigger than dinosaurs. I read that somewhere.

The other three pictures were taken the same day and I don't remember them. I have seen them though; my mother takes great pleasure in their existence. In the photos, my mien has not yet blackened with cynicism. Possibly because I am one. I am dressed in a stark white sweater, blue striped. My cousin is there with me and there's a fern behind us.

If I could look anything like that again, I would collapse with joy.

-IV- The recipe says to blend the lentils once they are done soaking. You can't blend them too much. Too fine a grind and they become dense when you shape them into piyajus. It's odd, the pieces add up to more than their sum. Cooking can be so



philosophical. Unfortunately, the ability to discern between a fine blend and a coarse one requires impulse control. And simple control. Blending is fun. Look at it go.

Next, slice an onion. Measurements were spoken at you when you asked for the recipe but your mother also asked you if you were well and at that precise moment you coughed. You assure her that you've survived every single day of your life so far. It is not enough.

Into the sliced onions go chopped chilis. You are supposed to massage the salt into them which releases the moisture from the onions. Only then can you add the pinch of turmeric and a small amount garlic and ginger paste. This your mother assures you, is very controversial. Once you have your onion garnish, you fold in the coarsely blended lentils.

But hey, it's all going to be mixed together right? Why can't we just blend it all in? It's fine. You're only mildly tinged with hysteria. The onions somehow made the whole mess white and purple. In nature, colours are often seasonal and fleeting. Brightly coloured birds sometimes dance, flashing all their plumage in coruscating waves until the colours mix together. The movement is what matters, because nature loves entropy. I read that somewhere.

Sometimes, everything you do only makes you older.

Step 2: Throw it all into the blender and blend it at the highest setting. Blending is fun.

-V- The first football jersey I ever bought wasn't actually a jersey but a t-shirt made of faux jean and it fit like a blanket. It was 3XL. It was this stone washed outre monstrosity being sold as promotional merch. It had World Cup on it, written in massive font with a picture of the actual cup and for some reason, Figo. It looked like a WWII-era restoration photo of a bombed-out landscape. I don't know if they were expecting something to happen.

I watched that World Cup mostly bemused and then increasingly anxious. I experienced heartbreak. Something about the way Klose's aquiline nose seemed to droop down with disappoint and pain. The yellow Ronaldo wore was so bright; Ronaldinho's smile like the cresting waves over a horizon only he could see.

I didn't ever grow into that t-shirt. It was too warm and it reminded me of Figo. It was also I think, not actually official World Cup merchandise and was very unbecoming. I loved it like a mother hen loves its unborn children. Something about the jeans texture and artificially faded colour appealed to me. It had no place in this world. In

nature, colours are often different at different times of the day. Something about how a butterfly flaps its iridescent wings in the Amazon, we don't get to see it because everything is green in the morning. I read that somewhere.

You can only allow yourself to feel emotion when something causes you physical pain.

-VI- When you've decanted the slop, it smells like your mother's kitchen did. Of course it does. It smells like raw onions.

The recipe tells you to shallow fry them and make sure the oil doesn't get too hot. The little blob of piyaju paste than you shape with your hands needs to be thin enough to get crispy. But it feels weird and you just can't get used to how it gets under your nails. And the oil, when does it get too hot? On your first piyaju nothing happened. Now it's smoking. When do you flip? You remember the ardent joy of fasting in the winter, that first bite of piyaju. Your house smells so good now. You've used a spoon to plop little dollops into the frying pan. The first one has gone jet black. You pick out it's burnt husk. In nature, colours are often a form of communication. Something about how bees look at a daisy and feel lost. I read that somewhere.

Step 3: Fry the piyaju in oil. You'll get about 7 good ones that didn't burn. They won't taste bad. Serve with ketchup that's too sweet.

Perhaps the next time, you'll feel whole.

Non-celebrities now auction off jewellery, underwear and loose morals to raise funds for pandemic relief efforts

EHSANUR GAZA

A-List celebrities are using their fame and public adoration to raise funds for pandemic relief. Rapper Meek Mill's 2018 Rolls-Royce Phantom has been donated. Others bid on a round of golf with musician Justin Timberlake and actor Bill Murray; co-hosting "The Ellen DeGeneres Show"; a walk-on role in a Martin Scorsese film with actors Leo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro.

In Bangladesh, cricketer Mashrafe Mortaza auctioned a bracelet he almost always wore on the field for 18 years. It sold for around \$50,000 to be used for his constituency. The bracelet was returned to the former Bangladesh captain. The band Chirkut auctioned off their instruments and the lead singer's jewellery for 10 lakh taka.

All this has led other lesser celebrities to realise they too can become famous but without too much of the actual hard work. TikTok stars from our neighbouring country have uploaded more than 11.2 million videos of either boys crying passionately or young boys and girls slapping each other after complicated partner reversals. One video showed boy meets girl, boy walks hand-in-hand with girl, girls grabs hand of another boy walking past, first boy slaps girl, second boy slaps first boy, girl slaps second boy, girl becomes a Chihuahua.

No money could be raised, however,

because no one really understands what is happening in these videos. Everybody fears this horrifying pandemic of Tiktok videos may infect Bangladesh. We have four confirmed cases originating from the all-girls school VickyBoysAtNoon. Moyukub Mahtab, a top standing HSC student there has first-hand seen a video and could not stand it anymore. He was immediately admitted to hospital with severe eye ticks. He confirms he is not winking because he cannot wink. This was verified by the fact that he is still single. A minister also joined in on the relief efforts. Dr Malet of Public Health and Hammertime has offered his 'Statements of Obvious Common Sense'. People are actually paying top Peso for these. His highest profiting comments include, 'People will get infected if they go out shopping during pandemic', 'We should maintain social distancing' and 'The sky is made of air particles'.



READER'S CORNER: "The child in Green"

DARKAK

One step, two steps, three steps, four.. Hops the child in green, never seen before. Malicious and wicked, his footsteps bring dread, This is the tale of the harbinger of death. People still wonder where he was born How his gleeful touch makes them mourn First glimpse of him was in the orient- Then the west, north and south, Conquered yet another continent, as this nomad runs about. His gentle caress shall wither your lungs away, His green robe flutters as they mark your decay. When the child crossed the ocean The orange king laughed, "Such a midget can never harm a country so great!" The green child smirked as he danced along, The wails from the deathbeds, such a tragic song! "We are ready", said the queen in Red. "All is well", chanted her people as they went to bed.

"The curse will never harm God's servants," retorted the priest in white, The masses gathered as they blindly spread the blight. Ignored the warnings, these foolish pawns! Carried the child on their shoulders and took him home. The child snickers as he embraced your children and kin, Now they shall be branded as a proof of your sin.

Ignorance, a crime worse than greed- The lords with plugged ears will never hear your screams. So tell your brethren to lock those doors, For the vile child can't be stopped no more, Shut yourself in and don't go out.. For the child is out there, dancing about. He waltzes atop of the mountain of corpse, Laughing at the fools for they never learn, Once the hex touches you, there's nowhere to run, So dare not go out now, it might be your turn.

The League of Nations -- the body which pretends to have a mighty, big say in global affairs -- yesterday removed Chapasthan from the world map following a really funny cartoon drawn about it.

The cartoon completely ruined the national image of Chapasthan, leaving many to wonder how fickle that image really was.

The cartoon, which appeared in the satire page of a Chapasthani daily, showed the ruler of the country, D Æ K-T8 R, robbing beggars of their daily earnings while a Tesla XXX was silently on stand-by behind the ruler.

The cartoon went viral and while most recognised this as mere irreverent satire, perceptions of D Æ K-T8 R took a swift dip when a TV channel caught up with the cartoonist and discovered that the image was not satire, but an actual Impressionist portrait of real-life events. The cartoonist had the video footage of D Æ K-T8 R actually robbing the beggars, and that went Viral.



Being a democratically-elected ruler, allegedly, global opinion against D Æ K-T8 R turned. The ruler had earlier opened up the economy after months of shutdown in a bid to contain the deadly Covid-22 virus, even though the spread was peaking. "The cure cannot be worse than the

disease," D Æ K-T8 R said in an impassioned speech to the country. "More people will die of hunger than they do of the virus."

After footage of D Æ K-T8 R's beggar-robbing became public, the leader said, "Dying of hunger is tough, I was merely trying to expedite the process. Mercy is a gift that blesses the giver and receiver, or something such. Their suffering ends, and I can use their meagre worldly estates for a worthy cause."

Then D Æ K-T8 R called the XXX dealership.

The following day, the League of Nations said in a statement: "We cannot endorse such barbaric practices, therefore as far as the League of Nations is concerned, Chapasthan has seized to exist. We have also informed all flight operators to terminate services to and from the country when international flights resume in full flow from tomorrow to help restart the global economy. The cure cannot be worse than the disease."

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY MAY 23, 2020, JAISHTHA 9, 1427 BS

A subdued, introspective Eid

Let the spirit of community touch us all

THIS will be a different Eid that we will be observing after the holy month of Ramadan. For most of us, it will be within the confines of our home and deprived of the usual pleasure of seeing many loved ones. It will be different because our lives have been turned upside down by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. It will be bleak for thousands who have lost their livelihoods and are in acute uncertainty about where the next meal will come from, how they will pay rent, how they will survive. And for more than a million people in nine districts, it will be a day of coping with the reality of lost homes, crops they grew and food they had stored destroyed by a devastating cyclone in the country's coastal areas. While the celebratory mood of Eid will be significantly dampened, let us not forget the spirit of Ramadan and Eid which is all the more relevant in the current scenario of despair, grief and uncertainty.

Eid is the time of giving generously to all those in need. And in no other time have there been so many people in such desperate conditions. The necessity to maintain social distancing and living in a semi-lockdown situation has made it difficult to be physically there for people, to distribute clothes or do any of the other altruistic activities associated with Eid. But that should not stop those in more privileged positions to give monetary assistance more generously to those in need. It is a great opportunity to donate to the numerous organisations and groups that, with their dedicated volunteers, have been working relentlessly throughout this crisis, providing food, medical help, even giving dignified burials to Covid-19 victims. These noble souls will continue to carry out their selfless acts and they should be supported in every way possible. While the government is trying to tackle the huge challenges posed by Covid-19 and Cyclone Amphan, providing financial support and other relief endeavours, we must all try to do our bit as best we can.

The regular camaraderie associated with Eid congregations and get-togethers may not be there this time around but this does not mean we cannot express our love for our fellow human beings with equal sincerity. This occasion warrants a renewed pledge to serve and support our community better and come together as a people fighting the worst odds we could imagine. For the frontline workers—the doctors, nurses, pathologists, cleaners, police, garbage collectors, security guards, and many others who are working round the clock and many will continue through the Eid holidays—we express our deepest gratitude and respect. Our thoughts and prayers for all those bravely fighting the virus in hospitals or at home as well as for those who have lost their loved ones during this pandemic.

We thank our dear readers and patrons for staying with us and supporting us during this crisis. Wishing everyone a safe and heartwarming Eid.

Hospitals turning away patients

Countless lives at risk

IT is a matter of grave concern that the ongoing pandemic has left hospitals overwhelmed, and in many cases patients are being denied vital medical attention, sometimes resulting in deaths. There has been an alarming number of such instances over the past few weeks. A recent report published in this daily sheds light on the sufferings caused as a result of private hospitals not taking in routine or serious patients with various ailments, especially if they appear to have symptoms associated with Covid-19. In such cases, a patient is required to do the necessary test to prove that they are Covid-19 negative before being able to get any treatment in the hospitals. Otherwise, the only remaining option is to risk going to the already-overcrowded public hospitals, which can treat only 30 percent of the country's population seeking healthcare services, a notoriously time-consuming process and not feasible for most emergency cases.

According to the report, a man suffering from a degenerative disease was another victim of this cruel practice of hospitals turning away patients. At least three private hospitals refused to treat him as he had a high temperature (he was yet to get his test results from IEDCR). The fourth hospital initially agreed, and upon observation, reported that the patient had a heart attack. But being a coronavirus-free hospital, it denied admittance as he had fever and breathing difficulties. Despite the family's request to provide him with emergency care while looking for an alternative, he was turned down. After an agonising 10-hour effort by his family to provide him with CCU support, the patient succumbed to his death. The next day, they received a text message from IEDCR confirming that he was COVID-19 negative.

Despite the health ministry's recent circular stating that all private hospitals and clinics should have separate arrangements for treating suspected Covid-19 patients—and that they cannot refuse any patient if they have the particular treatment facilities, and that failure to comply with the order will result in legal action—numerous patients continue to be treated with such callousness. Healthcare is a fundamental right. Such blatant refusal by hospitals and clinics to comply with the directive violates all ethical codes that healthcare professionals and hospitals must abide by. The government, therefore, must deal with this issue urgently and ensure uninterrupted delivery of healthcare services to ordinary patients. Hospitals and clinics providing regular critical services such as kidney dialysis must accept patients requiring such medical procedures. They must not be allowed to refuse critical patients.

Good night, sweet prince



REHMAN SOBHAN

THE passing of Anisuzzaman has taken from our midst one more close friend and comrade from the generation which participated in the struggle for national liberation and held steadfast

to its values.

I can think of few people who embraced and embodied the four foundational pillars of our constitution—democracy, nationalism, secularism, and socialism—with Anis's tenacity.

Anis and I had been friends and colleagues for 63 years, ever since we first joined Dhaka University as young teachers in 1957.

I remember him from those early encounters in the Teachers' Common Room of the Old Arts Building of Dhaka University as a rather shy, soft-spoken young man who concealed his exceptional intelligence and erudition behind an exterior of great modesty and gentleness.

Prof Abdur Razzaq—"Sir," to all who knew him—was my point of contact with Anis, and was to be our "guru" for the remainder of his life. Sir had the unique capacity of bringing together people from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and walks of life whom he presumed shared his liberal enlightenment values.

Sir always viewed Anis as one of the jewels of our academic community. Anis's own reticence inhibited him from proclaiming his exceptional scholastic qualities. But this was, in time, made apparent through his extraordinary capacity for serious research, his creative mind, fertility of his publications, and his lucidity and brevity of expression, whether in his writings or his public presentations, characterised by his self-deprecating humour.

A measure of his scholastic achievements is provided by the prestige he commanded in the academic community outside Bangladesh and particularly in India, where his work was widely recognised through prestigious awards, including the presentation of the Padma Bhushan by the president of India.

Anis was much more than a distinguished scholar. He was a born teacher and remained so throughout his life where he inspired generations of

students at the universities of Chittagong and Dhaka, who remain in his thrall as their mentor, guide, philosopher, and friend.

It was appropriate that at the end of his life, his work should be recognised through his appointment as national professor, to go with his awards of the Ekushey Padak and the Swadhinata Puraskar.

Anisuzzaman's contribution to our society extended well beyond his academic domain. His path-breaking scholarship provided the intellectual foundations for constructing and understanding our national identity.

His engagement with the issue of

government in exile which directed the Liberation War.

Its prime minister, Tajuddin Ahmed, recognising the precision of his mind and the expressiveness of his pen, drew upon him for the preparation of his public presentations.

When I involved myself in the move to establish a planning board to advise the Mujibnagar government, we immediately sought out Anisuzzaman, along with Prof Musharraf Hossain and Prof Sarwar Murshid, among others, to play an active role in planning policy agendas for an independent Bangladesh. In this capacity, he also travelled across India to educate the Indian academic community



In this undated photo, Prof Anisuzzaman (right) is seen with artist Murtaja Baseer (left) and Prof Abdur Razzaq.

SOURCE: GAYANTAPAS ABDUR RAZZAK SMARAK GRANTHA

national identity inevitably drew him into the defining political struggles of our generation, from the Language Movement of 1952 to the struggles to project our cultural identity and the asserting of secular values in the 1960s.

His views and political involvements eventually drew him into embracing democratic struggle for self-rule for the Bangalis under the leadership of Bangabandhu.

In the final phase of our struggle for national liberation, Anisuzzaman remained an active participant. In 1971, he actively associated himself with the

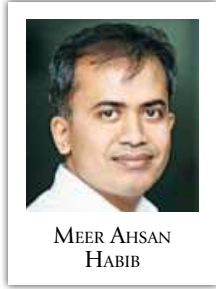
about the emergence of Bangladesh.

In the immediate aftermath of liberation, when Bangabandhu entrusted Kamal Hossain, as law minister, with convening the drafting of the constitution for an independent Bangladesh, Kamal immediately reached out to Anis, who had returned to Chittagong University, to play the lead role in preparing the Bangla draft of the constitution.

Anis not only played a critical role in the translation process, but sat in on deliberations of the drafting committee where he could give expression to his own deeply held values.

For Whom the Bell Tolls

Understanding the Digital Security Act



under the limelight. But the organisation and its founding chairman have also become the target of vicious hate crime and racist attacks in social media. The chairman is a member of a religious minority group and the haters alleged that he was messing with the religious belief of the poor.

Surprisingly, no one from the authorities cared to do something about these vicious attacks. But the foundation and people in general stood by him. In this connection, one commented on social media that "as usual, dishonest people get the accolades, while good people are discredited on baseless issues."

Similarly, we often see that journalists, free thinkers and activists who nurture the principles of democracy are accused of spreading rumours and defaming individuals. The tool that is most commonly used against them is the Digital Security Act 2018, which can lead to arrests without a warrant and proper investigation. Since its enactment in September 2018, it has been termed as a "draconian" act, particularly in reference to its sections 8, 21, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 43 and 53. In addition, the act reinstated the colonial-era Official Secrets Act of 1923 that makes investigative journalism almost impossible. One may recall that while praising the act, one ruling party lawmaker had called it a "heavenly law" and claimed, bizarrely, that the world would follow Bangladesh after the passing of such a law!

Indeed, this "heavenly" act was used recently to sue eleven individuals. Two of the accused, cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore and writer Mushtaq Ahmed, landed in jail for posting cartoons in social media. This incident took place against the backdrop of the disappearance of photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol on March 10. On the same day, Editor-in-Chief of daily *Manabzamin* Matiur Rahman Chowdhury and 31 others including Kajol were sued under the Digital Security Act for "publishing false news and circulating it on social media". The trend then continued with the filing of cases against Editor-in-Chief of bdnews24.com Toufique Imrose Khalidi and Acting Editor of jagonews24.com Mohiuddin Sarker. In these confusing times of Covid-19 pandemic, when

the free flow of information is vital to save lives, the opposite is happening in Bangladesh.

If hatred and racist propaganda on digital platforms is not a crime, then how can posting or sharing of cartoons, critical status and news links be deemed offences under the Digital Security Act? Since when have these activities become a crime in a democracy? Those who are bestowed with the authority of exercising power must understand that criticism is not sedition or defamation. It is logical for an aggrieved person to be critical of any action by any state functionary and the people within it.

The recent trend of filing cases under the Digital Security Act and the swift arrests of the alleged defendants have drawn sharp criticism both within and outside the country. The Editors' Council termed the trend as a clear threat to freedom of the press and freedom of expression and demanded its immediate revocation. Commenting on the development, seven ambassadors in Dhaka in separate tweets emphasised that press freedom was more important than ever. International human rights organisations have urged Bangladesh

and freedom of expression. Digital security is all about securing personal identity from theft as well as protection of assets and systems by using tools like firewall, anti-virus, biometric verification of identity while accessing a system, etc. It has nothing to do with tarnishing one's image in the cyber world. Unfortunately, we have knowingly or naively mixed up Cyber Security with Digital Security. As defined by the world's leading anti-virus enterprise, Kaspersky, the so-called crimes in question here in Bangladesh fall within the bigger purview of cyber threats and, if narrowed down, within the purview of cyber-attacks. Our ignorance made us so vulnerable to cybercrimes that cybercriminals looted USD 81 million (later only USD 18 million was recovered) from the national exchequer in February 2016, just by sending some phishing emails. Surprisingly, despite having clear provisions for trying such crimes under the Digital Security Act, no case has ever been filed in Bangladesh.

The act seems to be a weapon of mass destruction for press freedom and freedom of expression in Bangladesh. Instead of combatting cyber fraud and cybercrimes, it is being frequently used by

Bangabandhu eventually invited Anis to join his administration as the secretary of the Ministry of Education, but Anis persuaded Bangabandhu that he could best serve him by remaining a university teacher at a time when the universities of an independent Bangladesh badly needed the services of such academic scholars.

For the remainder of his days, at Chittagong University and then Dhaka University, Anis remained fully committed to teaching and scholarship.

In this time, particularly through the dark days of cantonment rule, Anis remained committed to protecting and perpetuating the values which he had helped inscribe in our constitution.

This engaged him in struggles to challenge departures from the national commitment to democracy, social justice, and secularism, which were so inherent to the spirit of the Liberation War. He accordingly played a vanguard role with Jahanara Imam in the movement to bring collaborators in the genocide of 1971 to justice.

In the early years of the life of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), around the mid-1990s, I persuaded Anis to become a member of our board of trustees. Over the last 25 years of his life, Anis remained an active and treasured colleague in CPD's programmes which were calculated to perpetuate the principles underlying our constitution.

In our endeavours, Anis remained an invaluable inspiration whose very presence in our midst ensured we did not distance ourselves from our foundational values.

Not all great scholars or public figures are also great human beings, free of conceit and notions of self-importance. But Anis was always available to all who sought his time and assistance. His generosity of spirit kept him involved, even in the final years of his life when his health had deteriorated, in attending public programmes when he could.

The departure of this great scholar, true patriot, and exceptional human being has left the nation impoverished. We will not see the likes of him again. I do not command adequate words to bid him his farewell, so let me borrow from Horatio's valediction in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*:

*Good night, Sweet Prince
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.*

Professor Rehman Sobhan is Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). The article was first published in Dhaka Tribune on May 19, 2020, and is being reprinted with the author's permission.

The recent trend of filing cases under the Digital Security Act and the swift arrests of the alleged defendants have drawn sharp criticism both within and outside the country. The Editors' Council termed the trend as a clear threat to freedom of the press and freedom of expression and demanded its immediate revocation.



Journalists demanding repeal of the Digital Security Act in front of Jatiya Press Club, Dhaka.

STAR FILE PHOTO

authorities to repeal the act. The Guardian reported quoting Odhikar that there have been 1,000 cases filed under the Digital Security Act which has been used largely by politicians and businessmen. This is quite frightening: can an act serve only the powerful section of society?

Those who advocated for the act either had no understanding of digital security or intentionally planned it to gag media

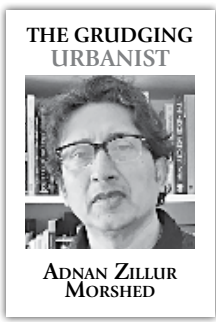
a section of people to hide various forms of transgressions. Although article 39 (2) (b) of the constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the freedom of the press, there have been numerous acts and policies that are not only jeopardising press freedom but also serving the interests of a vested quarter. State functionaries that are supposed to govern the press have been made ineffective.

For instance, Bangladesh Press Council is mandated to preserve the freedom of the press and to maintain and improve the standard of newspapers and news agencies in Bangladesh. It was established as a quasi-judicial body in 1979 under the Press Council Act, 1974. It was the outcome of a consensus that an independent authority should exist for safeguarding the freedom of the press and protecting individuals and institutions from excesses by the media. But in reality, the council has neither the authority to govern the press and ensure its freedom nor has any stake in the bureaucracy-led policy formulation process, a process that gave birth to the Digital Security Act—no other country in the world perhaps has so many acts and policies directly or indirectly limiting press freedom.

So contrary to what the lawmaker had hoped during the birth of this act, the world is not following Bangladesh. It is rather shocked to observe what is going on in the name of digital security, and how the freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and press freedom are being violated randomly. The act denies the very basic principles of the constitution of Bangladesh. Let us take a cue from the famous letter of Martin Luther King, Jr. that he wrote from the Birmingham City Jail—"I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. ... Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

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Not rewarding honesty is promoting dishonesty



THE GRUDGING URBANIST

ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

It is hard not to notice the frozen posture of BUET engineer MD Delwoar Hossain's murdered body on the bank of the Turag river. There was a lot of tragic symbolism in his corpse. A raised hand, eyes closed, dried blood oozing from his mouth, his modest checked shirt, worn out pants, a carelessly abandoned body—all coalesced into a haunting image on the canvass of green grass, almost a catastrophic enactment of a deeply conflicted Bangladesh. I kept wondering if his killers noticed his raised hand, as they left after dumping his body. And, if they did, what they thought of it.

In its heartbreaking silence, Delwoar's lifeless body spoke loudly. With its lifted hand and closed eyes, his body was telling us something profound: that not rewarding honesty is actually promoting dishonesty. We are slowly getting glimpses into his personal and professional life from the descriptions of his classmates, colleagues, and family members. A portrait is slowly emerging: an honest city corporation engineer who resisted the temptation of crores of taka that could have been easily deposited under his office table, if he so allowed. He would not approve grossly inflated invoices. His honesty became a roadblock to a lot of people around him who would like to accumulate wealth at any cost.

It is becoming clear that Delwoar Hossain's professional honesty prompted his guilty verdict and death sentence. The "politician-city

corporation-thikadar-industrial" complex, an omnipotent billion-dollar mafia in Bangladesh, may have ordered his execution. This complex assumes the power to decide who lives and who doesn't. It is often protected by many concentric circles of political and bureaucratic patronage. The demand for justice can often fizzle out trying to penetrate just a few outer circles.

How does society respond to a tragedy of somebody getting killed for being honest? You may choose to stay silent but your silence may inadvertently take the wrong side. The lesson is this: If we don't champion honesty, we are facilitating dishonesty.

I didn't know Delwoar Hossain personally but I reckon I must have passed him by sometimes in the corridors of BUET academic buildings during the 1980s. Although not in the same department, he was my contemporary, beginning his BUET journey four years after I did. Looking at his social media pictures it is hard to miss the intense power of his piercing eyes. The setting of his family pictures reveals the modesty of a quiet middle-class family. There is no ostentatious display of wealth. There is never a smug laugh either on his face or on those of his family members. There is no hubristic body language. The family pictures that have emerged so far are defined by the humility of a simple Bangladeshi family and their even simpler lifestyle.

I kept wondering why Delwoar's murder isn't getting enough traction in the news media. I have a lingering suspicion that it may be because of a prevailing "typical" image of a government engineer as an unscrupulous bribe-taking mercenary. Is the news media trying to be super-cautious as to not fall into the trap of



PHOTO: COLLECTED FROM MD DELWOAR HOSSAIN'S FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

Engineer MD Delwoar Hossain at a BUET reunion programme. Hossain was found dead at the Beribadh area under Turag police station on May 12, 2020.

whether he was honest or not? Or is it that the media decides which murder to sensationalise and which murder to ignore? How much power do moneyed god fathers exercise to control media narratives and bury "inconvenient truths"? Is there a prearranged limit to investigative journalism?

The broader problem is that to perpetually accept a predetermined impression of something or someone as truth, and normalising it within our popular imagination, is to tacitly support the evil behind that

impression. Only by, on the one hand, relentlessly uncovering corruption and, on the other hand, promoting honesty could we ever hold a government official accountable. It is the media's moral responsibility not to preemptively normalise the corrupt or honest image of a city corporation engineer. If the engineer is corrupt, then expose him or her. If the engineer is honest, then champion him or her. But surrendering to a fixed portrait of the government engineer as dishonest serves no noble purpose. Worse yet,

the news media's silence or negligence can indirectly enable the corrupt circle that kills people.

I have been thinking about the last few minutes of engineer Delwoar Hossain's life. The killers were all waiting for him in the minivan that picked him up from his rented residence in Mirpur. He was allegedly beaten and strangled to death inside the van before being thrown out onto the river bank. One wonders whether the holy month of Ramadan could have any neutralising effect on people's darkest instincts.

This sheer contradiction can be explained by what the philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt called the "banality of evil," evil done with stunning mundanity, as if one is simply performing daily duties. But more intriguingly, how people at large respond to the banality of evil reveals the sustainability and permeability of evil in society. The great French philosopher and activist Simone Weil wrote in 1933: "Never react to an evil in such a way as to augment it." Will the failure to demand justice for Delwoar Hossain's brutal murder augment and fortify the dark forces that designed his elimination?

His children will not only not have a father to celebrate Eid with this year but also remain traumatised forever by the image of their father lying dead on a lonely patch of grass, blood still drying on his face. The least that society can do is demand justice—and a judicial system that is just, independent, and swift. Not demanding justice would mean supporting injustice and evil.

Adnan Zillur Morshed is an architect and urbanist. He teaches in Washington, DC, and serves as Executive Director of the Centre for Inclusive Architecture and Urbanism at BRAC University. Email: morshed@cua.edu

Azad Rahman: A star in the musical firmament of Bangladesh

SYED NAQUIB MUSLIM

While highlighting the significance of music in human life, Martin Luther, the German theologian and leader of the Protestant Reformation, once said: "Music can make the sad merry, the merry sad... Make the proud humble..." Humble yet versatile, Azad Rahman, a legendary figure of music in Bangladesh who is considered the father of Bangla Kheyal, passed away at a hospital in Dhaka on May 16, 2020.

Born in West Bengal in 1944, Azad studied Indian Classical Music at the Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata from where he received a gold medal. He migrated to Dhaka in 1964, and began working as an artist and music director in then Radio Pakistan. From there, he began to earn popularity as a composer, working on various songs mostly composed by Jibunnessa Jamal, Abu Haider Sajedur Rahman, Azizur Rahman, Dr Moniruzzaman, Rafiquzzaman, Dr Moniruzzaman, and Fazle Khuda.

Azad earned praise for his originality in crafting tunes, not comparable with that of any other composer. Besides his musical talent, he was also quite well known for his administrative capability. He served as a principal of the Government Music College, and also as the director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy for two terms. Earlier, he was appointed the first executive director of the (now defunct) National Academy of Performing Arts. As Director General at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, he produced a cultural troupe for representing Bangladesh abroad through music. He



Azad Rahman (1944-2020).

led a number of cultural delegations to a number of countries. It was because of his committed mentorship that we got talented artists like Firoza Begum, Sabina Yasmin, Ferdausi Rahman, Ferdous Ara, Khurshid Alam, Runa Laila, Shahnaz Rahmatullah, Anjuman Ara Begum, Nashid Kamal, and others.

He displayed a remarkable zeal and commitment through the music direction of a number of patriotic songs such as "Songram cholbe, cholbey..." He was totally committed to the Liberation War in 1971, and during that critical time he composed songs like

"Jonmo amar dhonno holo maago" to inspire the Freedom Fighters. He was in charge of music direction in a few movies including *Agantuk*, *Dossu Bonhur*, *Ananto Prem*. Also, he sang a playback song in the movie *Epar Opar*. Thus I have reasons to be fond of his music since 1966. I have been listening to the songs of Khursid Alam, Zinat Rehana, Khondoker Faruque Ahmed—"Tomar duhaat echuye shopho nilam", "Shonibar shonibar shonibar aaj", etc. These popular songs were tuned by Azad Rahman.

Azad was a regular participant in

musical interview programmes on television where he used to impart lessons in a soothing tone and always appear with a smile across his lips. On December 31, 2019, Channel-i sponsored an exclusive programme of Bangla kheyal where he taught the audience the core points of kheyal. Apart from music direction, Azad used to give lecture on music and musical theories at private universities.

Diversity was his forte. One unique feature of his musical genius is that he had, unlike many famous composers of both Bangladesh and West Bengal, the

remarkable skill of mixing the nuances of kheyal, gazal, and Lalon giti in the same song. Melody and simplicity were the dominant traits of Azad's tune. In 1977 and 1993, he was awarded twice the national prize as Best Music Director.

Another rare feature of his personality was that he could create "fusion" not just in the cultural life, but also in social life. He was an ideal husband, an affectionate father. The romantic song sung by his life partner Seilna Azad, "Moneri rongey rangabo," was extremely popular to the lovers of music. He used to help his wife in the kitchen. As an intimate friend and admirer of his music, he once invited me to dinner and claimed that a few vegetable items on the menu were prepared by himself. I saw him last in 2018 at a musical soiree, held on the Green Herald School campus, and I again met the couple at Bangabhaban the same year on the occasion of the Victory Day. He was a very humble man but he would not tolerate any debate on the validity of Bangla kheyal to which he was exceptionally dedicated.

Every song contains a melody that lingers in the minds of all, young or old. Experts in communications and music agree that music makes pleasurable sounds that communicate a message to our inner being. Azad Rahman will be remembered for his melody, simplicity, originality, and diversity. His songs will continue to inspire both the present and future generations of Bangladesh and beyond.

Dr Syed Naquib Muslim is a former secretary of the government of Bangladesh.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

TIBET ANNEXED BY CHINA

May 23, 1951

China formally annexed Tibet as an autonomous region on this day in 1951, giving rise to a Tibetan independence movement—led by the Dalai Lama, winner of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize—that continued into the early 21st century.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Castle surrounds

6 Muffin choice

10 Mumbai's nation

11 Madrid museum

12 Weighed down

13 Appraised

14 Lyric poems

15 Bump into

16 Free (of)

17 Total

18 Agreeable answer

19 Smoke alarm, e.g.

22 Writer Morrison

23 Horn sound

26 Baryshnikov, e.g.

29 Energy

32 Signal of approval

33 Sock part

34 Immediately

36 Auctioneer's cry

37 Indian coin

38 Crack up

39 Fixes copy

40 Fill with joy

41 Bears' lairs

42 Sheet material

DOWN

1 Renaissance fair address

2 Trying to lose

3 Augmented

4 Binds

5 -- Francisco

6 Lingerie items

7 Run-down

8 "Skyfall" singer

9 Network points

11 Hyped

15 Stick out

17 Academic studies

20 Conclude

21 Bird of myth

24 Footstool

25 Not in time

27 Opponent

28 Blush

29 Did kitchen work

30 Piano piece

31 Visit briefly

35 Brooklyn team

36 Songs for one

38 Hair goo

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinoin@gmail.com.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER

I USED TO LOVE SLEEPING OUTDOORS AT NIGHT, LISTENING TO THE CRICKETS, CICADAS, OWLS AND COYOTES

ZZZZZ

SNKZZ! SNORK! BZZAW! URP! SNIK

KOFF

3-21

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

THIS IS OUR LIVING ROOM...

NICE!

...AND THESE ARE THE MacPHERSONS.

THEY LIVE HERE WITH ME.

THAT'S NICE OF YOU.

A Translation from Rabindranath Tagore's Galpasamagra

Story of a Rajpath

BY NISHAT ATIYA SHOILEE

It is I, a “*rajpath*” as they say. I had to suffer the same fate as Ahalya who was cursed into becoming the unfeeling being that she was. A snake of stone, God knows for how long I had to sleep still and simply stretch, stretch, and stretch like there is no tomorrow till I found my way through the green miles of mountainous plains, brown meadows lain against lifeless plains uniting and dividing borders at the same time. With the forbearance of a deathless dead I have been gently kissing on ashes and dust, waiting for an end of days. For what seems like an eternity I have been here, resting in a vicious cycle of morbid restlessness. Not a minute of respite I could afford to grow one strand of grass on the stony wasteland I call my home; not a minute to spare so I can grow a wee wildflower of bluish hue at one corner of my crown, nor can I speak though I see it all feelingly. Footsteps—footsteps all over my ancient bones — millions of them repeating in a cacophonous nightmare. But it is also true that I can read their heart as I trace their feet. I know who is going home, who is leaving, who is out for work, who is back from work, who is about to start for a festival or being carried to the cemetery. The ones who are happy — truly happy with their lives— are bound by affection and esteem, have a certain air to their light trots and with each step, they plant a seed of hope as if every course they choose on their way feels favored and sprouts floras of all sorts. And those unfortunate ones with no home or no hopes to live by are desperately lost for I feel the utter weariness their heavy treads seem to tell, wondering just what might be the point of living a life after all. Their hardened pace further flattens the already dried skeleton I loath to call my own.

For all that, I can never claim to hear all sides of a story. For hundreds of years have I been keenly listening to laughter



and songs of so many, but it is never quite the all of it, you see! I long for the rest of what I missed but by then the storyteller is gone. I have lost count of the fragments of unheard stories that died along with my dry dust every now and then. Hold on, did you hear that? Someone just sighed in silence, “If only I could say what needed to be said!” Wait, please! I will listen, I promise! Even if they don’t! But the walker doesn’t look back, leaving behind the story and also me half-fed, vainly searching for clues. That one nameless man and his unheard tale keep me awake till the dawn sneaks in with another newcomer and their share of secrets.

Everything comes to an end on its own accord, but I do not see mine. Not one footprint can I hold onto for long as it is soon replaced by the next and leaves no trace whatsoever behind.

I am not a destination, however, and have never been. I am just the medium you choose as a part of your journey. I do not offer the comfort of a home one seeks, just the route you have to cross to reach your address. I am the one miserable surface of concrete you carelessly tread, never to stay; suffering

an existence ever-cursed and condemned by you for an effort ironically I have to make at your convenience. The hardly audible bits and pieces of your household jokes, laughter and merry songs disappear into nothingness till they reach my cold distant cemented ears, as if I am the last one to appreciate the life that you live, let alone deserve it!

But then again, perhaps it is not a complete loss after all. It’s the little children who seem to enjoy my company the most, the bringers of joy and hopefulness. They play with my dust, utter little sweet things and their light feet fluttering like butterflies all over my rigid frame suddenly seem to fill me up with a yearning for a life I never had. Ultimately, they leave, too for all do.

And I do have to admit here again that I am familiar with each and every pedestrian that walks me by and I know them for who they are. I wait for them and imagine what they might be doing at home the day they are not over here. I clearly remember those beautiful pair of sad anklets shying away from the crowd with her lips pouted and big bright eyes complaining to the evening sky as she

would pace fast along my pavement. I recall her standing often beneath that big banyan which stands still at my left end. Well, there was another who used to hum to himself before making his way straight towards the crowd. He never looked at anyone, never took a break and stopped whistling only when his feet would touch the backyard. Once he had left, the girl would have done the same, ever so softly as if not to awake anyone. When she would be closer to my side, I knew it was the nighttime slowly covering the earth leaving trails of its cold wet touch upon us. Soon it would be way past the twilight and the entire place was deserted.

The evening breeze would then softly stir the evergreen blooming bamboos,

my concrete chest as she left. The next day she was here again but not her companion. That night, she could not walk very far and fell into my lap of dirt surrendering to the inevitable. Who might you be, dear girl, and where are you from seeking refuge in me, the last place on earth to be at such an ungodly hour? What is it the universe is planning, placing you here with me? I wondered.

That was the night I met her for the last time.

Hundreds of stories like these have lived and died with me, and I have tried to keep track as diligently as it is possible. But of course, there are too many. They come and then they leave, never to stay.

And oh, the heat of the summer, if only you had known what I am talking about! Every time I breathe, I tend to forget that the sky is blue, blackened and soiled with my foulsome dirt. Be it the rich, the poor, the happy, the morose, the young, or the ancient, all but just drift, drift and drift away in the sandstorm made of their own feet till there is no sign of their existence left on my broad unkind stomach. Neither I smile, nor I mourn. No nostalgia for the past, no hopes for the present and no plans for the future, I have only got the newest cascade of human feet to entertain. Now who dares to claim a footfall the echo of which will survive the end of times, you ask? The sighs and whispers you so cautiously hide as you make your way on me, will they survive in the airy emptiness you are leaving behind, or will they mark the shadow of the new soon to replace the ghosts of your once told stories? Can the airy nothings survive the weight of the air itself? If you ask me, I will be the wrong one to answer, for all I know is that I am here and now, because I have to be.

The translator is Lecturer, DEH at ULAB. She is also Sub Editor, Star Literature Page.

The Other Side of the Divide: A Journey into the Heart of Pakistan

Sameer Arshad Khatlani. ISBN: 9789353057701. Penguin India, 2020

REVIEWED BY MITALI CHAKRAVARTY

The Other Side of the Divide by Sameer Arshad Khatlani journeys through the precarious landscape of people who live on both sides of the divide — the divide caused by the line drawn by Radcliffe in 1947 to split the subcontinent into Pakistan and India. The angst, the wounds linger on through even pandemics like COVID 19.

Was this divide a need of the Muslims or was it a result of politics beyond the comprehension of a common citizen of the Indian subcontinent, irrespective of the religion?

Sameer Arshad Khatlani, a journalist who had been with *The Times of India* during his trip, and then in *Indian Express* and now in *Hindustan Times*, journeyed to Lahore for a Peace Conference in December 2013 and in the process uncovered a story beyond the one given out. Though his book is compacted within that time period, it took years of research to write the book and it was finally published in 2020, just post the riots in Delhi and a little before COVID 19 disrupted our way of life. The book was something he wanted to do. In an earlier interview, he tells us, “I have always been very curious about Pakistan and wanted to write the book because I thought I have a unique, layered perspective that will make it compelling given the straight jacketed approach towards that country in India. The focus in India on issues that reinforce the same old view of Pakistan has left many compelling stories untold. I wanted to narrate those. Pakistan is a complex country and I thought its complexities were worth exploring in

the form of a book.”

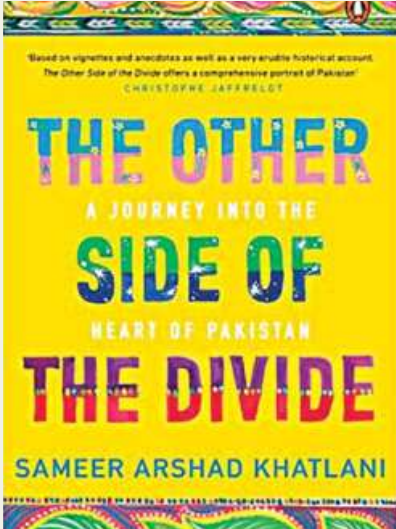
His book starts with the dilemma of Muslims who continued in India. They were not in favour of such a divide as it would upend their lives. And it did. They ended up in refugee camp. The reason given for the divide was politics per se: “Pakistan’s idea as a separate Muslim homeland—which was dismissed as ‘chimerical and impractical’ in the 1930s—now suddenly gathered steam. a tacit British support was at play—the paycheck Muhammad ali Jinnah received for backing the British war effort.”

Khatlani gives a first-person account. His family itself opposed his trip. He clarifies, their reactions or that of many Indian Muslims “can be traced to a latent legacy of wounds the subcontinent’s division inflicted on them and millions of other ordinary people.” They felt visiting Pakistan would be “rash.” Khatlani elaborates, “Like any average Indian, they hear, see and watch nothing that might humanize Pakistan. Not surprisingly, the country comes across as a hopelessly dark land because to its portrayal in the news media, the cinema, as well as the terror attacks that emanate from that country.” When he does journey across, he finds a world where “India’s ‘soft power’, the reach and impact of Bollywood, helps offset anti-India sentiments in Pakistan. It humanizes India among the Pakistani masses; many shared problems besetting the two countries thus appear to be lopsided.”

He takes us through Pakistan weaving in how Partition created ruptures where none had been. The

Radcliffe line split communities and villages. His telling is reminiscent of the fallacy described in Larry Collins’ Dominique La Pierre’s book *Freedom at Midnight* (1975). “Sometimes the line ran down the heart of a village, leaving a dozen huts in India, a dozen more in Pakistan. Occasionally it even bisected a home, leaving a front door opening onto India and a rear window looking into Pakistan.”

Khatlani factors in the human suffering sustained over the years by



the community, the aftermath. He explains how “almost all Bhanu Chak residents have roots in Alwar and Bharatpur. However, none of them had been able to travel to meet their relatives in decades.”

An interesting, fast paced, well written, nuanced to perfection, balanced, journalistic read, much like his articles, the book is an unputdownable one — a bit like a thriller. His exploration reminds

me of Dan Brown’s Prof Langdon, though Khatlani unravels lesser known facets of history and politics, unlike the thriller hero who cracks mysteries by cracking codes. Khatlani journeys through the famed Liberty and Anarkali *bazaars* of Lahore and by lanes and shuttles between taxi-drivers, liberals and artists.

He talks to the driver who was taking him around, Aziz, one of the many people whose family was forced to cross over and had “neither resources nor connections to revisit their roots. so, they relish the rare idea of talking to somebody from ‘that side’. Aziz told me that his grandfather would get emotional every time he saw a visitor from India...No bitter memories of the Partition seemed to have passed on to Aziz from the survivors of the Partition slaughter in his family. Vagaries of life have weighed down the family’s three generations, leaving them with little time to harbour any ill will.”

There are these anecdotes from the times of Mughals and earlier, gems of shared history with Pakistan that he embeds into his narrative, comments and observations of the multiplicity of languages and cultures on the other side of the divide, the open attitude of their liberals and the affection he experienced from common folks. He talks of the terror that runs through Pakistan, terror created by a revival of Kharijites “who have emerged in different forms and targeted Muslims since first rebelling against and killing Prophet Muhammad’s companion and third caliph, Usman, in the seventh century.” He concludes the book telling us “radical Kharijites

were eventually defeated but some survived. Many see a revival of radical Kharijite legacy in the late twentieth-century terrorist activities of groups like the Taliban and al- Qaeda.”

Khatlani brings in plenty of syncretic lore like during Partition, “the rubabis lost their livelihood; they had spent years learning the Sikh holy book by heart for it.” Rubabis are Muslim singers who evolved from Guru Nanak’s times and performed in Sikh shrines, like that in Amritsar. He describes temples across Pakistan, especially the Hingial Shrine in the remote mountains of Baluchistan which hosted pilgrims from across the divide in 2006. He meets Sikhs and Hindus, who have been developing Pakistan just as Muslims like A.P.J. Abul Kalam or Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed had been committed to developing India.

Interestingly, a little before Khatlani’s book was launched, a fiction on the same syncretic theme, Sahitya Akademi award winner Aruna Chakravarti’s *Suralakshmi Villa* (Feb 2020) and Avik Chanda’s best-selling historical *Dara Shukoh, the Man who would be King* (Nov 2019) invaded book shelves, taking India by storm with their focused syncretic telling of the Ganga- Yamuna tehzeeb. One of the things to ponder is why would writers of different genres within a span of four months from varied backgrounds be so focused on the same syncretic thread in Indian lore? Is there really an issue we need to address?

Mitali Chakravarty is a poet and a writer. She is also the founding editor of *Borderless journal*.



With La Liga ideally less than a month from potential restart, Real Madrid stars, including Sergio Ramos (L) and Marcelo, were sweating it out in training, trying to perfect their bicycle-kick skills.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Kante stays away from training

AFP, London

N'Golo Kante has been allowed to stay away from Chelsea's return to training due to his coronavirus fears.

The French World Cup winner joined Frank Lampard's squad on Tuesday as training resumed following a decision to allow socially distanced sessions.

But the 29-year-old missed Wednesday's small group practice with the blessing of the Chelsea manager, who is reported to have allowed him to train at home on compassionate leave.

Kante, who tested negative for the virus this week, is said to be unconvinced it is safe to train with his teammates.

The former Leicester star experienced a health scare when he collapsed at Chelsea's training ground two years ago. Tests at the time did not reveal any heart concern.

BCCI won't push for IPL over T20 World Cup

REUTERS, New Delhi



India's cricket board will not push for the Twenty20 World Cup in Australia to be postponed but would consider staging the Indian Premier League (IPL) in the October/November slot if it becomes available, a senior BCCI official has told Reuters.

This year's IPL, which is worth almost \$530 million to the BCCI, has been indefinitely postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic while the World Cup, which is scheduled to begin on Oct. 18, is also in jeopardy.

Reports in Australian media have suggested India's influential board may look to push for the World Cup to be postponed to open up a window for the IPL.

World Cup contingency plans are on the agenda at next week's International Cricket Council (ICC) board meeting but BCCI treasurer Arun Singh Dhimal said India would not be recommending it be pushed back.

"Why should the BCCI suggest

postponing the Twenty20 World Cup?" Dhimal told Reuters by telephone.

"We'll discuss it in the meeting and whatever is appropriate, (the ICC) will take a call.

"If the Australia government announces that the tournament will happen and Cricket Australia is confident they can handle it, it will be their call. BCCI would not suggest anything."

While Australia has seen new infections of the novel coronavirus slow to a trickle and is gradually easing travel curbs and social distancing restrictions, hosting a 16-team World Cup would be a Herculean task for Cricket Australia.

Dhimal questioned whether the tournament should go ahead if it had to be played without spectators and said the Australian government would play a key role in any decision.

"It all depends on what the Australian government says on this - whether they'd allow so many teams to come and play the tournament," he added.

"Will it make sense to play games without spectators? Will it make sense for CA to stage such a tournament like that? It's their call."

Cricket Australia chief executive Kevin Roberts was guarded about the prospects of staging the tournament as scheduled on Friday.

"We don't have clarity on that one, yet. But as the situation continues to improve, you never know what might be possible," he said. "It's ultimately a decision for the ICC."

The ICC has said it was unlikely to make a final call on the fate of the World Cup until August but some boards are in the process of making contingency plans in the event of a postponement.

While the BCCI recognised an open October-November window would suit the IPL, Dhimal said there was no point in making plans until there was some certainty about the World Cup.

"If we have the window available, and depending on what all can be organised, we'll decide accordingly," he added. "We can't presume that it's not happening and go on planning."

Hertha out for Union revenge

AFP, Berlin



Hertha Berlin will look to build on their winning return to Bundesliga action last weekend following the coronavirus suspension and avenge November's derby defeat by city rivals Union when the pair meet on Friday in the German capital.

Union, the side from the east of Berlin, pulled off a famous 1-0 win over their west Berlin rivals when the teams met for the first time in the top division this season.

The return match at Hertha's Olympic Stadium home would in normal times have been a 74,000 sellout.

"We all remember the match at the Alten Foersteri. It was a black, black, day. Now we've got the chance to put it behind us just a bit," said Hertha's general manager Michael Preetz.

"The conditions are very different, therefore it's a different sort of derby," added Hertha coach Bruno Labbadia, who started with a win in his first match last Saturday.

The Bundesliga became the first major European league to resume last weekend following the two-month shutdown, with draconian hygiene measures enforced at all matches across the country.

Players are undergoing regular virus tests while games are being played behind closed doors as part of strict guidelines approved by the government.

Germany's top two tiers will pay tribute to the victims of the virus outbreak over the course of the next two rounds of matches. More than 8,000 people have died in the country, which has reported over 175,000 cases of COVID-19.

Players will also wear black armbands and observe a moment of reflection before the start of each match.

Borussia Dortmund will try to keep



Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer poses with a team jersey and the number 2023, indicating the year until which he recently extended his contract. Meanwhile, Borussia Dortmund forward Erling Braut Haaland was all smiles as he aims to continue his scoring streak.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



AFP, Wellington



It has been described as New Zealand cricket's darkest day, the 1955 Test against England when the Black Caps were skittled for just 26, a record low that still stands today. 65 years later, the score still rankles with New Zealand fans, who are always on alert during a major Test collapse and death-ride the batting team hoping the record falls.

"Frankly, we'd be grateful for anyone to take this record away from us," Paul Ford, co-founder of Kiwi cricket supporters' group The Beige Brigade, told AFP. "It's ignominious, it's shameful. It would be great if someone came along and scored 25 or fewer."

Cricket's landscape in 1955 was vastly different. India had recorded their first Test victory only three years before, Pakistan debuted in Tests barely two years previously and Sri Lanka were still 27 years away from gaining Test status.

New Zealand had not yet won a Test yet, but they made England toil for an eight-wicket victory in the opening Test in Dunedin and were reasonably placed midway through the second match in Auckland, having conceded a first-innings deficit of 46 runs. But the gulf in class proved telling on a deteriorating pitch in the second innings when only one batsman, Bert Sutcliffe, reached double figures.

Five players ended the session with ducks and Sutcliffe lamented: "It seemed hardly fair that we should have been so humiliated after putting up so stout-hearted a performance for two-and-a-half days."

Reaction in New Zealand was ferocious, although captain Geoff Rabone continued to defend his side.

"It was many things, that batting display, but it was never disgraceful," he later wrote.

"Everyone gave their all and we were outgunned on the day. Everyone tried as hard as they could -- how could that be seen as disgraceful?"

De Jong not ready to play yet

AFP, Madrid



Dutch international Frenkie de Jong said Thursday he was glad to resume training with Barcelona but is "not ready to play a game yet" after a two-month stoppage because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Spanish clubs began training in groups of 10 players on Monday, in line with health protocols, as La Liga took another step towards a planned resumption next month.

"I was missing training, my teammates, playing football and all that," De Jong said in an interview. "Two or three months is a long time. It is always nice to meet up again after a separation for holidays or whatever, but it's normally just three weeks or so and this was

almost three months."

Teams in the top two divisions in Spain returned to training earlier this month, with players initially working individually as part of La Liga's staggered programme.

"I don't think I'm ready to play a game yet. We still need a few weeks of training. First individually, then in small groups and then as a whole team. We'll be ready to play again in a few weeks' time," said De Jong. "I think it was good to start by training separately because everyone worked at their own pace and could see how their fitness was before working with the rest of the group. I think everything felt good enough! It was a good build-up."

La Liga chief Javier Tebas is hopeful matches will return from June 12 but admitted the exact timing will

depend on the health authorities in Spain and the trajectory of the virus.

De Jong is held in high regard and former Dutch international Ronald de Boer said he had the potential to successfully replace Sergio Busquets.

"People said he didn't reach the level he reached with Ajax last season in Europe or with the national team," De Boer told BarcaBlog. "But not everyone can say that they play so many minutes with such a strong team, so I think he's doing well. You see how another young player like De Ligt had a harder time, while everyone thought he would play regularly from the start."

"He is a controller, you should not ask him to score 20 goals, he is not such a player. I am sure he will be a great successor to Busquets in the future."



Barcelona midfielder Frenkie de Jong was happy to finally be back in training with his teammates but admitted that he was not ready to play a competitive game, saying that would take a few more weeks.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Woakes enjoys 'normality' of training

AFP, London



England paceman Chris Woakes is glad to be suffering the "normality" of familiar aches and pains following his first bowling net practice since the coronavirus lockdown.

Warwickshire's Woakes was back at his Edgbaston home ground in Birmingham on Thursday for an hour-long stint after being chosen for an individual session.

Batsmen and wicketkeepers are due to return from June 1. The players are seeking to build up their fitness ahead of a three-Test series at home against the West Indies, which looks set to be rescheduled for July behind closed doors.

"It's what we know, it's what we do," Woakes said on Friday. "Obviously it's the job, so it was nice to have some form of normality going back to some training."

England have selected 18 bowlers to take part in individual training sessions across seven grounds, with just a physiotherapist in attendance.

Under strict health measures they are not allowed to use changing rooms and must work with a set of balls they alone can pick up.

"It looks a lot different to what we're used to," said the 31-year-old Woakes, an allrounder and veteran of 33 Tests.

"But at the same time, with what's everyone's been through, it was quite nice to be out there and do a bit of training and get the ball back in hand," the World Cup-winner added.

"Obviously not having bowled for two months, there's a few things that are sore. The sides definitely woke up this morning knowing I'd had a bowl yesterday but it was nice to be back out there."

Despite the pandemic, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) still plan to stage a full international home season that also includes three Tests against Pakistan as well as limited-overs internationals against Australia and Ireland.

Officials from touring teams have made optimistic remarks about wanting to come to England, subject to health advice, and Woakes said: "First and foremost we just hope there's going to be some form of cricket. Obviously it's going to look different, with it being behind closed doors."





Blood banks on verge of drying up

Thalassemia patients suffer as blood donation rate dips due to shutdown

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Dwindling blood donation due to the Covid-19 related shutdown is taking a heavy toll on thalassemia patients, who need frequent blood transfusions depending on their condition.

Blood banks across the country are almost running dry. While regular donors are unable to reach the banks, blood collection through camps in educational institutions are also suspended.

“Usually, I contact ‘Blood Network’ [an organisation that connects patients with donors] for a bag of B-positive blood but this time they failed to help. I finally got the blood from one of my relatives,” the father of a thalassemia patient told The Daily Star yesterday, wishing anonymity.

He fears that he may not get lucky again in finding a donor, lest the pandemic continues.

Another thalassemia patient’s mother said her son developed serious complications when they could not arrange A- negative blood on time.

He had to receive treatment at a government hospital for about a week, before a hospital staff helped collect the blood, she said, wishing anonymity.

Sayed Bodun Nesa, publicity secretary of Bangladesh Thalassemia Samity Hospital in the capital’s Green Road area, said their blood collection has reduced by 50 percent from that of regular times.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Scores of fishermen busy drawing their nets, which they had cast to gather freshly laid eggs of carp, on Chattogram’s Halda River. This photo was taken from Hathazari’s Amtua Machuaghona area yesterday morning.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

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Biggest haul of eggs from Halda in a decade

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Chattogram

Egg collectors in the Halda river have been delighted by what is this decade’s record haul of eggs in the lone natural breeding ground of carp-like fish in South Asia.

Around 25,536 kgs of eggs were collected from the river yesterday. The number was just 7,000 last year.

The eggs will be hatched in fisheries. The local administration buys a portion of the hatched fry which are then released in the Halda every year to increase the fish stock.

Ruhul Amin, upazila nirbahi officer of Hathazari upazila, told The Daily Star that he released one lakh fries into the Halda last year, adding they planned to do the same this year.

Broodfish started laying eggs early today and a full spawn occurred at 7:30 am at five points along the river.

Around 616 egg collectors took position at various point of the river since Thursday night

DIGITAL SECURITY ACT Journo held over reports on AL MP in Habiganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested Sushanta Dasgupta, editor and publisher of local newspaper Dainik Amar Habiganj, in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

Sushanta also runs a platform called Amarp. com that provides contact information about parliamentarians, and allows constituents to communicate with their representatives. The platform was developed with support from the government’s ICT Division.

Rabiul Islam, assistant superintendent of Habiganj police, said the journalist was picked up from the office of his newspaper in Chirakandi area of Habiganj town on Thursday.

Sayeduzzaman Zahir, general secretary of Habiganj Press Club, lodged the case against Sushanta and three other journalists of the newspaper, said Masuk Ali, officer-in-charge of Habiganj Police Station.

Asked about the reason for filing the case, Sayeduzzaman said, “The lawmaker from Habiganj-3, Abu Zahir, is a respected person. He is also the district Awami League president and a lifetime

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

FALLOUT FROM COVID-19

Left high and dry

87pc of 558 returnee migrant workers have no income opportunities amid shutdown, says Brac report

JAMIL MAHMUD

Some 87 percent of 558 returnee migrant workers do not have income opportunities amid the shutdown enforced to contain coronavirus spread, said a Brac Migration Programme report.

The report said the rest 13 percent are either dependent on family members or have small income from farming.

And some 10 percent returnees have taken loan from formal and informal sources.

The Brac Migration Programme launched the report, “The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on the Life and Livelihoods of Returnee Migrants”, during a virtual programme yesterday.

It conducted a telephonic survey in April in 13 districts – Dhaka, Munshiganj, Shariatpur, Tangail, Narshingdi, Cumilla, Noakhali, Sylhet, Sunamganj, Siraiganj, Rangpur, Jashore and Khulna.

The respondents, including eight percent female workers, returned between January and March. They aged from below 30 to over 50.

Eighty-six percent respondents returned in March and the others in January and February.

Forty-five percent of the workers returned from Gulf Cooperation Council countries – Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait. Of the others, 17 percent returned from Italy, 12 percent from Malaysia and nine percent from Singapore. The rest were from other countries including the UK and the US.

Nearly five lakh people returned from abroad between mid-February and mid-March. They include over 2,00,000 expatriates, the report said, citing home ministry data.

It said 34 percent of the respondents already spent their savings, 33 percent could depend on savings for next three months, and 19 percent for one to two months. Others did not share information to this end.

It added 69 percent returnees could manage their expenses from savings, while the rest depended on others or took loan.

According to the report, 84 percent returnees were uncertain about their future plan, six percent wanted to go back to their workplaces abroad and others thought about small scale agro-based business or groceries at home.

Fifty-two percent returnees were in dire

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Improve business environ, services to draw investment

Japan’s trade body comes up with advice for Dhaka in post-coronavirus times

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Japan has asked Bangladesh to have a blitz on the business environment and services to the existing Japanese companies as preconditions to come by fresh investments from the far-east Asian country.

Many Japanese companies have been looking for new destinations to move their investments from China after the Covid-19 fallout.

To attract these investors, Bangladesh needs to extend all-out support to the existing investors, Yuji Ando, representative of Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro) in Bangladesh, said in reply to an email sent by The Daily Star.

He recommended that Bangladesh should immediately launch special flights to bring back around 500 Japanese investors and high officials who returned to their country in April after the Covid-19 outbreak and extension of their visas.

“...We need supports in this regards to fully restart the operation in Bangladesh. It will contribute to increasing employment

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU’S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Reconstruction efforts making good progress



May 23, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

CONSTRUCTION OF KURMITOLA AIRPORT WILL RESUME IN JUNE

The construction work of the Kurmitola International Airport will resume in June. France will provide technical support for the project. A two-member French team headed by the chief engineer of French civil aviation is currently visiting Bangladesh. They have submitted a survey report to Bangladesh civil aviation authority. The Tk 22-crore project will be completed within four years. The delegation also

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Renowned German journalist, writer and activist Gisela Bonn calls on Bangabandhu at Bangabhaban on 23 May, 1972.

Coronavirus roils world economy

Chinese premier warns of immense challenges; job losses mount from shutdowns in US

AGENCIES

China warned yesterday that its huge economy faces an immense challenge from the coronavirus, as the ongoing pandemic and national lockdowns caused massive job losses in the US and Latin America.

As Beijing’s communist rulers failed to set an annual growth target for the first time in decades, Asian markets fell, further battered by Chinese moves to crackdown on Hong Kong’s treasured autonomy.

New coronavirus infections have begun to dip in much of the world, but the economic damage from the pandemic is only just beginning, and the disease is continuing its deadly march in Latin America and Russia.

Governments are still struggling to balance measures to prevent the virus -- and head off a feared possible second wave of infections -- with moves to reopen their battered economies.

Britain confirmed yesterday that it would impose a 14-day quarantine on international arrivals in addition to its ongoing social distancing rules, but US President Donald Trump is pressing to reopen his country’s economy.

Russia meanwhile, reported its highest ever daily coronavirus death toll of 150, suggesting the novel coronavirus is not yet under control in the world’s biggest country by area.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A crowd of people seeking relief materials forcing open the collapsible gate at BNP’s Naya Paltan head office in the capital yesterday morning. The opposition party was handing out relief goods to eligible card-holders as aid to the underprivileged to ease economic hardships during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The relief-seekers were asked to line up outside the office to collect the materials, but their sheer volume and desperation caused them to rush inside.

PHOTO: SHEIKH ENAMUL HAQ



PRAYER TIMING MAY 23
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 3-43 12-45 5-00 6-42 8-00
JAMAAT 3-53 1-15 5-15 6-52 8-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



MILK GOODNESS FROM EUROPE

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

| RAMADAN | MAY | SEHRI | IFTAR |
|---------|-----|-------|-------|
| 29 | 23 | 6:42 | 8:00 |
| 30 | 24 | 3:42 | 6:42 |