



The Daily Star



REGD. No. DA 781

Vol. XXX No. 130

Jaishta 16, 1427 BS

Your Right to Know

SHAWWAL 6, 1441 HJRI

12 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00

BANGLADESH UPDATE

2,523
New cases in 24hrs

42,844
Total cases

582
Deaths

9,015
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

359,532
Deaths

5,846,653
Total cases

New jobs dry up amid shutdown

ADB study finds 87pc decline in April job postings in Bangladesh compared to last year's data; sharp fall in textile, manufacturing sector jobs

REJAU KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

New job postings nosedived 87 percent year-on-year in April on the leading job search sites in Bangladesh, highlighting the strain the country's labour market has been going through because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The number of job postings dropped sharply from the third week of March, a week after the first cases of Covid-19 were confirmed, and after the ongoing nationwide shutdown was enforced, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said in a brief note yesterday.

The brief reported on a rapid assessment of labour demand in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to help understand the impact of coronavirus on the countries' job market.

Relative to December last year, the number of new job postings in Bangladesh was approximately the same in January and 10 percent to 17 percent fewer in February and the first and second weeks of March this year, according to the report.

It fell to 59 percent in the third week of March and 24 percent in the fourth week,

it said. Year-on-year, monthly job postings were 35 percent fewer in March and 87 percent fewer in April, although job postings in February were only 1 percent fewer, the brief report said.

A job posting is an advertisement created by an employer or a company seeking to hire an employee for a position.

While online job portal data are not representative of the entire labour market, they can readily capture the impact on labour demand caused by Covid-19 lockdowns, the ADB said.

There are several job search sites and these real-time data could guide social protection and labour policies for better targeting within a limited fiscal space, it said.

In addition, as economic activities are gradually resuming under the "new normal," online job portal data could be continuously monitored in the coming months to assess the progress of economic recovery, the brief said.

The data for the brief came from bdjobs.com, one of the leading online job portals in Bangladesh in terms of number of job

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

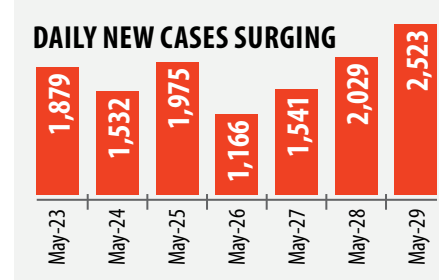


Crammed with people bound for Dhaka, a ferry reaches Shimulia Ferry Terminal in Munshiganj yesterday. With movement of public transport suspended, thousands are returning to their workplaces using different modes of transport after celebrating Eid at their village homes. Travelling like this is putting people at risk of contracting Covid-19.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A big leap in new cases

2,523 test positive in 24hrs as highest number of tests conducted



MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Just two days before the ongoing nationwide shutdown is relaxed, 2,523 people tested Covid-19 positive in the country yesterday, the highest number yet in Bangladesh in a single day.

Yesterday also saw the highest number of tests conducted in a 24-hour period.

Twenty-three more people died from coronavirus infection during that period, according to Directorate General of Health Services.

The death toll now stands at 582, and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Bus owners push for doubling fares

Say they have to carry fewer passengers to ensure health safety; road transport services to resume Monday on a limited scale

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

With buses set to hit the roads from Monday, transport owners have started asking for permission to double the fares, because the vehicles would carry fewer passengers to prevent coronavirus transmission.

A top leader of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association placed the proposal at a meeting with officials at BRTA head office in the capital yesterday, over two months after public transport was suspended.

The new fares would be decided today by a committee led by the chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) at another meeting, according to Nazrul Islam, secretary of Road Transport and Bridges Division.

Yesterday's meeting presided over by Nazrul and attended by transport association leaders, and police and other officials, happened a day after the government announced that transport services would resume from May 31 on a limited scale in adherence to health guidelines.

The demand for raising travelling costs comes at a time when income of many people has dramatically reduced due to the shutdown of the economy on March 26 to contain the spread of Covid-19 in the country.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity yesterday urged the government to cut fuel prices instead of allowing transport companies to charge more.

It pointed out that oil prices fell in the international market, and stopping extortion in the sector would save operational costs.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Airlines prepare to partially resume flights

To follow health guidelines, keep at least 30pc seats vacant on each flight

RASHIDUL HASAN

The national airline Biman and two local airlines -- US-Bangla Airlines and Novoair -- are preparing to resume domestic flight operation from June 1 following the health guideline prescribed by the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

Each of Biman and Novoair is planning to operate seven flights every day while US-Bangla is preparing for 10 daily flights, sources said.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism M Mahubul Ali yesterday urged all air passengers to strictly follow the health regulations and social distancing directives while travelling.

Biman's Deputy General Manager Tahera Khandoker said, "We will operate morning and evening flights to Chattogram and Sylhet and three flights to Saidpur daily from June 1 using our Dash 8Q400 aircraft."

US-Bangla Airlines General Manager Kamrul Islam said they had a plan to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Money whitening scope to widen

Govt looks for fund to revive economy

REJAU KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

The government may allow uses of untaxed or black money in all sectors to boost investment and create jobs as part of its efforts to pull the economy out of Covid-19 wreckage.

According to an official of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), the government high-ups were looking for ways that could bring the huge amount of untaxed money back to the economy as investments.

Black money is largely attributed to tax evasion and its direct impact is the loss of government revenue. For the last five years, black money-holders have been able to whiten their assets by investing in residential buildings for by paying a tax of 10 per cent on the amount invested, which for regular taxpayers is between 10 and 30 per cent.

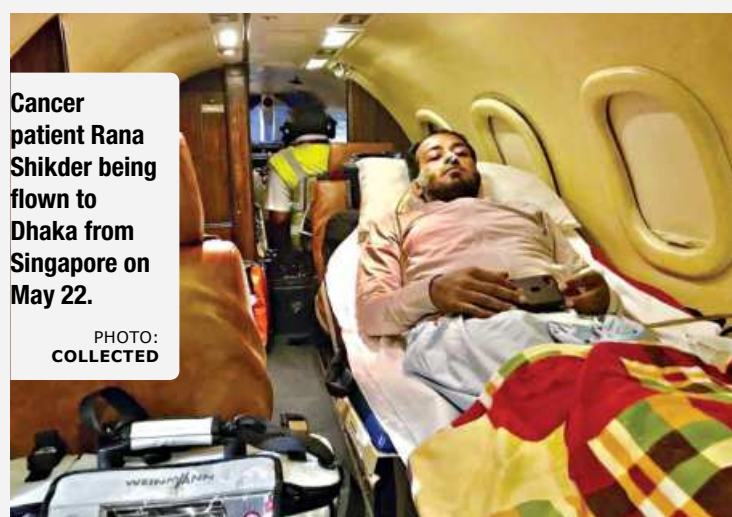
But from the current fiscal year, economic zones and hi-tech parks were added to the list. Black money-holders do not face any question about the sources of their income if they invest in the sectors.

The scheme will be open till June 2024. However, the response has not been encouraging.

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank in Dhaka, said "This is an instrument that has miserably failed to achieve its objectives of raising revenue for the government while inducing investments into productive sectors. It has been there in one form or other in every budget under all governments."

"We need to have a clear understanding of why it has not worked." One reason, according to Zahid Hussain, is because it has become an opportunity for whitening undeclared income. There is no specific timeline within which the facility can be availed at concessional tax terms and beyond which severe penalties will be imposed if caught.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Cancer patient Rana Shikder being flown to Dhaka from Singapore on May 22.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

From Singapore with love

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

At 32, Rana Shikder is waiting for death, but he is content because he is at home.

When he does slip off this mortal coil, Rana will have his loved ones beside him instead of being thousands of miles away in a cold, anonymous hospital bed. And he has Cynthia Goh to thank for it.

Like millions of other migrant workers seeking their fortune, Rana left

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

CHARTERED FLIGHTS
Sohail Rahman,
Morshed Khan,
wives off to UK

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Beximco Chairman Sohail F Rahman and former BNP leader M Morshed Khan along with their wives left for the UK on chartered planes amid coronavirus travel restrictions.

Sohail F Rahman, chairman of Beximco Ltd, and his wife left for the United Kingdom around 1:30pm yesterday, said

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

KILLING OF 26 BANGLADESHIS IN LIBYA

Dhaka for quick probe, punishment of killers

JAMIL MAHMUD and PORIMOL PALMA

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the government demanded the Libyan authorities quickly investigate and punish those who killed 26 Bangladeshis and four Africans in a "revenge attack."

Dhaka also demanded compensations for the families of those killed and injured, he said in a statement.

Momen said the Libyan interior ministry has already ordered an investigation and arrest of the killers.

Meanwhile, officials at the Bangladesh mission in Tripoli said the Bangladeshi migrants, who were killed at the hands of suspected human traffickers in a Libyan city on Thursday, were taken to the North African country en route to Italy via the Mediterranean Sea.

They landed in Libya early this year prior to the Covid-19 outbreak. The country was being used as a transit point to reach Italy, said officials.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

আমরা শোকাহত

শমরিতা হাসপাতাল লিমিটেড এর মাননীয় চেয়ারম্যান এবং সাবেক সংসদ সদস্য জনাব আলহাজ্ব মোঃ মকবুল হোসেন গত ২৪ মে ২০২০ ইং তারিখ রাত ৯.১০ মিনিটে ঢাকার সম্মিলিত সামরিক হাসপাতালে ইচ্ছাকৃত করণে (বিনািল্লাহি ওয়া ইন্না ইলাইহি রাজিউন) আমরা শমরিতা হাসপাতালের সকল কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীবৃন্দ মরতুমের বিদেহী আত্মার মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি। এবং তার শোকসন্তপ্ত পরিবারের জন্য শান্তি কামনা করছি।

শমরিতা হাসপাতাল লিমিটেড
৩৯/২, পাছপাথ-ঢাকা



TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Bangladesh, 1986.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Old Photographs

While in lockdown I pulled out my old black and white negatives. These are photographs of Bangladesh I took during vacations home while I was living and working in California's Silicon Valley. From 1984 to 1999, whenever I came home, I spent my days wandering the streets of Dhaka taking photographs. If possible I also went outside the city - outskirts of Dhaka, a boat trip to Chittagong, trips to our family home in Sylhet, as well as to plantations owned by our family.

After each trip I returned to California and reported back to my engineering job. But I spent free weekends carefully processing the film, making sure all those scenes of Bangladesh were "developed." I stored the negatives - cut into strips - in cellophane sleeves to prevent them sticking to one another. When working with them - to make black and white enlargements - I followed an analogue workflow with the negative. That required looking at the contact sheets through a magnifier and picking out a "good one" to work with.

Today I no longer have access to the tools and chemicals needed for printing my negatives. In any case, working with digital cameras, I have become accustomed to a digital workflow, which is much more powerful and flexible than the analogue one.

But how can I apply digital workflow to those old negatives which have been sitting idle? I need those negatives in my computer, and for this I must convert them into digital pictures using a scanner. Over the years I had shied away from this tedious and lengthy work. However encouraged by a favourite cousin who loves my work, I started doing this

during the lockdown. I used a low-quality but fast scanner built around a point-and-shoot camera.

And so I found myself in a topsy-turvy ride through the years - as Bangladesh revealed herself to me, again and again, through various guises, changing every time I looked through the camera. For example, in 1984, I often walked into a village on a weekday and found myself surrounded by children eager to be photographed. But during the 1990s I could hardly find village children as most of them were at schools, many operated by BRAC.

There were photographs of relatives and friends - often a quick snapshot during an office encounter or a chance meeting in the street - that flooded my mind with memories. Family photographs - particularly with my departed parents and relatives - filled me with good memories and wistfulness.

What subjects attracted me those days? Undoubtedly the children and their boundless energy was the one constant motif running through fourteen years. It was almost like I wanted to re-live my own childhood here, over and over again. I was also attracted to street art of various forms: rickshaws, movie billboards, graffiti and advertisements. One particular trip, watching Dhaka expand rapidly mostly through the hard work of manual labourers, I photographed that. Another trip I decided to photograph tea workers in our plantation.

So now I have a window into a time of our country before it changed dramatically. I hope to make something of it one day, but I am not sure what.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabir on Instagram.

FIRST TIME IN UN HISTORY Biman carries Bangladeshi peacekeepers

UNB, Dhaka

For the first time in the United Nations Peacekeeping history, the UN chartered a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight, the flagship carrier of the country, for carrying Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

This comes as a true recognition of Bangladesh's invaluable contribution to the UN Peacekeeping operations for more than three decades, said Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations yesterday.

The Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the UN remained deeply engaged with the UN Headquarters for coordination and finalisation of the agreement, which culminated in achieving this milestone.

Earlier, the Bangladesh Biman flight carrying a contingent of 179 Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers from Bangladesh Army and Air Force departed from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka for the capital city of Central African Republic, Bangui.

The contingent is composed of 125 members of the Armed Utility Helicopter Unit, 20 members of the Advance Party of Quick Reaction Force Company, and 34 members of Stranded Peacekeepers.

Currently, 6,543 Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers are deployed in nine several missions, among them 1,061 are working in MINUSCA, which started operation on April 10, 2014.

An unwavering commitment Covid-positive BITID lab chief awaits recovery

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

In isolation, all Prof Dr Shakeel Ahmed thinks about is rejoining the fight against Covid-19. At the same time, he has also made sure that the work continues during his absence.

The in-charge of BITID Covid-19 testing lab in Chattogram himself tested positive on May 26.

"I will be available over the phone and will guide them with necessary instructions," he told this correspondent.

He had not been feeling well since May 23. But with the number of samples increasing every day in Chattogram, Dr Shakeel powered through it and continued.

On May 26, he decided to test his own sample and found the result positive.

Still, he decided not to leave the workplace immediately as he was working on 331 samples on that day. "I wanted to finish my pending work; many patients were eagerly waiting for their reports for three to four days," he told The Daily Star.

"By afternoon, I came to know that I was Covid-19 positive but I worked till 11pm to complete pending work," he said.

Of the 331 samples, a total of 51 showed positive for Covid-19 that day.

"I prepared test reports, signed those and then left the lab to go into isolation," he said, adding, "I even signed my own report that showed Covid-19 positive."

Asked about the safety of other doctors and assistants in the laboratory, Prof Shakeel said he was not infected there. "I was infected by a patient at BITID hospital," he said.

"As I have to work around 14 hours everyday, I have to go outside the lab. The hospital compound is overcrowded with patients; many of them do not even use face masks."

"In the lab, we all use PPE and there is a slim chance of contamination," he said. "Please pray for me so that I can rejoin the battle against Covid-19 soon."

BITID is the first institution in Chattogram where Covid-19 test was introduced on March 25 under the leadership of Prof Shakeel.

All the samples from at least six districts under Chattogram division were tested in the laboratory until tests were introduced in more institutions in the division.



Dr Shakeel Ahmed



As operation of public transport is set to resume tomorrow, owners and workers are busy preparing their vehicles to ply on the roads. Experts, however, are discouraging the move amid rising infections and deaths. They say resumption of such transport will only exacerbate the already terrible situation, as citizens must come in close contact with each other, increasing the risk of transmission. These photos were taken from the capital's Kamalapur and Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED, PRABIR DAS

Crocodile Juliet lays 52 eggs at Karamjal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Crocodile Juliet has laid 52 eggs at the Karamjal Wildlife Breeding Centre in the Chandpai Range of the Eastern Sundarbans yesterday morning.

Juliet laid the eggs beside the pond of the breeding centre, Azad Kabir, in-charge of Karamjal Wildlife Breeding Centre in the Sundarbans, told The Daily Star.

"Of the eggs, 14 were kept in Juliet's own cage, 26 in old incubator and 12 in the new incubator," he said, hoping the eggs will hatch in 85 to 90 days. He said they are using natural methods and expecting a good outcome.

Earlier on May 9, 2019, Juliet had laid 44 eggs.

Karamjal Wildlife Breeding Centre started its journey in 2000 while crocodiles started laying eggs there from 2005. So far, 292 crocodile offspring were born in Karamjal at different times, he said.

Of these, 195 cubs are still in the cage while 97 were released in various rivers and canals of the forest, the official added.

Reopening will pose more risk to public health: Mahila Parishad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad yesterday expressed deep concerns over reopening of government offices and public transport amid the increasing number of Covid-19 patients and deaths.

"We are surprised to note that at a time when the number of coronavirus-infected patients in the country is increasing day by day and the death tally is getting longer, the government has announced to open public transport including government, non-government and autonomous organisations in limited scale from May 31," read a statement by the organisation.

The government's decision to keep markets open conditionally on one hand and to ban movement of people on the other seems to be a reflection of lack of coordination, it said, adding that the notification to open office and public transport at

this time will put public life at a higher risk.

The government shut down most public and private offices, and all public transport from March 26 and extended it till May 30 in several phases.

On Thursday, the Ministry of Public Administration issued a notification announcing the end of the temporary shutdown.

Meanwhile, the government's technical committee on coronavirus and other health experts and the World Health Organization have said the only way to prevent the spread of Covid-19 infection is to maintain social distancing and adhere to hygiene rules.

"Bangladesh Mahila Parishad is demanding reconsideration of the notification by extending the shutdown and implementing a strict lockdown across the country," read the statement signed by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Acting President Fawzia Moslem and its General Secretary Maleka Banu.

Prince Charles condoles losses due to Amphan

UNB, Dhaka

Prince Charles in a letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed sympathy over the losses caused by super-cyclone Amphan in Bangladesh.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim said Charles, the prince of Wales, wrote the letter on behalf of himself and his wife Duchess of Cornwall Camilla.

"My wife and I wanted you to know how deeply we feel for the people of Bangladesh following the loss of lives and utter devastation caused by cyclonic storm Amphan," Charles wrote in the letter.

Prince Charles said their hearts go out to all those who have been so cruelly bereaved or injured, or whose homes have been swept away.

"We understand how dreadfully difficult this must have been, as your people prepared to celebrate what should have been a joyful Eid," he wrote in the letter.

"Our greatest possible sympathy and our special prayers are with the people of Bangladesh at such a desperately anxious time, as you battle against the effects of both the Covid-19 pandemic and this appallingly severe storm," he added.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Shoppers pass through a disinfected tunnel to enter the kitchen market in Motijheel's AGB colony in the capital. With movement restrictions eased from Sunday, more and more people are likely to get out, and such markets will possibly see higher footfall. The World Health Organization has recently advised against spraying people with disinfectant, citing health reasons and ineffectiveness of the method, but the message does not seem to have reached many. In being cautious against the coronavirus, such well-intended malpractices could jeopardise public health if information is not disseminated properly. The photo was taken yesterday.

Mango, litchi, veggies to be included as relief

Govt directs deputy commissioners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has directed the deputy commissioners to add mango, litchi and vegetables to the list of relief items for the destitute to tackle the Covid-19 situation.

The Disaster Management and Relief Affairs Ministry on Thursday came up with the direction while allocating Tk 6.30 crore and 9,750 tonnes of rice to the deputy commissioners of 64 districts to operate the ongoing relief activities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the direction, the ministry said, "Vegetables, mangoes and litchis can be bought and distributed as relief items." Besides, the ministry also said each relief recipient may be requested to plant at least five trees.

On May 16, Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque in a virtual meeting with experts, business leaders and economists had requested the authorities concerned for marketing seasonal fruits and agricultural products, including mangoes and litchis, during this time of crisis.

The meeting had also decided to include mangoes, litchis and other fruits along with essential items as relief so that the growers do not have to worry about their summer fruits due to the transport crisis amid shutdown.

The meeting also said poor people who had lost their jobs due to Covid-19, will also get nutrition if seasonal fruits are included in the relief items.

Later, the Ministry of Agriculture sent a letter to the ministries concerned, requesting them to include seasonal fruits in the relief materials.

Online concert for Ranesh Thakur today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

To protest the incineration of Baul Ranesh Thakur's music room, a group of Bangladeshis in different countries are organising an online solidarity concert today.

The "Solidarity Concert for Baul Ranesh Thakur" will be broadcast live on the Facebook pages of Das and Co., Nagarnat, and Sylhettoday24.com from 8pm.

To stand by Ranesh and all baul musicians living under duress, renowned musicians will perform at the online event.

Ujjal Das, coordinator of the programme, said, "This concert is not only to protest the heinous attack on Baul Ranesh Thakur's house, but also to protest the continuous attack on Baul musicians of Bangladesh."

Performers include Baul Shofi Mandal, Bappa Mazumder, Rahul Ananda, Sayed Hasan Tipu, and Baul Basir Uddin Sarkar. They will be joined by Ashiquzzaman Tulu from Canada, Sohini Alam from the UK, along with artists based in India, Australia, and Germany.

Buy paddy, not rice

A study on govt's Boro procurement suggests this will increase market price of paddy

PINAKI ROY
To ensure fair prices for Boro farmers, the government under its procurement programme should only buy paddy from the growers instead of rice from millers, a study suggested.

It showed that last year the market price of Boro paddy could have increased by 45 percent had the government purchased only paddy from farmers for its rice stock.

Analysing last year's data, the research, titled "Boro Rice Procurement in Bangladesh: Implications for Policy" revealed that rice procurement from millers accounted for 81.1 percent of total government procurement.

The remaining 18.9 percent of the procurement was purchased in the form of paddy from farmers.

In 2019, the government bought four lakh tonnes of paddy from farmers at Tk 26 per kg and 11.5 lakh tonnes of rice from millers at Tk 36 per kg.

Only 1.34 percent of all farmers, who sold Boro last year, could supply their produce to the government depots.

Others sold Boro paddy for an average of Tk 15.4 per kg in the open market.

This prompted the Ministry of Agriculture to commission the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to conduct a research on the government's Boro paddy procurement, said Akhter Ahmed, country representative, IFPRI Bangladesh.

Last week, the study, funded by the United States Agency
SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Farmers carrying the Boro harvest that was submerged under collected rainwater in a field in Sylhet's Companiganj yesterday. Heavy rainfall over the past few days has inundated the farmlands of the area. This photo was taken in Companiganj's Khagail area.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

India's virus death toll tops that of China

The Americas, Russia see surge in deaths

AGENCIES

India's coronavirus death toll passed neighbouring China's yesterday, with 175 new fatalities in 24 hours taking the total to 4,706, according to official data.

India, home to some of the world's most packed cities and a creaking healthcare system, is emerging as a new hotspot with record jumps in new cases in recent days.

Figures from India's health ministry showed 165,799 infections, with western Maharashtra state -- home to the finance hub of Mumbai -- accounting for 36 percent of cases and 42 percent of deaths.

China, where the deadly virus emerged late last year, reported no new deaths or new suspected cases yesterday, with the toll still at 4,634 and a total of 82,995 infections.

Even though the number
SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

First treaty with the US inked



A French delegation calls on Bangabandhu at Bangabhaban on 30 May, 1972.

May 30, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

JUTE EXPORT NATIONALISED

The government has taken a decision to nationalise export of jute, informs Commerce Minister MR Siddiqi today at a meeting organised by the Bangladesh Jute Association. A Jute Export Corporation will be set up soon, he adds, which will handle all the exports of jute abroad. It will also explore new markets for Bangladeshi jute products. Existing jute exporters can work as agents of the Corporation. The main reason behind this government move, says the minister, is to check corruption in the jute sector and ensure fair price for jute producers.

TK 66 CR AMERICAN AID FOR BANGLADESH

Donald G MacDonald, deputy director of USAID, today informs
SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Zia's death anniversary today

UNB, Dhaka

The BNP will observe the 39th death anniversary of its founder and former president Ziaur Rahman today.

The BNP and pro-BNP socio-political organisations have drawn up different programmes, including online discussions, and distribution of food and clothes among the destitute, to mark the day.

Zia founded the party in 1978. He was assassinated by some army officers at Chittagong Circuit House on May 30, 1981.

Born on January 19, 1936, in Bogura's Bagbari, Zia was a sector
SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

TREATING COVID-19 PATIENTS

Expand scope for plasma therapy

Health experts urge govt, say this could save lives

PORIMOL PALMA

Medical experts have urged the government to undertake a national programme to expand the scope of convalescent plasma therapy for treating Covid-19 patients as the method has been gaining traction for its effectiveness.

The technical sub-committee on Covid-19 diagnosis and laboratory observed that there is a huge demand for the therapy and recommended that the government take action so that the people can have better access to the treatment.

The committee said public and private hospitals with necessary equipment can collect plasma and administer the therapy.

But there should be a regulatory body to guide and monitor the whole process, said a member of the sub-committee that made the recommendations at a meeting on May 20.

"Plasma of 21 people who recovered from Covid-19 has been collected at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. So far, 18 patients have received the therapy," said Prof MA Khan, haematologist at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

He said it was not possible for DMCH alone to meet the increasing demand for the therapy and recommended that the other hospitals be involved.

He also encouraged the initiatives of some private hospitals that have been collecting, supplying and administering the therapy.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra Founder and Trustee Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, who tested Covid-19 positive on May 24, has also received the plasma therapy.

The 79-year old physician, also a kidney patient, said he found plasma therapy very effective and that his organisation had decided to establish a plasma bank.

"Plasma therapy works like magic. I have realised it after receiving the therapy. I felt much energised after the therapy [on Thursday]. All patients should have access to this therapy," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Convalescent Plasma therapy can quickly develop a passive immune system in a patient's body which helps the person to fight against the virus, said Prof Khan, who is also the head of the technical
SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Mammoth skeletons found at airport site in Mexico City



REUTERS, Zumpango

Alongside construction crews racing to build the Mexican capital's new airport, skulls and curving tusks of massive mammoths peek through the dirt as archaeologists dig up more and more bones belonging to the ice age's most famous mammal.

The latest discoveries include two huge skulls, along with scattered ribs and limbs, found just inside the perimeter of where a new civilian airport is being built, about 30 miles (50km) north of downtown Mexico City.

To date, some 70 individual
SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Three more die with Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

At least three men died in the last two days with what appeared to be Covid-19 in Madaripur and Noakhali.

In Madaripur town, a 40-year-old man of Housedi area died at the isolation ward of Madaripur General Hospital yesterday morning.

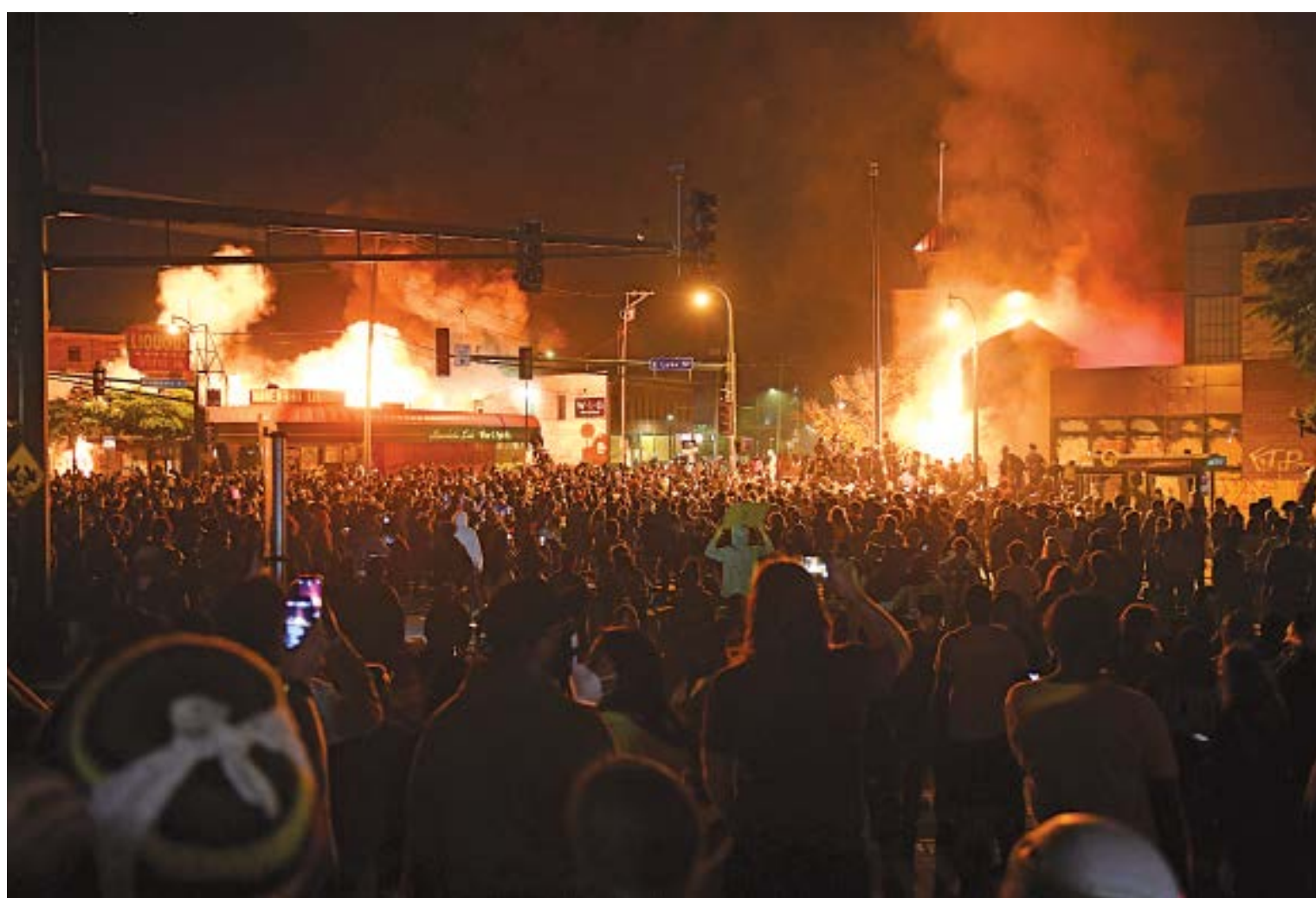
He was admitted to the hospital on Wednesday with fever and breathing difficulties, but the symptoms kept getting worse afterwards, said
SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



PRAYER TIMING MAY 30

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-43 8-05
JAMAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-47 8-35

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Hundreds of demonstrators gather near the Minneapolis Police third precinct during the third day of demonstrations in response to the death of African-American man George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, US, on Thursday night.

PHOTO: REUTERS

POLICE BRUTALITY IN US Troops deployed amid raging riots

Police station set on fire in Minneapolis, shops looted as anger over killing of Afro-American man spread across the country

AGENCIES

Hundreds of troops deployed to the streets of Minneapolis and St. Paul early yesterday after a third night of rioting over police brutality against African Americans left hundreds of shops damaged and a police station on fire.

After the angry demonstrations spread overnight to multiple US cities, from New York to Phoenix, President Donald Trump blasted local officials and labelled the protestors "thugs" and threatened a harsh crackdown.

Black leaders continued to express outrage over the videotaped death of George Floyd, 46, while handcuffed on the ground and in custody of Minneapolis police on Monday. He died after one officer kneeled on his neck for more than five minutes.

"People are angry they are frustrated because this is not the first police killing they have seen around the country," Al Sharpton, a prominent black rights activist, told MSNBC.

Trump indicated he would counter more street violence with more troops on the streets.

"These THUGS are dishonoring the memory of George Floyd, and I won't let that happen," Trump tweeted.

"Just spoke to (Minnesota) Governor Tim Walz and told him that the Military is with him all the way. Any difficulty and we will assume control but, when the looting starts, the shooting starts."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Mahathir expelled from his own party

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's ruling party on Thursday terminated the membership of his predecessor Mahathir Mohamad, a move widely seen as an attempt to consolidate power as he faces a possible challenge to his nascent premiership. Mahathir, 94, had said he would seek to oust Muhyiddin from office for making a "backdoor arrangement" that brought back into power a graft-tainted party rejected by voters in an election in 2018. In a letter circulated widely on social media, the party stated that Mahathir automatically ceased to be a member after he made a show of rejecting Muhyiddin's leadership as prime minister and party president by sitting with the opposition when parliament met last week. Similar letters were also issued to Mahathir's son and party deputy president, Mukhriz, and three others aligned with the former prime minister. An aide to Muhyiddin confirmed the letters were authentic. Mahathir's office declined an immediate response to a request for comment as it had not yet seen the letter itself, an aide said.

'When the looting starts, the shooting starts'

Twitter hides Trump's tweet over protests in Minneapolis for 'glorifying violence'; executive order signed targeting social media

AFP, Washington

Twitter yesterday concealed one of Donald Trump's tweets for "glorifying violence," ramping up a dispute with the US president who says social media companies censor conservative voices like his.

In a move bound to infuriate one of the platform's most followed users, Twitter said it was placing a "public interest notice" on a Trump message about protests in Minneapolis over the death of an unarmed black man at the hands of the police.

In a late night tweet, Trump wrote: "These THUGS are dishonoring the memory of George Floyd, and I won't let that happen. Just spoke to Governor Tim Walz and told him that the Military is with him all the way. Any difficulty and we will assume control but, when the looting starts, the shooting starts. Thank you!"

Hours later, the micro-messaging platform hid the tweet behind a message that said it "violates our policies regarding the glorification of violence based on the historical context of the last line, its connection to violence, and the risk it could inspire similar actions today."

"As is standard with this notice, engagements with the Tweet will be limited. People will be able to Retweet with Comment, but will not be able to Like, Reply or Retweet it."

Users could still click through and view the full unedited tweet.

Trump, who has more than 80 million followers on Twitter, lashed out at the platform on Thursday, signing an executive order seeking to strip social media giants of legal immunity for content they carry.

The order calls on government regulators to evaluate if they should



PHOTO: REUTERS

A woman gestures during a protest against the police brutality on an African-American man George Floyd, in Denver, Colorado, on Thursday.

be eligible for liability protection for content posted by their millions of users.

The move, which was slammed by critics as a legally dubious act of political revenge, came after Twitter labelled two earlier Trump tweets -- on the increasingly contentious topic of mail-in voting -- as misleading.

If enforced, the action would upend decades of precedent and treat internet platforms as "publishers" potentially liable for user-generated content.

Trump told reporters at the White House he acted because big tech firms "have had unchecked power to censor, restrict, edit, shape, hide, alter any form of communication between private citizens or large public audiences."

"We can't let this continue to happen," Trump said.

Critics said however Trump has no authority to regulate private internet operators or change the law, known

as Section 230, which backers say has allowed online platforms like Facebook and Twitter to flourish.

While the Trump order would not prevent platforms from moderating content, it could open them up to a flood of lawsuits from anyone who claims to be harmed by content posted online.

"Social media can be frustrating. But an Executive Order that would turn the FCC into the President's speech police is not the answer," said Jessica Rosenworcel, a Democratic member of Federal Communications Commission, one of the agencies tasked with enforcing the executive order.

Internet firms have denied Trump's claims of bias, and point to his massive social media following. But the president's move plays into his narrative ahead of his difficult November reelection battle that liberal forces are trying to censor Republicans.

'Double-edged sword'

HK warns US over removal of city's special status

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Hong Kong told the United States to keep out of the debate over national security legislation being imposed by China, and warned that withdrawal of the financial hub's special status under US law could backfire on the US economy.

President Donald Trump is due to announce later yesterday his response to the Chinese parliament's advancement this week of security legislation for Hong Kong, which many lawyers, diplomats and investors fear could erode the city's freedoms.

The former British colony has been racked by civil unrest amid fears Beijing is curbing the high degree of autonomy it has enjoyed under a "one country, two systems" formula adopted when it returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

"Any sanctions are a double-edged sword that will not only harm the interests of Hong Kong but also significantly those of the US," Hong Kong's pro-Beijing government said late on Thursday.

From 2009 to 2018, the US trade surplus of

\$297 billion with Hong Kong was the biggest among all Washington's trading partners, and 1,300 US firms were based in the city, it said.

Beijing says the new legislation, likely to come into force before September, will tackle secession, subversion, terrorism and foreign interference in the city. It could also see Chinese intelligence agencies set up bases in Hong Kong.

Chinese authorities and Hong Kong's government say the legislation poses no threat to the city's autonomy and the interests of foreign investors would be preserved.

Reacting to US efforts to call a UN Security Council meeting over Hong Kong, China's foreign ministry reiterated on Friday that Hong Kong was an internal affair and no country had the right to interfere.

It said China had lodged solemn representations to countries condemning its plans and was determined to take countermeasures against any US actions.

Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States are among the countries that have condemned the proposed security legislation.

Hong Kong tells United States to stay out of its affairs

Trump expected to make China announcement later today

China security ministry to "direct" Hong Kong police

Advertisement for Amaranthus 3 Bedroom Apartments at Bashundhara Residential Area. Includes contact info: Call on 16687, Or Mobile: 01714 016717, 01713 367486, 01713 098449. Asset Developments & Holdings Ltd, 91 Gulshan Avenue.



Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen visits a bookstore of Lam Wing-kee, a bookseller from Hong Kong who in 2015 was detained in China for allegedly bringing banned books into the mainland, in Taipei, on Thursday. Sitting by a wall in front of banner reading "Free Hong Kong, revolution now" in the tiny shop, Tsai expressed support for the Hong Kong's democracy movement and reiterated her pledge to assist fleeing Hong Kong citizens. "Free Taiwan supports freedom in Hong Kong," Tsai wrote in a sticky note posted on a bookshelf.

PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN brief

Taliban attack kills 14 Afghan forces

AFP, Kabul

Taliban fighters stormed an Afghan border post yesterday, killing at least 14 security force members, the insurgents and officials said, the latest in a series of attacks since the end of a brief ceasefire. Despite the clashes, Afghan authorities have vowed to press on with efforts to help reduce violence following the temporary pause in fighting. Officials had also accused the Taliban of carrying out two other raids on separate checkpoints on Thursday, killing 14 Afghan security force members.

Poll: Americans trust Trump on economy

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump is trusted more than Democratic nominee Joe Biden to handle the economy, polls show, even with more than 40 million Americans filing jobless claims and growth stalled due to the coronavirus pandemic. Though the former vice president has an edge on Trump in overall support ahead of the Nov. 3 election, Reuters/Ipsos polling this week showed Trump with a 42% to 34% lead over Biden in terms of which candidate was trusted more on the economy.

UN delays crucial COP26 summit

REUTERS, London

The coronavirus pandemic has prompted the United Nations to delay until late 2021 a crucial climate summit that had been scheduled for Britain this year, officials said. This year's meeting, known as the COP26, had been billed as the most important climate change summit since the 2015 talks that produced the Paris Agreement. The summit will be rescheduled to Nov 1 to 12, 2021, the UN's climate body decided, dates proposed by the British government. Glasgow, Scotland will remain the host city, and there will first be a warm-up summit in Italy.

No need for third party

China snubs Trump's mediation offer in India row

AGENCIES

China has rejected US President Donald Trump's offer to mediate between India and China as tensions over border disputes continue to rise.

"China and India are capable of properly resolving the issues through dialogue and consultation," the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said, news agency PTI and Reuters reported.

In a surprise move, Trump on Wednesday offered to "mediate or arbitrate" the raging border dispute between India and China, saying he was "ready, willing and able" to ease the tensions, amid the continuing standoff between the armies of the two Asian giants.

Reacting for the first time to the US President's offer, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said the two countries did not want the "intervention" from a third party to resolve the military standoff.

"Between China and India we have existing border-related mechanisms and communication channels," Zhao told reporters. "We are capable of properly resolving the issues between us through dialogue and consultation. We do not need the intervention of the third party," he said.

Several areas along the Line of Actual Control or LAC in Ladakh and North Sikkim have seen major military build-up by both the Indian and Chinese armies, in a clear signal of escalating tension and hardening of positions by the two sides even two weeks after they were engaged in two separate face-offs.

India has said the Chinese military was hindering normal patrolling by its troops along the LAC in Ladakh and Sikkim,

and strongly refuted Beijing's contention that the escalating tension between the two armies was triggered by trespassing of Indian forces across the Chinese side.

The Indian Foreign Ministry has said all Indian activities were carried out on its side of the border, asserting that India has always taken a very responsible approach towards border management.

"The two sides have established mechanisms both at military and diplomatic levels to resolve situations which may arise in border areas peacefully through dialogue and continue to remain engaged through these channels," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

INDIA DENIES TRUMP-MODI CALL. Meanwhile, India has denied that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken with Trump about the standoff with China, after Trump suggested Modi was upset about border tension. "They have a big conflict going with India and China. ... Two countries with very powerful militaries," Trump told reporters, according to a White House transcript.

"And India is not happy, and probably China is not happy. But I can tell you, I did speak to Prime Minister Modi. He's not - he's not in a good mood about what's going on with China," Trump added. But Indian officials expressed surprise at Trump's latest remarks. "There has been no recent contact between PM Modi and President Trump," a government source said. "The last conversation between them was on April 4, on the subject of hydroxychloroquine."



... Two countries with very powerful militaries, Trump told reporters, according to a White House transcript.

Table with 2 columns: S.No. and Details. Contains information about the Bangladesh Police recruitment exam for 2020-2021, including exam dates, subjects, and results.

“Productions are losing the real essence of our culture” —Salahuddin Lavlu

SHARMIN JOYA

Salahuddin Lavlu is a renowned actor, screenwriter and director. He reflects on urban social issues in his tele-fictions. In a recent conversation with *The Daily Star*, Lavlu, the President of Directors' Guild Bangladesh, shared his views on the present condition of the television industry and more.

This Eid season, television channels are running repeat telecasts of shows and some previously shot tele-fictions. “I hope that the audience enjoys the repeat telecasts. At the same time, it is unfortunate that the production teams of these shows will not benefit in any way from them,” says Lavlu.

Moreover, few production teams began shooting, putting their lives at risk during these critical times, despite the prohibition. “Frankly speaking, there was a lot of confusion surrounding this issue. When the government announced that they will allow a limited number of organisations to reopen after May 10, some thought that it applies for shootings. It was a misunderstanding,” asserts Lavlu. “As soon as the Directors' Guild learned about it, we immediately intervened and stopped the production teams. They have apologised as well.”

Majority of the critics and audiences feel that the television industry lacks creativity and innovation in storytelling these days, as writers and directors are mostly preoccupied with adaptations of foreign stories. Whereas, artists like Lavlu are dedicated to portraying our native culture and society. “Sadly, productions these days are losing the real essence of our culture,” he says. “I feel that the lack of knowledge and interest in our own culture is the reason behind the influx of foreign stories.” Only a handful of projects are made on contemporary issues that

represent the society of Bangladesh. Lavlu further shared that budgets for tele-fictions have decreased and at the same time, the role of the approval committee is on its way to extinction.

Most financiers are selective about scripts. They tamper with the stories to make them more budget-friendly, and even make decisions about casting. “Usually the programme departments of television channels have a preview committee who curate the projects. However, they don't maintain their roles anymore,” adds Lavlu.

According to him, the intervention of different agencies has disrupted the scenario, making way for a generation that is hungry for fame. He also feels that artists have lost respect over time, as art is being used for commercial purposes only. “Once upon a time, our tele-fictions were a part of our country's traditions. Even our neighbouring countries looked up to our productions,” he asserts.

Acting is the only profession for most artists. As a result, many agree to play repetitive roles on television, often for financial purposes. “A shopkeeper chooses the products that sell the most. But shouldn't there be a difference between a shopkeeper and an artist? An artist should understand their responsibilities towards their craft and their society,” explains Lavlu. As the President of Directors' Guild Bangladesh, Lavlu is aware of the misconducts in the world of television. The associations had planned to introduce some new policies, starting from this Eid season. However, due to the ongoing pandemic, they have put the implementation of those policies on hold. On a more optimistic note, the artiste hoped that moving forward, television channels will be more careful about the quality of the programmes they air.



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

Ferdousi Majumdar reminisces her days on 'Shongshoptok'

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Back in the day, BTV's *Bohubrihi*, *Kothao Keu Nei*, *Ei Shob Din Ratri* and *Shongshoptok*, brought families together under one roof, as they watched new episodes of the shows after days of waiting. As we grapple with the coronavirus pandemic, the channel added reruns of these iconic TV dramas to their schedule. Swept off by nostalgia, a large section of the nation's population has been happily watching the reruns on television at home, even though episodes of the shows are available on YouTube. *Shongshoptok*, based on Shahidullah Kaiser's novel, returned to BTV after three decades, from May 9. *The Daily Star* recently caught up with Ekushey Padak-winning actor Ferdousi Majumdar, who played Hurmotti in the hit series.

Why do you think 'Shongshoptok' was such a successful show?

I have been watching the show on BTV again, and I feel that the script, direction and acting were quite powerful at the time. We worked with great care and spent hours in rehearsals to develop the characters. In fact, everyone in the cast went through each line in the entire script. I believe that team work was the secret behind the success of the project. Abdullah Al Mamun also worked tirelessly as a director.

Hurmotti is one of the most iconic television characters in our country. How was your experience of playing the role?

Back then, everyone around me called me *Hurmotti*. Even today, most people recognise me because of the character. Playing her was one of the greatest achievements of my career.

What was it like to work with Humayun Faridee?

Humayun Faridee was an impeccable actor. Everyone on the sets, including myself, were

fascinated by his sheer aptitude. He was a true artiste, in every way.

You are one of the most powerful artistes in Bangladeshi theatre. How are you staying connected to your co-workers now?

Thanks to technology, I am staying in touch with my fellow theatre artistes through video calls, since we are all at home. They are like family to me, and we are trying to keep each other's spirits up.

Do you have any message for our readers in these turbulent times?

Nothing lasts forever. Even though we are going through difficult times, I believe that this ordeal will come to an end soon. Frontline fighters such as law enforcers and doctors deserve our heartfelt appreciation right now. They are risking their lives daily, and they do not deserve to be put in harm's way because of our negligence.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

JK Rowling announced she will publish a new children's book, a fairy tale about truth and the abuse of power. The *Harry Potter* author said she kept the book in her attic for years and will make it available online for free for children in self-isolation.

Set in an imaginary land unrelated to Rowling's other works, *The Ickabog* will be released in 34 daily, free installments before it is published as a book, e-book and audiobook in November. The royalties from the book will be distributed among projects fighting the pandemic.

The novelist said she wrote *The Ickabog* in fits and starts in between the Potter books well over a decade ago, and initially planned to publish it right after *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. However, she kept the book on hold, deciding to step away from children's books and wrote adult novels instead, including *The Casual Vacancy*, and *The Cuckoo's Calling* under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith. The first installment of the free online version of *The Ickabog* was released on May 26. Chapters of the book will be published daily until July 10 on *The Ickabog* website.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Preparing for a musical insurgence

How rising stars are handling quarantine

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Even though the ongoing pandemic has affected professional artistes the hardest, the rising stars in the music industry also face an uphill challenge, after musical events stopped altogether throughout the country. A vibrant sub-culture, which included café and art-space shows, university events and independent releases, have been submerged in uncertainty. Although the rising musicians of our industry usually do not financially depend on the art, their momentum – a crucial part in determining their trajectory – has been put in grave danger.

For many, the prospect of performing in an upcoming show worked as a motivator to create and practice. “Being quarantined isn't a good feeling,” says Razin Halim, Level Five's bassist. “Even though we have conference calls to discuss our future releases, it is hard to actually write new material at this time,

especially when most of us have to work from home as well.” Level Five, a popular indie band that came into the limelight with their debut album, *Obosheshey*, has consistently garnered fanfare with fantastic live performances. With the absence of shows, the members are doing the best they can to maintain the spark that brought them this far.

Artistes who had recorded material prior to the nationwide shutdown have an edge on the competition. Issa Nibras Farooque, known by his stage name Farooque Bhai, has seen substantial success with the release of his new EP, *Gin Bhoot Tonic*. “This is the only time I am on a level playing field as other Bangladeshi artistes,” says Farooque, who resides in Toronto, Canada. “Since everyone has to promote their music on the internet, all I have to do is focus on my own sound.” The Farooque Bhai Project's compositions have helped usher in a new age in Bangladeshi independent music, and the singer-songwriter does not



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

plan on letting a virus halt his prowess.

Dads in the Park had shot the music video for their latest song, *Pareidolia*, prior to the shutdown. Much like *Lullaby*, their second single is also a resounding success. Even though the two-man project does not rely on shows as much, staying at home at a stretch does come with consequences. “For the past two months, I haven't been able to write anything,” says Ishmam Salim. “However, I had a few compositions written down from before, so I am working on those.”

Pragata Naoha, who was enjoying a remarkable run before the shutdown, tries not to let the events fluster her too much. Still riding the coattails of *Kalo*, the singer is already working on new material with her band, Hades. “All I can say is, I am looking forward to the release of our upcoming song, *Bedroom*. The listeners will be surprised if they can decipher the meaning behind it, especially during this unbearable period of having to stay at home,” she says.

Besides music, Pragata is also attending online classes for her first semester in the University of Manitoba.

“I am trying my best to stay positive and practice,” says Aseer Arman, who earned fame and accolades overtime with his song, *Eka Beche Thakte Shikho Priyo*. The former Joler Gaan member looks to start his studio work afresh, after things get better. “Due to some logistical difficulties, I unfortunately had to sell my studio equipment when I moved to another residence,” he says. “However, I am constantly jamming by myself, and trying to come up with new material. I plan to rebuild my studio as soon as I can.” If we know anything about our music industry – from both the spectrums of the famous and the rising – it is that the fraternity is spectacularly resilient in the face of adversities. The relatively small, but ever-growing fan base of the rising stars in Bangladesh, can hope that their favourite artistes will come out bigger, better and stronger.

Shoppers say new Eid collection 'to die for'

SHOAIB AHMED SAYAM

Along with miseries, the pandemic has certainly brought citizens with generational privilege things to look forward to.

For instance, the exclusive collection of personal protective equipment (PPE) for Eid was the rage among people with daddy's 100 percent legitimate business money.

After a visit to the shops on Chand Raat, this reporter saw droves of mask-wearing families squeezing between individuals and peeking over shoulders to get a look at the newest collections.

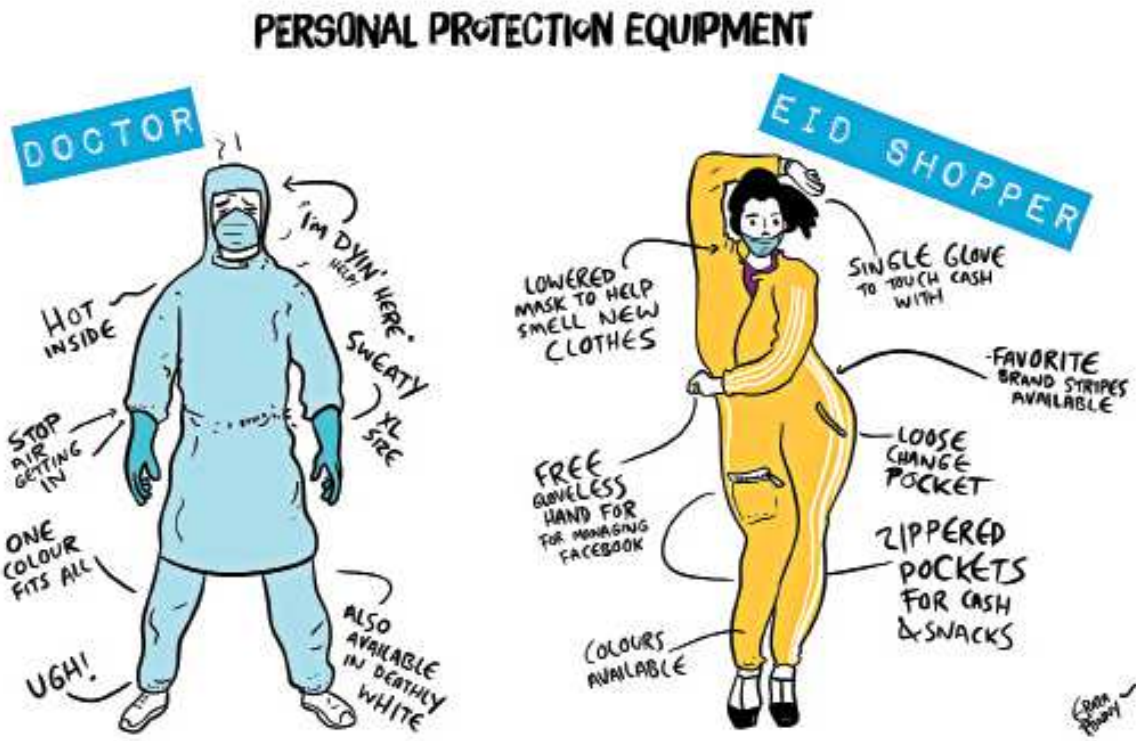
"They have this coughing cool as hell protective overall, and that too in my favourite colour!" said Sadman Zaman, a university student who protested the protest for reduced tuition fees.

"I have full rights to make independent choices unlike poor people. I didn't create the economic system that syphons resources from them and showers it on my family," he said when asked why did he not pick the much cooler blue overall.

Fahad Zaman was scanning the safety-goggle display, picking one up with his disinfected hands and putting it on his infected face. "How do these look?" he asked this reporter, who was wearing matching goggles, which was unacceptable because he had bought that "one-of-a-kind" pair for Eid reporting.

The goggles came in different colours and styles, belonging to popular brands like Ray-bun, Pola, Guchi, Appel and Goggle.

Among all items, face-mask sellers were the winners in this pandemic. Customers were thronging mask stalls, which had a wide variety to offer. Shoppers had



several materials to choose from -- velvet, georgette, silk, jamdani -- with embroidered patterns and tassels.

"Madam, these were specially imported from Thailand. You won't find these in any other pandemic," said a shopkeeper, trying to entice his potential buyer. "These look local to me. I want a mask so beautiful it'll make the coronavirus beg to get inside me," the middle-aged woman retorted.

When asked how business is going, Nandu Zaman, a local shopkeeper, said, "After pivoting to selling PPE, business has been booming. It's as if people think Covid-22 cases are dwindling to

zero instead of rising every day."

"Why are people buying so much when they can't go out on Eid?" asked this reporter.

"Hell, if I know," Nandu replied.

To find an answer, the reporter went from shop to shop, dodging spit particles and elbowing anyone who came close. Then he encountered someone who was rotating for five minutes at one point with her phone held up. She kept saying "Bhai, price?", "Price, brother?", "Mama, price?"

Sufia Zaman was, in fact, live broadcasting from her Facebook page "Cundar Cundar Jama Kulakshun" to provide her audience an authentic Eid

shopping experience.

"There are 15 people watching right now. They'd be lost without my recommendation. Look, they're watching you now!" Sufia said, while pointing the camera at the reporter.

When asked about the significance of Eid shopping in this pandemic, she said, "Shopping is my passion. I shop and I shop, but I'm never satisfied. Online-shopping can never replace physically going to the store. I must caress the product, smell it, feel it, to be one with it."

"This virus will not separate our three-piece salwar kameez from our tailors," she remarked.

Local trillionaire donates BDT 100,000 only to Covid-22 research

RUMMAN ROWDY KALAM

Joshim Bashon -- local entrepreneur, CEO of shipping ;), Math Geniis, IBU alumnus, founding father of Amazing.com and saviour of the masses (this is copied directly off his official Facebook page) -- recently made headlines when he made a public donation for research into Covid-22.

While we here at Satireday do not endorse donation shaming, there was large public outcry over the contribution, which was a sum of BDT 100,000 only.

One of Bashon's own employees, who requested anonymity, had this to say, "Every day he comes and brags to us. I'm a trillionaire b-----, and that's in dollars. Trillionaire in dollars. Get woke. But now he donates less than 0.000000001 percent of his fortune and to distract from the fact that he has upped our working hours to 22 hours a day, seven days a week. I literally sleep in this warehouse now."

We, unfortunately, had to cut our conversation with Bashon's employee short simply because his sleep deprivation and high blood pressure almost definitely caused him a stroke over the phone.

Thankfully, however, I was able to call 969 emergency services, where I was greeted by a jingle informing me to stay alert about Covid-22. And after 10 minutes of hearing the song on a loop, I realised my anonymous correspondent had either saved

pat on the back.

2. Maximum sum donated from the "pat-on-the-back" programme will not exceed BDT 50,000 only.

3. In order for the "pat on the back" to be verified (to ensure you aren't one of his rival Axl Muske's robots), you have to photoshop a selfie of yourself with Bashon and post it to Tiddler.com with the hashtag "bestintheworld", which will then be verified by individuals from Bashon's team.

I was able to get in touch with Bashon for a virtual meeting on Doom.com, another spin-off idea from his company, which is currently under investigation for harvesting user data, but he refused to use Skype, so I had no other choice.

Asked why Bashon only donated such a small sum, when he was known for outlandish acts such as tipping even bigger sums to internet celebrity chef PottBae, this was his response: "Listen, you have to understand. I didn't become rich overnight. It took me a year or two. But I wasn't always like this. I worked hard to get to where I am. I started with nothing, and now I'm a trillionaire. And that's in dollars."

I proceeded to ask Bashon about the large inheritance his father left him, to which he replied, "Look. My father was a drinker. A fiend. Sorry, I was watching The Dark Knight yesterday and lost my train of thought. My father only left me

JOSHIM BASHON, LOCAL TRILLIONAIRE (IN DOLLARS), FLUSHED AWAY NOTES THAT WERE FROM A BANK MOSTLY USED BY POOR PEOPLE WHO SNEEZED DURING COVID-22



himself or, well, let's not think of negative things.

After the large public outcry, Bashon decided to respond by opening what his team is calling the "Pat-on-the-back" programme. Anyone can go to goodjobjashim.org.gov and click on the "pat-on-the-back" button, which will then result in Bashon donating Tk 50***, only in your name, and you'll also have to witness a poorly made gif of Bashon getting a pat on the back.

The *** mark refers to the terms and conditions, which is five pages long, but here are some of the main ones that may concern everyone:

1. One person can only give one

a small sum of money, nothing too big."

When I poked him further by mentioning the "small sum of money" as being 500 billion dollars and further asking if the reports were true that he had not reported the inheritance on his taxes, Bashon decided to cut the call and block me on all his social media.

I cannot also access amazing.com from either my home or office computer, rendering me unable to purchase any more toilet paper, as amazing.com had purchased the entire market stock of toilet paper right before the Covid-22 outbreak.

Bidesh declares limited on scale victory in war against virus; disowns 3,800 infected nationals

Enemies of the state are harbouring the virus, says police official

ORCHID MANGCHA

Declaring a limited on scale victory in the war against Covid-22, Bidesh yesterday opened up day-to-day functions.

Large processions took to the streets to celebrate the legendary triumph. Masked citizens in PPEs thronged the colourful procession. Walls were lined with posters hailing the "Niece of Virologists", a moniker given to the Champion of People and Leader of the Nation Bobby.

The people had been waiting to forget what had been the most tumultuous period of their entire lives. "I can understand famine, cyclones and genocide. But physical distancing? Not shopping for months? To save other people's lives? That I cannot fathom," a spectator at the procession said.

"We are being careful. We have not won yet as long as there are traitors still hiding in the country. We are only allowing the highest foreign currency earners and our best friends in business to open up their factories, shops and offices," Abal Ahmed, the spokesperson for the Greatest Ever Leader II, said.

In a televised speech Her Majesty Bobby thanked mass prayer processions and her zero-tolerance policy for the virus as reasons behind the conquest.

"Take off your masks. You are now free!" She roared into her mic probably to entice the use of the adjective "rousing" in newspaper descriptions of her victory speech.

She also promised swift justice against those still harbouring the infection in their masks. Huge camps, which national observers have called "scary", are being set up to capture and keep all the traitors.

"I have now adopted a zero-

tolerance policy against traitors," she said.

The 3,800 citizens who are still infected with the virus had been declared traitors and persona non grata.

"They do not love the country. If they did, they would not have been harbouring this virus in their body. The harbouring of viruses is against the law under the infectious diseases act," Chief of Police Sultana Tasnim said.

The 3,800 are currently in isolation and will be shifted to an island no one wants to live in but there are pictures of the really colourful buildings there have

went viral once.

Detractors, however, said the country had won the battle but not the war and was just copying its bigger neighbour.

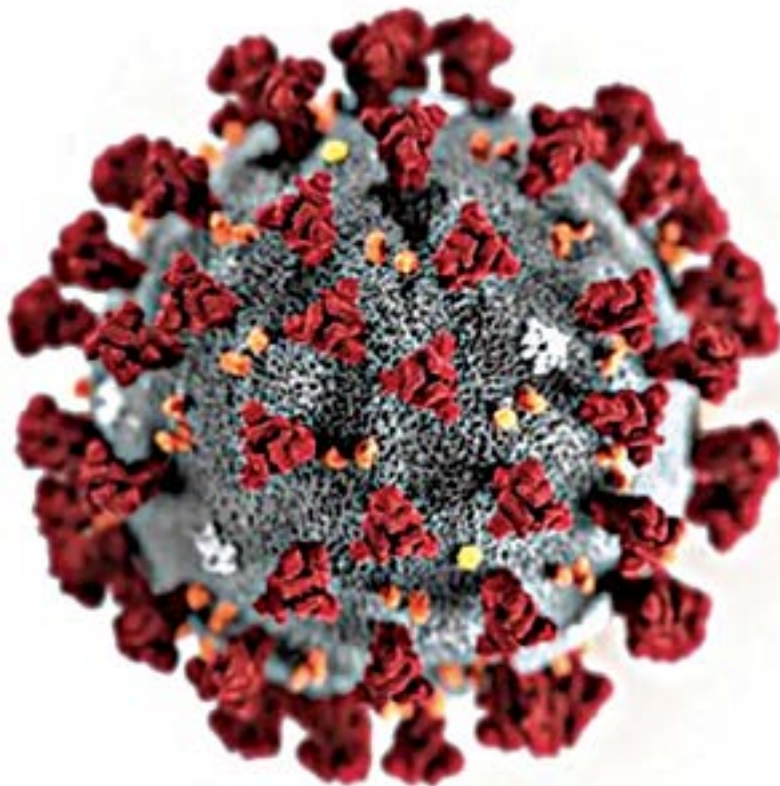
"So, they announced a shutdown and extended it by two days. We followed suit but extended it by three days. Then our neighbour said we will relax shut down on the 31st and we said okay, we will do so on the 30th. This doesn't throw anyone off. We can clearly see they do not have policy in place," Shukur Kumar, a newsman, said.

"Some of these factories and businesses are yet to clear their employees' salaries and Eid bonuses.

They should not be allowed to operate," he added.

When asked if he had received his own salary and bonuses, he admitted he had not but said those who moralise should not be held to the same standard as everyone else.

Businesses hailed the decision to reopen everything on a limited scale. In celebration, a chotpoti stall owner, who is yet to pay his employees their full salary for April, catered for a client's daughter's wedding free of cost. "In these times it is important to keep the clients happy," the owner, who we cannot name because of the vague wording in some laws, said.



Immediate help for the cyclone affected near embankments

An urgent need to address starvation and waterborne diseases

CYCLONE Amphan has devastated the country's coastal areas, with around 70 villages going under water in Koyra upazila in Khulna when the embankment was breached. This has resulted in thousands of people living in utter despair. According to a report in this daily, at least two lakh people have been badly affected by the cyclone. Among them, those who once lived near the embankment are living in dire conditions with no food and not enough drinking water, and suffering from various waterborne diseases.

While the government has done a commendable job in evacuating a huge number of people during the cyclone ensuring minimal casualties, the challenge now is to make sure that those affected are given immediate food assistance and that they can start rebuilding their lives. The local administration has so far distributed 50 tonnes of rice, 500 packets of dry food and Tk 75 lakh among the cyclone victims in the upazila. But as the report has pointed out, there are families in remote areas who have not yet received any food aid, leaving them without any food for at least two days. The immediate priority is therefore to provide food and drinking water to these people.

The second most urgent task for the government is to repair the Harinkhola embankment which was badly damaged, allowing saline water to come in. The civil surgeon of Khulna has warned that such huge quantities of saline water entering the areas are causing waterborne diseases, with a crisis in drinking water inevitable. Unless the embankment is repaired on an urgent basis, it will become uninhabitable. Where will all these people go?

We hope that the administration is accelerating its efforts in these areas as these people need to physically survive, rebuild their homes, get back their cattle (shifted to another upazila during the cyclone) and basically start their lives from scratch. Prompt interventions are crucial.

Safeguarding last rites during the pandemic

A noble example set by Al-Rashid Foundation

WE are humbled by the noble example set by the Al-Rashid Foundation during this pandemic, which has already taken too many precious lives. Faced with the grim reality of burying those who have succumbed to the virus, this organisation has been providing crucial help at a time when people have been asked to stay away due to the health risks posed by funeral gatherings, especially in a household where the virus may have spread. Family members and relatives are finding it difficult to bury the deceased in this situation. With approval and training from the Ministry of Health, a team of 30 committed individuals are working with unabated determination to carry out the burial rituals as soon as they get a call from the family of the deceased, hospital authorities or the Ministry of Health—transporting bodies to the respective graveyard, crematorium or church in different districts.

Even during the Eid holidays, the members of the organisation carried out this difficult task as they laid to rest three more victims of the pandemic. While precautions must be taken when dealing with such a highly infectious disease, it is indeed shocking that some patients have been abandoned in their final moments, and left without anyone to arrange for the funeral. There have also been reports of residents who were resisting the burial of Covid-19 patients in their neighbourhoods, putting intense pressure on the families to abandon the body. It is during such dire times that Al-Rashid Foundation and other similar volunteer organisations have stepped in to serve bereaved families from various religious communities, maintaining their specific rituals.

We commend the humble initiatives by such establishments to come forward and demonstrate inclusiveness through their diligent support, and call upon others to do the same as well. Such crucial moments of crisis puts our humanity to test. We must take heed from this example and try our best to do whatever we can, collectively or individually, to contribute in this ongoing battle against Covid-19, if we are to survive all odds. Al-Rashid Foundation further plans to set up clinics to provide medical services for the poor across the country as well as free ambulance services to transport dead bodies in the near future. Organisations like these should be supported by both state and the private sector.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Treatment for Covid-19 patients

There have been plenty of reports on patients being denied treatment for multiple diseases in various hospitals across the country, especially if they displayed any of the symptoms of coronavirus. Due to this, many critical patients have passed away while their families desperately tried to get them admitted. I have also read about incidents where after the demise of these patients, it was proven through medical reports that they were actually Covid-19 negative! I was relieved to learn recently that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has directed all public and private hospitals with 50 beds and more to ensure healthcare service for Covid and non-Covid patients in separate arrangements. Such a directive was needed urgently as more citizens are falling victim to this deadly virus. I would like to thank the authorities for this. Hopefully now the citizens of our country can avail treatment with ease.

Zeenat Siddiqi, Dhaka

MOHAMMAD SHAFIQUIL ISLAM

"THE virus is slowing us down to the speed of poetry." – Billy Collins

Whenever there has been an outbreak of pandemics, artists and authors have responded, with a sense of responsibility, to the miserable human condition. If hundreds of thousands of people die of a fatal disease—sometimes the figure reaching to 50 or 60 percent of the population of a city or a country—silence reigns supreme, and in this state, poets and writers attempt to break the silence, recording the intensity of misery and reality in poetry and fiction. As the history of pandemics suggests, a great number of poets and writers have composed groundbreaking works reacting to human suffering. Some notable examples are Boccaccio's *The Decameron* (1353), Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), Manzoni's *The Betrothed* (1827), London's *The Scarlet Plague* (1912), Maugham's *The Painted Veil* (1925), Camus's *The Plague* (1947), Koontz's *The Eyes of Darkness* (1981), Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985), Saramago's *Blindness* (1995), and Brooks's *Year of Wonders* (2001), which are all considered enduring masterpieces. People are currently perusing *The Plague* as if "the novel were a vaccine," as if it were "something that can help heal us." It is assumed that gloom descended upon some of Shakespeare's plays because of the troubling plague in England in 1592, which lasted until 1594. In an article titled "From Sa'di to Boccaccio: The literary legacy of pandemics," Hamid Dabashi, Professor of Comparative Literature, Columbia University, refers to Saadi's poems in which there's an account of human suffering caused by famine in 13th century Persia. Saadi's most powerful lines, as Dabashi quotes, read, "A famine of such devastation one year happened in Damascus/ That lovers forget all about love..."

Poetry plays an important part in bringing joy to the agonised and solace to the affected. As Simon Armitage, poet laureate of the UK, lays out in his arguments, "Poetry is by definition consoling; it often asks us just to focus and think and be contemplative. It asks us to be considerate of each other and the world." Armitage has written a great poem entitled "Lockdown" on the Coronavirus effect that *The Guardian* has recently featured. In his introduction to the poem, the poet claims that poetry as an essential art form helps us alleviate our agony during the critical times of pandemics. Armitage is optimistic that we may see a different planet, where everything will be new.

The present poet laureate of the USA, Joy Harjo, has also stressed on the positive role of poetry that, she believes, may help people overcome depression, and on the continuation of creativity in the face of epidemics. She states, "We always turn to the arts, to poetry at times like these when we are thrust into the unknowing, into

places of terror or awe. People are calling on artists to help inspire and make sense during these times." It is really important and compelling for artists, for poets to "make sense" of things happening around them, of the events that are creating pressure on people's minds and making them sink into anxiety. Sometimes, the precipitousness or precariousness of tragic incidents transform the situation so drastically that people either become completely silent or begin to create anarchy. In these days of coronavirus, people are baffled, because the enemy shifts its colour now and then, kills people brutally, making corteges of dead bodies on streets and in fields, and seizes the surviving populace in panic—as was the picture in times of other pandemics,

quarantine, and other lived experiences springing out of coronavirus. An international literary journal *Reckoning*, which is devoted to environmental justice, has made a call for creative work, including poetry, for its special series called "Creativity and Coronavirus". In this way many publications, including renowned international literary journals and magazines, are trying to create a "lived record" of the coronavirus pandemic.

Bangladeshi poets are doing no less. A remarkable poem by a not-so-well-known but strong voice of poetry named Minar Basunia, "God Belongs to All Creatures", has become popular on social media, receiving attention from a wide readership and a slew of comments and words of praise. Basunia writes (in my translation):

be considerate of each other as well as of nature. In response to coronavirus, I've also attempted to write a few poems, from which I feel tempted to share a few lines:

Silence has gripped the whole wide world

No one weeps anywhere on earth anymore

It seems everyone is waiting for the last call

The world is blanketed in despair and silence.

Finally, I'd like to quote American poet Billy Collins, who with his keen observations seeks the progress of the world through poetry. Although the "virus is slowing us down," Collins confirms, the world will certainly retrieve a green light at "the speed of poetry." In conjunction



Decameron, John William Waterhouse, 1916.

including plagues, flu, and the Black Death in Europe. It is the artists and poets who try to enliven and inspire the worried and the panicked during these times, making sense of and giving meaning to life.

Poets from various corners of the world are responding to these trying times, reflecting on the severity of events, the uncertainty of the future, and their personal experiences and feelings. Carol Ann Duffy, poet laureate of the UK from 2009-2019, has launched a project entitled "Write Where We Are Now" which is taking contributions from a constellation of poets from around the world. Under the project, a number of prominent poets from the UK and other countries are sharing their poems on the lockdown, isolation, social distancing,

God does not belong to only humans. He has probably accepted the appeal of dolphins—

He has probably responded to the prayers of the sea—

He has perhaps deeply listened to the pleas of the woods—

He has perhaps considered the demands of the hills reasonable.

Here the poet refers to the injustice human beings have been perpetrating against the environment for hundreds of years; other creatures in nature had probably been making an appeal to God, who belongs to everyone and everything, for a long time for their safe existence on earth, and God has listened to them now. Both eco-critically and philosophically powerful, this poem tenders an important message to human beings to

with medical science, art in general and poetry in particular is inevitable for the world—more so in the toughest times of pandemics—because a world without poetry poses a threat to the mental health and sane survival of humanity. During these days of devastation, poetry may help us keep mentally strong, save us from falling prey to despair, and deliver us from the prospect of etioloating the self. Poetry inculcates common decency, heals wounds, assuages anxiety and dissipates despair, leading us toward a world that may emerge newer and wiser.

Dr Mohammad Shafiqul Islam is Associate Professor, Department of English, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet. Email: msijewel@gmail.com. His poetry collection *Inner State* was published by Daily Star Books in February 2020. Follow Daily Star Books on Facebook and @thedailystarbooks on Instagram for updates.

The double piston of love and fear



SHAMSAD MORTUZA

HIS visiting card had two office addresses: one in Scotland and the other in Estonia. There was nothing wrong with it, but the architect who just shared his card explained the oddity. He told us about his dual citizenship. Worried that his business in the UK in a post-Brexit scenario could take a tailspin, he had opted for an e-citizenship of e-Estonia. Yes, you read it right. The Estonian Government has created a cloud based public-private consortium to make most of its services, including citizenship, available online. Our Scottish friend maintained that under this new arrangement, he could still avail all the benefits of the European Union (EU) despite his mother country being politically severed from it.

And why would Estonia allow e-citizens? Because it is crowdsourcing funds through e-investments and e-citizenships: a win-win proposition. What prompted Estonia to adopt such extreme measures is even more interesting. "In case of any foreign intrusion, which is not unlikely given this Baltic country's former conglomeration, the country will simply disappear in the cloud securing all the resources of its citizens," the card owner explained. Imagine a strategic online retreat in place of a military defence, how ingenious! Well, not so unique if you are a *Star Trek* fan who is used to the concept of being beamed up.

I remembered this chit-chat on the issue of hiding in the cloud out of fear of something ominous while passing through the clouds on a special flight to Bangkok. Fear necessitates innovations. The emergency health protocols in every

household, every office have come out of fear. Sanitisation, distancing and protective gear are the new normal paraphernalia risen out of fear. And of course, except for some essential work, we too have moved online, albeit by default.

My daughter and I took a special flight to Bangkok. When my wife, who works in the Bangladesh Embassy in Bangkok, told us that we could avail the plane meant for shipping back 160 Thai nationals, we were not very sure. My daughter in particular was afraid of airport safety. Then my wife hurled the unassailable diatribe: what motive could I have in staying in Dhaka while our activities were being done online? I guess fear is one factor that made me seek station leave and come to Bangkok.

On May 23, we went to board a flight organised by the Royal Thai Embassy in Dhaka. The airport had a deserted look as ours was the only flight. The officials of the Embassy made sure that we had the medical clearance and government papers to fly—their diligence was exemplary. They guided us every step of the way, quite a contrast to our immigration, where it took three individuals in two counters to clear one passport. The supervisor was dictating what commands to press on the keyboard, what to type to merge my new passport with the old one. And they were not even apprentices. In their casual remarks it was revealed that the officer had been doing this for four years. Quite a long way before we e-transit, I sighed.

The Thai embassy officials gave every passenger a goody bag that included some snacks, a face mask and a pair of surgical gloves, hand sanitiser and wipes, and a cash refund of 314.20 Thai baht that they got through negotiated discounts from the airlines. Every passenger got their share of discounts from the already purchased e-tickets! Imagine such honesty in our culture even at the time of Ramadan. I don't think the fear of

after-life grilling would have brought out such righteousness in many of us. A small gesture goes a long way in giving the impression of a country.

On the plane, each alternate seat was kept empty. There were three male stewards, all wearing PPE. We felt like human subjects abducted by aliens. Thailand has suspended all its flights until June 30, and the major airports have been shut down. Our plane was taken to Don Mueang domestic airport which had been re-designed to facilitate the repatriation of stranded Thai nationals from different parts of the world. The entire place was barricaded by human shields of staff wearing PPE. We were seamlessly processed through six different tables. It took us less than five minutes to have our temperature checked, papers verified, on-arrival visa endorsed. Our bags were not given on the belts. They were isolated and bleached and brought to the bus bay. A special bus carried us through the runway all the way to the parking lot to reduce any chance of contamination. The Thai nationals, however, had to wait to be processed for the quarantine centre where they would have to stay for two weeks. Some of these men were wearing Italian-Thai Development jackets, which made me guess they were engaged in the Dhaka Metro Rail projects. I offered them my gratitude in silence.

The Bangladesh Embassy had to vouch for our home quarantine. The Thai government has identified 14,000 Thai nationals who needed repatriation during the pandemic. They are bringing them in batches to ensure proper accommodation at the quarantine centre—so the flights are coordinated with the availability of space there. It is not only fear but also care that necessitates innovations.

Thailand is beginning to relax its lockdown, and it has shown amazing professionalism in handling the crisis. Like everywhere else, there was pressure

on the government to lift the lockdown. In response, this is what PM Prayut had to say: "We have received calls to ease certain restrictions, but we have to think about being prudent. We have to listen to information from medical experts. I do not want to make decisions under duress. They should be based on facts."

Thailand was the second country to be affected by the disease when Patient Zero came from Wuhan. A taxi driver who carried this Chinese tourist was later tested positive in January. The situation aggravated when the disease spread during a Thai boxing event. Thanks to strict curfew measures, contact tracing and testing, the country has managed to recover from initial setbacks and reduce the number of affected patients to 3,045, with 57 succumbing to Covid-19. The three new cases today are all from inbound passengers who have been brought back to the country. There is comfort in the way things are planned and executed.

Right now, Bangkok is slowly transitioning to a new normal mode. Social distancing is going to stay. Working online is going to stay. The future has suddenly been pushed back to be present at the present time.

Our journey to Bangkok seemed like a scene from a dystopian world. We were happy to give up our rights to free mobility not only because we were afraid but also because we felt that we were being cared for. There was comfort in our discomfort. We overcame the fear of flying at a horrid time, out of love. I think a lot can be done if you are pulled by the double-piston of love and fear. Wasn't it Oprah Winfrey, who once said, "every single event in life happens in an opportunity to choose love over fear"?

Shamsad Mortuza is a professor of English, University of Dhaka (now on leave). Currently, he is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of ULAB. Email: shamsad71@hotmail.com.

US imperialism in the wake of Covid-19

ALI AHMED ZIAUDDIN

Vladimir Lenin once said, "there are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen". Can anything be more relevant to explain the present?

Things fall apart. Time passes. And so will this pandemic. But what it leaves behind in its wake is a matter of worry. If history offers any lesson, pestilence like the plague, smallpox, cholera or the more recent Spanish flu caused severe socioeconomic hardship in different regions of the world. In turn they triggered political upheavals, power realignment and wars.

With over 350,000 dead, almost six million infected, and the world economy at a standstill, there is no reason to expect today's world to remain unaffected. What exact damage it may cause is a wild guess but one thing is certain: uncertainty. In view of earlier lessons, it's worthwhile to explore what the future holds; not to wade into fantasies but to prepare for the worst-case scenario. First, let's examine the broad parameters that define the present globalised world.

For the first time in history, the entire world is under a global empire, governed by the ancient doctrine: might is right. The facade of democracy, human rights, and rule of law are there but they do not impede the forcible imposition of the imperial will on weaker states. The imperial centre along with its allies, more accurately client states, operates on the premise that providence entrusted them the right to maintain world order; others must obey. Any defiance provokes reprisal. Imperial writ must prevail. It's imperial logic because it's the nature of power. Diplomatic pressure, sanctions, regime change, fermenting insurgencies, and when all else fails, military invasions are the handy tools to enforce order.

Yes, there is internal resistance from the more humane elements; yes, the allies/client states do grumble a lot; and yes, other power centres compete to make life difficult, but in the end the imperial centre holds sway. Its power stems from military might and financial control. And its driving force is imperial logic pressed by the insatiable greed to control the world's resources.

With nearly 800 military bases in 70 countries of varying sizes, the military

control is obvious. What is trickier is the financial control. In the post Second World War period, the US dollar replaced the British pound sterling as the world's reserve currency. The war left USA relatively unscathed and the biggest creditor; its economy vast and sturdy to back it up. The dollar was as good as gold. This vast wealth creation was largely due to the munitions production of the Second World War, followed by the Cold War. After the war, manufacturing diversified into all kinds of items. Its economy became the global supplier and buyer of various goods and services from the rest of the world. A broad industrial base within a market economy created conditions for American multinational corporations to provide full employment and a feeling of exceptionalism, which in turn enabled its ruling elite to grow an imperial instinct. It's an affliction suffered by all powerful nations throughout history.

With the excuse of containing communism, this drive created a broad socioeconomic structure in the US that came to be known as the military-industrial complex. It grew exponentially ever since. What no one noticed, except a few perceptive academics, was that the so-called American dream got fundamentally embroiled in a permanent war industry. The complex is a collective of defence, energy, banking, tech giants and media industries that control every nook and corner of the American economy and politics. It meant and still means that continuing wars are an economic necessity. All other policies, foreign or domestic, are subject to this need.

But in the last three or four decades, besides the defence industries, most profits have come from manipulating finance, speculation and outright fraud; not from manufacturing sectors (the Smithian model). Profits without production became the new mantra of the ultra-rich. While one percent of Americans amassed incredible wealth, millions of workers lost jobs to cheaper workers in foreign lands. Globalisation accelerated this process. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the imperial drive went berserk using whatever convenient excuse at the given moment. It's apt to note that three decades since, USA has invaded and/or

destroyed nearly a dozen countries.

While the elites focus on their empire, nearly a third of America lives pay-check to pay-check. But the endless wars go on because it's the most lucrative racket. Permanent war comes at a huge cost, both human and economic. So long as most of the labour intensive industries were on US soil, the middle-class taxpayers paid the bill and the working class boys were sent to war. Once the assembly lines shifted abroad, America started running on deficit. Still the war racket didn't stop, costing trillions while the middle class dwindled and the number of working class falling under

funds started buying these bonds to beef up their foreign reserves. America's swelling debt over the past three decades to 194 countries, by the end of the year, will accrue to more than 25 trillion US dollars, three of which is owed to China. None of this includes all the alarming private debts either.

The bankers and the clients are stuck in a gridlock. It's complicated. It means that every US dollar transacted pays a fee, whatever little, to the Fed. Second, all transactions are under the Fed's watch. It means transactions not to the liking of the US can be withheld or worse, confiscated, meaning any

Nearly a third of America can't afford healthcare and worse—they go hungry regularly, can't pay rent and are trapped in student debt. The US prepared for a global war, not a pandemic. The world watched baffled, the emperor naked behind the façade of invincibility. A mighty presence across the world is all bluster; unable to fend for itself. China did fumble initially but its stringent containment measures from mid January was there for everyone to see. The US and Europe imagined they were somehow immune; they wasted precious time but now blame China. There should be an independent scientific inquiry led by the WHO to find the origin and the nature of the disease so that this doesn't happen again. But if the US and its clients are bent on a witch hunt, there should also be a UN commission to assess the damages done by the colonial project, especially by the US, in the last hundred years or more.

John Perkins, author of *Confessions of an Economic Hitman*, commented "The Covid-19 death toll is just one of many examples of how the same people who bend weaker governments to their wills with conditional loans, corrupt deals and occasionally orchestrated coups hurt the American public." Can the US extricate itself from the debt trap? Not if it doesn't mend its ways and quickly. As the saying goes—"all debts catch up".

But that is anathema to imperial logic. In such conditions, power seeks quick fixes, which often leads to desperate measures. America's ruling one percent may threaten to seize China's financial assets if it doesn't fall in line, which may well lead to confrontation. They may look to start the Second Cold War with China, or accidentally start a hot one. The first one had enriched USA and defeated its enemy; it would be a strong temptation. It seems such thinking is gaining bipartisan support in Washington. China is no pushover, neither militarily nor economically. America's recklessness may endanger the entire world. A few years ago Joschka Fischer, the ex-German foreign minister, wrote "One of the key challenges of the 21st century will be to manage the decline of US power". He may well prove right.

Ali Ahmed Ziauddin is a researcher and activist. Email: aliahmedziauddin@gmail.com



PHOTO: COLLECTED

the poverty line increased.

How was the deficit met? As the world's reserve currency, most countries kept their foreign exchange in dollars with the US Federal Reserve System (Fed). Even after the Fed de-linked the dollar from gold in 1971, trust in the world's banker didn't suffer. So the Fed covered its deficit budget by borrowing from other countries' savings, hoping the American economy and foreign earnings would slowly reimburse the creditors. But as the war racket ratcheted up, so did borrowing. The debt pit got deeper. Then the Fed started issuing treasury bonds. Countries with surplus

client i.e. any country unwilling to toe Washington's line runs the risk of losing its money. Only last year, the US and UK seized Venezuela's dollar and gold reserves. Third, the banker pays paltry interest but clients can't easily withdraw large deposits due to the fear of being sanctioned, although they too need dollar reserves to meet their balance of payments. All this provides the US enormous control over global finance. Despite so much control, America's fiscal balance still falters because the imperial instinct is insatiable.

While the defence budget rises, infrastructure keeps breaking down.

A pandemic revelation: women rule (better)

Give women their due, and everyone benefits



ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

AS the world reels from the biggest health crisis we have seen in our lifetime, some countries have dealt with the coronavirus pandemic better than others.

"Germany, led by Angela Merkel, has had a far lower death rate than Britain, France, Italy or Spain," *The New York Times* recently reported. "Finland, where Prime Minister Sanna Marin, 34, governs with a coalition of four female-led parties, has had fewer than 10 percent as many deaths as nearby Sweden." "And Tsai Ing-wen, the president of Taiwan, has presided over one of the most successful efforts in the world at containing the virus, using testing, contact tracing and isolation measures to control infections without a full national lockdown."

We mustn't forget the redoubtable Kiwi Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

"Ardern, 39, New Zealand's premier, has held Kiwis' hands through the lockdown, delivering empathetic "stay home, save lives" video messages from her couch and communicating daily through non-combative press conferences," London's *The Guardian* newspaper reports.

"Her insistence on... urging New Zealanders to look after their neighbours,

take care of the vulnerable, and make sacrifices for the greater good—has won her many fans." It also produced results. The nation of 4.8 million people has recorded an astonishing 22 deaths, according to the government. New cases are down to zero.

Notice a trend here? All the leaders mentioned above are women.

Now let's consider which countries have done worst. According to statistics compiled by Johns Hopkins University in the US, the countries with the highest number of Covid-19 cases are the US, Brazil and Russia, in that order. The number of US cases, a mind-boggling 1.76 million, is over four times that of its nearest country, Brazil, at second place, has 438,812 cases, with Russia close behind.

Consider their leaders. President Donald Trump. President Jair Bolsonaro. President Vladimir Putin. One would be hard-pressed to find more emphatic, almost caricature-like examples of machismo amongst national leaders. Trump is on record suggesting injecting disinfectant to treat Covid-19 (He was being sarcastic, silly!), and Bolsonaro proudly takes the discredited treatment hydroxychloroquine, while suggesting naysayers can go have a fizzy drink instead.

"Macho isn't mucho," the former Hollywood star Zsa Zsa Gabor once wryly observed.

It is remarkable how many female leaders have made a real mark in handling the pandemic.

"How about Iceland's Katrin Jakobsdóttir, who has offered free coronavirus testing to all the country's citizens? Or Norway's Erna Solberg, who held a press conference just for children, telling them it was okay to feel scared?" Helen Lewis pointed out in an article in *The Atlantic* magazine.

However, the false binary of macho male versus nurturing female leadership is too simplistic. Sociopolitical dynamics

We need to look beyond male and female leaders and consider the broader sociopolitical perspective. It's not about whether women leaders are necessarily better. It's about whether nations which are congenial to women leaders are better.

are complicated. Nor is it so cut-and-dried. New Zealand's Ardern has a lot in common in temperament with Canada's Justin Trudeau. In the US, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer has more in common with male Democrats

Governor Gavin Newsom of California and Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York than female Republicans Governor Kay Ivey of Alabama and Kristi Noem of South Dakota. And Xi Jinping, China's iron-fisted male leader, has led his nation to a stunning recovery after catastrophic initial missteps.

We need to look beyond male and female leaders and consider the broader sociopolitical perspective. It's not about whether women leaders are necessarily better. It's about whether nations which are congenial to women leaders are better.

Kathleen Gerson, a professor of sociology at New York University, told *The Guardian* that women leaders are more likely to be elected in "a political culture in which there's a relative support and trust in the government—and that doesn't make stark distinctions between women and men. So you've already got a head start."

"A country that elects a strongman—or where a strongman can hold on to power, once elections become a sham—is an already troubled country," Lewis writes in *The Atlantic*.

"So let's not flip the old sexist script. After centuries of dogma that men are naturally better suited to leadership, the opposite is not suddenly true. Women leaders aren't the cause of better government. They are a symptom of it."

This is broadly true for societies as well. How a society treats women is a telling guide to a society's health.

What's remarkable is how far we still

have to go. Even some countries that consider themselves advanced have their work cut out. The US is still waiting for its first woman president. Just one out of four US senators is a woman. Angela Merkel is the only woman leader of G20 nations, a group of the world's 20 largest economies.

In South Asia, the situation is worse. We carry the heavy burden of the misogyny and patriarchal instincts of religious orthodoxy—this, unfortunately, cuts across all faiths. Our roster of women leaders is illusory, and many bask in the reflected glory of family connections.

Bangladesh's considerable strides in gender parity, sometimes outshining its South Asian neighbours, is encouraging. But what must never be forgotten is how much is left to be done. Our mindset is still deeply invested in patriarchy. We need to learn that providing half of the nation to realise its full potential benefits us all—materially and morally.

The full emancipation of women may take time, but it will surely happen one day. And all of us—men and women—will be the better for it.

(This article is dedicated to the women who have filled my life with love, joy and support. From you I learned first-hand to love, admire and respect women and support their inalienable right to equality and dignity. Thanks to you all, I learned how to be a real man.)

Ashfaque Swapan is a contributing editor for *Siliconeer*, a digital daily for South Asians in the United States.

QUOTABLE Quote

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI
(1469-1527)
Italian statesman and writer

The more sand has escaped from the hourglass of our life, the clearer we should see through it.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Treat, as a turkey
- 6 Bank fixtures
- 11 Clarifying words
- 12 Singer Black
- 13 Fruit basket items
- 14 Bisect
- 15 Building wing
- 16 Luau instrument
- 18 Tall tale
- 19 Game cube
- 20 Fishing pole
- 21 Sushi choice
- 22 Make blue
- 24 Says further
- 25 "First..."
- 27 Tennis great
- 29 Was restless

DOWN

- 1 Humans, e.g.
- 2 Activist Bloomer
- 3 Shook, perhaps
- 4 Pitch's kin
- 5 Guarantees
- 6 Timetable: Abb.
- 7 Copying
- 8 Was just what was needed
- 9 Coveted
- 10 Hardens
- 17 Famed raft
- 23 Female rabbit
- 24 Pendulum path
- 26 Admitted an error
- 27 Tops
- 28 Spooky gathering
- 30 Made flat
- 31 Hinders
- 33 Resort spots
- 39 Maximum amount
- 41 Hasten

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

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

RAWER ASSET
ADORE NAIVE
DORIC NIXED
LEASED
MADLOX BEN
ORWELL ELLE
CRIMSON TIDE
HODS MOANED
AWE YOU DRY
FUNGUS
CAROM ANIME
AXIOM TUDOR
REPLY SMEAR

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

WHY ARE THESE TENTS THE SAME SIZE? I'M AN OFFICER! MINE SHOULD BE LARGER! WHAT ARE YOU GUYS DOING? BUILDING LT. FUZZ A LOG TENT

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

SO YOU HAD A ROUGH DAY TOO? YEAH, DOES IT SHOW? NO. THAT PAIN WAS DANGEROUSLY LONG.

Nazrul's Nonfiction Prose and the Question of Human Emancipation

AZFAR HUSSAIN

1 Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976)—one of the greatest Bengali poets—has by now been fully assimilated into the literary canon and even into public discourse in Bangladesh. He has been appropriated and institutionalized at more levels than one, as Nazrul remains the “national” poet of the country. But the canonization and institutional invocation of Nazrul have also run the risk of relaying and repeating certain run-of-the-mill characterizations of the poet—ones that do not do justice either to the content or to the scale, scope, and range of his work.

For instance, Nazrul is routinely commended as a “rebel poet,” although—by his own admission—he is not only a rebel but also a revolutionary poet. Elsewhere I’ve already written about how Nazrul is fundamentally a revolutionary, while also underlining the prodigious range of his preoccupations—both literary and non-literary. A poet and a musician in the first place, Nazrul was also a short story writer, novelist, playwright, essayist, theorist, translator, film-maker, editor, journalist, even a drummer, and an actor. Nazrul knew at least six languages and even sporadically wrote lyrics in both Hindi and Urdu. He was a political activist and even a founder of a political party to boot.

Over the years numerous works on Nazrul have been produced. Some of them are surely important and interesting. Yet many areas of Nazrul’s works have remained unexplored or relatively unexplored. One such area, I submit, is his nonfiction prose. I argue that Nazrul’s nonfiction prose instructively reveals his poetics, politics, philosophy, and praxis all at once. I also argue that his prose is not only performative but also insurgent and even insurrectionary. He makes us see what the feminist musician Ani DiFranco said once: “Every tool is a weapon if you hold it right.”

Let me, then, briefly map out the terrain of Nazrul’s nonfiction prose. It encompasses hundreds of his editorials, short articles/essays, notes, letters, and even speeches, spanning a period from 1920 to 1940. But Nazrul was most active in this genre throughout the second decade of the last century. Some of Nazrul’s major works of nonfiction prose include his four books—*Joogbani*, *Dhumketu*, *Durdiner Jatree*, and *Rudramangal*. They are mostly collections of the editorials and short essays Nazrul had written for the daily *Nabajoo* and the biweekly *Dhumketu*. And Nazrul edited both of them with exemplary commitment and conviction as well as with oppositional rage and rigor. Nazrul also wrote a great deal of nonfiction prose for two other magazines—the weeklies called *Langal* and *Ganabani*—

ones that Nazrul himself edited.

In fact, Nazrul was passionately involved in the editing of *Langal*. Fully devoted to the causes of peasants and workers, *Langal* was a mouthpiece for Nazrul’s own Labor Swaraj Party. This weekly published not only some popular works on Marx and Lenin but also works by Chittaranjan Das and Subhas Chandra Bose, among many others. Saumyendranath Tagore—a communist activist, Nazrul’s close comrade, and Rabindranath Tagore’s grand-nephew—was the first translator of *The Communist Manifesto* into Bengali. Nazrul serially published Saumyendranath’s translation in *Langal*.

Further, Nazrul contributed to other newspapers and magazines, the number of which, according to one estimate, exceeds even 100! In other words, Nazrul’s nonfiction prose can by no means be dissociated from his relentless interventions in the field of journalism—oppositional, insurrectionary, mass-line journalism, that is. We would do well to remember that six of his books of both poems and nonfiction prose were banned by the British colonial government in India—an unprecedented event in the history of the world. Those books were banned not only because his voice was insurrectionary but also because his voice was powerful and popular.

2 Indeed, throughout 1920, Nazrul wrote for the daily *Nabajoo* scores of fierce editorials, taking to heart—so to speak—the revolutionary imperative Karl Marx registered once: “[...] rub your conceptual blocs together in such a way that they catch fire!” In his editorials Nazrul mobilizes powerful poetic metaphors and vivid images in order to make his points about society, politics, culture, and history, among other things. In fact, Nazrul effectively blurs the borderlines between an editorial and an impassioned prose-poem, inaugurating an exciting chapter in the history of editorial journalism.

Take, for instance, “Naboojoog”—the first editorial-turned-essay in his book *Joogbani*—a piece in which the poetic and the political and the philosophical exemplarily intersect, attesting to Nazrul’s distinctive rhetorical élan and *elan*. Taking emancipation itself as the ontological basis of humanity, Nazrul poetically invokes—in that editorial—the trinity of his favorite revolutions such as the Irish Revolution, the Turkish Revolution, and, above all, the Russian Revolution of 1917 in order to issue a call-to-action for people’s liberation from colonial rule in India.

Later, in 1922, in the pages of *Dhumketu*, Nazrul openly and publicly raises and declares—for the first time in the country’s

history—the demand for the full independence of India from British colonial rule. But at that time Gandhi and his acolytes wanted to remain merely content with the dominion status of India. Nazrul remains consistently critical of this position in his nonfiction prose and even in his humorous, satirical pieces. I should note parenthetically: Nazrul boldly politicizes humor, wit, irony, and, above all, his satirical enunciation in his nonfiction prose, making the point that the question of style is not only an aesthetic question but also a political one.

The dialectical interplay between the aesthetic and the political in Nazrul’s nonfiction prose remains indivisible from the question of human emancipation which continues to constitute Nazrul’s overarching theme throughout much of his nonfiction prose. Nazrul later comes to constellate



his insistence on the full independence of India with the question of the total emancipation of humanity in his essay called “Mushkil,” lending credence to his brand of revolutionary humanism and robust internationalism, while also anticipating certain insights of some of the well-known third-world theorists and activists such as the African Marxist revolutionary Amílcar Cabral and the Caribbean anticolonial revolutionary Frantz Fanon, for instance.

Within the thematic horizon of human emancipation, one can surely locate an impressive range of issues and concerns Nazrul dwells on in his nonfiction prose. For instance, Nazrul—as early as the 1920s—writes in his essay called “Sangskritir Charcha” [The Practice of Culture] about what Fanon later calls the “perverted logic

of colonialism” and about how people deeply and even unconsciously *internalize* colonialist values. The African writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o—in his *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986)—theorizes how the mind itself comes to be colonized, and he accentuates the need for decolonizing it. Nazrul clearly anticipates Ngugi. Nazrul calls attention to both the land and the mind—sites that are colonized—while urging us to emancipate them, although Nazrul does not use the term “decolonization” as such.

But Nazrul repeatedly deploys the phrase “mental slavery”—*moner golami*—reminding one of the Jamaican singer Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song”: “Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery/ None but ourselves can free our minds!” Astonishingly, Nazrul even makes an appeal to the “unconscious” in *Dhumketu* back in 1922: “Rise, ye

unconscious! Know yourself!” He seems to be hinting at what might be called the ideological unconscious of the colonized subject.

No doubt Nazrul’s nonfiction prose establishes him as a major anticolonial revolutionary, whose concerns with the four sites of anticolonial struggles—*land, labor, language, and the body*—remain deeply pronounced throughout his oeuvre. Nazrul shows—in various contexts and configurations—how those four sites (including the body which, for Nazrul, surely involves the mind against the grain of the Cartesian mind/body split) remain colonized. But he writes about quite a range of other issues as well.

Some of Nazrul’s subjects then include: the need for recuperating our own cultural and

conceptual resources; the radical notion of non-hierarchical mass leadership, as Nazrul says: “Who’s your leader? Your conscience is your leader, your sense of responsibility is your leader!”; the need for confronting and combatting *all* forms and forces of oppression as the proof of our sense of humanity; music as performance or praxis; the politics of world literature and literary universalism; education and curriculum; and the marginalia of the everyday, as he delineates the contours of the social topology in his nonfiction prose.

Also, Nazrul writes not only about communalism—one of his predominant themes—but also about racism way more competently and passionately than any creative writer in Bengal during his time. His understanding of “communalism” as being both structural and deeply “internalized” is simply remarkable. The question of racism is particularly taken up in his piece “Kaala Admeek Gooli Mara” [Shooting Black Folks]. Nazrul clearly sees the dialectic between colonialism and racism; he sees—almost like the Caribbean Marxist CLR James—how racism turns out to be colonialist and colonialism in turn racist. Nazrul even evinces a revolutionary ecological consciousness as early as 1920. Mark, then, Nazrul’s Englishian pronouncement: “None can ever achieve a victory by waging war against nature.”

In his ecologically engaged piece “Roj Keyamat Ba Proloy Din” (1920), Nazrul zeroes in on the environmental dangers of coal-excavating projects—ones that persist with a vengeance in the era of disaster capitalism today. Nazrul even foresees our times of environmental and economic crises, systemically produced as they are. In some ways, Nazrul also speaks to our coronavirus-ridden global conjuncture that has exposed class-race-gender inequalities, to say the least. And, true, Nazrul never loses sight of the sources and systems of oppression. More clearly in his nonfiction prose than anywhere else, Nazrul seeks to identify and dismantle these four interconnected systems of oppression—capitalism, colonialism, racism, and patriarchy—in the interest of nothing short of the total emancipation of humanity.

Given space constraints, I think I have merely scratched the surface of Nazrul’s nonfiction prose, meaning that it calls for further exploration in a world where the question of human emancipation is more relevant than ever.

Azfar Hussain teaches in the Integrative, Religious, and Intercultural Studies Department within the Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Grand Valley State University in Michigan, and is Vice-President of the Global Center for Advanced Studies, New York, USA.

From Kazi Nazrul Islam's The Autobiography of a Vagabond

TRANSLATED BY NASHID KAMAL

PRELUDE

In 1917 when Kazi Nazrul Islam joined the British army, he was sent to the barracks in Karachi. There he met another fellow soldier who narrated this story to the poet. This is his first published work.



Dear friend, are you sure you want to listen to this? I am a person with a harsh exterior and a soft heart. When you insist that I have to tell you my story, I feel very emotional and stressed out.

I don't remember much about my childhood. I was miserable in my studies but excelled in sports like playing marbles. I was spoilt like the young Lord Krishna and was Alexander the Great to my friends.

Bankim Chandra wrote a very interesting poem on Sri Radha. She was angry at Ram, and Ram was reading this to appease her. I had memorized this poem and was once loudly reciting it to my friends at my *pathshala*. I never had a chance to know if Radha was actually convinced by this poem. My Pundit arrived and grabbed me from behind like a snake. He was so enraged that he took me by my ear and struck my head to the wall. Insinuating at my forefathers he showered me with profanities. My anger took the best of me. I landed a 250 pounds of assault on him and sped home. Fearful of my father's wrath, I ran to the storeroom and hid among the kegs of rice. From my hideout I could clearly hear the Pundit speaking to my father. He accused me of having no merit in my studies and that I had uttered foul things about his wife. He further cursed that I would surely grow leprosy and he would say special prayers so that I go to hell.

I later learned that Radha was the name of the Pundit's wife and he thought I was ridiculing her. My father banished me from my village to Burdwan where

I was admitted to an English medium school known as the New School.

In the beginning, I felt like a fish out of water. I was fresh from the village and the young men in my school treated me like a rat. Soon, however, I got used to their fancy ways and actually became their leader. The same boys were now afraid of me as they got a taste of my strength. In a few months, I became a master, not necessarily of my studies, but of all other devious ways.

My father was not a rich man but he sent monthly allowances at regular intervals. He was not aware of my wicked habits. I gave him no reason to suspect as I passed my school finals every year. My teachers, among whom was the head master too, were very curious to learn how I managed to pass. I managed this by cheating and bribing and reached my third class.

My mother always found excuses for my pranks and showered me with love. Upon her insistence I even got married. I was in the third class but my excuses bore no value. Of course, I also liked the young lady. She was about twelve years old when I was nineteen.

In general, newly married women are supposed to be shy. They are not to open their eyes, and neither did she. She occasionally took furtive glances at things and closed her eyes again. She was afraid of being rebuked. If she spotted me, she would turn into a tortoise. She wrapped herself in layers of dress material and it was impossible for me to understand

if the bundle was a human being. If I looked the other way, she would sneak a peek at me from under the veil of her Benarasi sari. If I looked at her, she would close her eyes and pretend to be very serious. I would come out of the room and narrate this story to everyone. My mother would say, “Are you going to remain a child forever?” My sisters would not spare my wife. They would embarrass her with awkward questions. I was very amused by all these. Soon I realized that this young woman Rabeya had begun to fall in love with me. She was afraid to come near me, but she kept on eying me from the other side of the wooden door. Aware of her presence I sang:

*She evokes sympathy with her beautiful eyes
Wonder what she wants to say, wonder why she shies away?*

Through my playfulness I proclaimed my love for her. Then it was time for my final exams and my father wanted me to go back to Burdwan. Before leaving, I held her hands and said, “O my dearest, please forgive my pranks. Do remember me when I'm gone.” She did not say anything, but her tears spoke for her. After I let go of her hands, she ran to the bed and threw herself down. She hid her face and started crying. I controlled my emotions and went back to school. I did not know then that it was my first and last kiss on her.

I never met her again. Two months later, I got the news that she had passed away in her paternal home. I returned to Burdwan with a broken heart which was never mended.

As time passes pain also lessens. I was promoted to the first class and my school closed down. I went to seek admission in Raniganj, hoping that the change would add to my healing.

You will be surprised to learn that I got married again. I did not plan on marriage but surrendered to my mother's will again. In this young woman, I may have been looking for my Rabeya. However, God did not will it that way. Sakina was quite talented and good-looking but I did not feel attracted to her. I tried hard, but could not love her. The fault was mine. I felt guilty and went back to Raniganj to take the final exam. I failed.

My father was informed of this failure. He sent me a long letter saying that I was a worthless fellow and wasting so much money on me was a huge shame. I turned into a vagabond. Many people suggested that I should seek mental counseling. I did not care about them. My hostel manager threw me out and I returned to Burdwan. I joined my former group of rowdy students. My father decided to disown me. Then I got the news that Sakina had passed away. She was still crying for me when she died. She carried an old photograph of mine. Six months later, my mother passed away too. I started drinking to my heart's content. Then I joined the army and here I am, looking to refill my glass. May I have another, please?

Nashid Kamal is an Academic, Nazrul exponent and Nazrul translator.

SPORT

KVITOVA WINS 'BIZARRE' CZECH TOURNAMENT

From face masks, racquet bumps, poplar tree fluff everywhere and the prospect of a final played at the press centre, Prague's first post-lockdown tennis tournament offered a plethora of bizarre moments. The three-day all-Czech event, pitting eight women and eight men, which ended on Thursday, was played under tight health protocols to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus. "The gloves, face masks, the fact nobody handed us the towels, no handshakes, that was definitely bizarre. And playing without people, the atmosphere was not exactly what we are used to," said two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitová after winning the women's part of the event. -- AFP



With the announcement being made that Serie A will recommence from June 20, league leaders Juventus went into training at the Juventus Training Centre in Turin on Thursday full of vigour and enthusiasm, reflected in these two pictures of Paulo Dybala and Gianluigi Buffon. Their Portuguese talisman Cristiano Ronaldo was also present, but he was still training in isolation.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Serie A to resume on June 20

Italy's Serie A will be given the green light on Thursday to resume on June 20 after a three-month absence as one of the countries hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic begins to ease restrictions. Sports Minister Vincenzo Spadafora said that the government's Technical and Scientific Committee (CTS) had agreed to the health protocol proposed by Italian football chiefs. "Italy has started to return to normal life again, it is only right that football should do the same," said Spadafora.

"The federation assured me that it had a Plan B and a Plan C. "In light of these considerations, the championship can resume on June 20." Italian football federation (FIGC) president Gabriele Gravina told the minister during the video conference there would be a play-off system if the championship were again interrupted, while the existing standings would be used if it was stopped. "We had a very useful meeting," said Spadafora. "From the start, I said that football could restart once all the security conditions had been met." No top-flight matches in Italy have been played since Sassuolo beat Brescia 3-0 on March 9.

Online chess for local players soon

Having gathered experience from Asian Junior and Girls Online Chess (Zone-3.2) competition held on Thursday, Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) is planning to organise an online chess tournament for the local players to keep them active amid the coronavirus pandemic. FIDE, the world game's governing body, has provided the chess federation with 5000 US dollars to deal with the pandemic, and BCF wants to use this fund for two purposes -- holding an online tournament either for seniors or juniors and arranging an online training camp for budding players. "After being involved with Asian junior online chess tournament, it is now clear how to organise online chess. Harunur Rashid was one of

arbiters of the tournament and oversaw the process of rapid chess. I also observed how chess was organised by Zoom, through which each player came under surveillance, so that no competitor could not take any help from any device or person," BCF general secretary Syed Shahabuddin Shamim explained to The Daily Star yesterday. "We are seriously thinking of organising an online rapid chess tournament to keep the players' brains active as they have been idle for a long time," Shamim said. "I will soon sit with BCF president Benazir Ahmed to discuss the details of the tournament. If he gives us green signal, we will proceed to organise online rapid tournament and online training for the budding players." Asked whether players have the technology at home to take

part in online chess, Shamim said: "Everyone will not get the opportunity to train because of limitation of technologies such as mobile phones or computers, internet and uninterrupted electricity, so we have to sort out the players who have the facilities." The BCF general secretary also said that they would hold two more tournaments for disabled people and prisoners once the situation improves as they got the approval from FIDE's Social Act Commission, which is using chess as a tool for social development, social change and gender equality. "I had an online meeting with Social Act Commission of FIDE yesterday [Thursday] and FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich joined the meeting for the first time. Social Act Commission have sought suggestions from different

countries on how to organise chess competition amid coronavirus pandemic," said Shamim, who is a councillor of the commission. "The FIDE president also wanted to know what steps Bangladesh has taken in chess. We have two proposals in which we want to organise the chess tournament for disabled person and prisoners. We will organise prison chess once the current situation is improved a bit," said Shamim. "We have already made an agreement with a local organisation to arrange chess for disabled persons while the plan regarding prison chess is to hold the first edition with 100 women and children, who are in prison. Our aim is to entrain prisoners as well as to divert their attention from crime because playing chess increases individual's awareness and sharpness," Shamim said.

Hales, Plunkett not included in 55-man camp

Alex Hales and World Cup-winner Liam Plunkett were both left out of a mammoth 55-man England training group announced Friday. But 14 uncapped players were selected as England look to stage a full Test and limited-overs programme against West Indies, Pakistan, Ireland and Australia despite the coronavirus delaying the start of their home season until at least July.

Among those recalled was David Willey, who lost his place in the ODI squad to Jofra Archer shortly before England won the World Cup for the first time last year. Official squads will be named at a later date, with three Tests against the West Indies set to be played behind closed doors at bio-secure venues, such as Old Trafford in Manchester, first up for England this season. The group will not train in one place, but with individual sessions across several county venues, that started with bowlers back in the nets last week, the only form of training allowed at present.

"The pool of players will give selectors strong options when it comes to selecting squads across formats further down the line, as we move closer to our aim of playing international cricket this summer," said ECB performance director Mo Bobat, who helped England coach Chris Silverwood and the selectors compile the list.

Nottinghamshire opener Hales was dropped shortly before last year's World Cup after it emerged he had tested positive for drugs. There had been speculation that, with England likely to need separate red and white-ball squads, Hales might be recalled.

But England one-day captain Eoin Morgan dashed Hales' hopes on Wednesday when he said "it will take more time" for him to regain the trust of the squad.

WHAT TO WATCH

BUNDESLIGA

- Star Sports Select 2
Wolfsburg v Eintracht Frankfurt
Live from 7:30pm
- Bayern Munich v Fortuna Dusseldorf
Live from 10:30pm
- Star Sports Select 1
Schalke v Werder Bremen
Live from 7:30pm



Players vie for the ball as fans are seen on screens on the sidelines during the 3F Super League football match between AGF and Randers FC at Ceres Park in Aarhus, Denmark on May Thursday. The football season resumed following a two-month break due to COVID-19 pandemic.

PHOTO: AFP

Glory for Ajax and the Bosman ruling which changed football

When Patrick Kluivert scored the winner for Ajax in the 1995 Champions League final, it might have been the start of another period of domination for the Dutch side. Instead it was a victory which in many ways marked the end of an era for the club who had won the European Cup three years running in the 1970s, and for the game as a whole. Since that night a quarter of a century ago in Vienna, when the Amsterdam side defeated AC Milan 1-0, only once has a club from outwith the continent's four leading leagues -- Italy, Germany, Spain and England -- lifted the trophy. That was Porto, winners in 2004 under Jose Mourinho. Football was already changing before Ajax raised the trophy aloft, following the introduction in 1992 of the Champions League as well as the Premier League in England. But the most fundamental change came a few months later in the shape of the Bosman ruling. In December 1995, after a five-year battle, the European Court of Justice ruled in favour of Belgium's Jean-Marc Bosman in his fight to be allowed to leave his club, RFC Liege, on a free transfer as his contract had expired. Previously clubs could retain the

registrations of players even after contracts finished and demand transfer fees for them. As Bosman said in 2015, "it was illogical". But it did help small clubs ward off predators. That was to be no more, and the free movement of players has helped revolutionise the game. At Ajax, that triumphant team coached by Louis van Gaal was not immediately torn apart in 1995, even if 19-year-old Clarence Seedorf left for Sampdoria and Frank Rijkaard retired. Seven of those who started in Vienna also started the 1996 final, which Ajax lost on penalties to Juventus. Then the exodus began, with Michael Reiziger and Edgar Davids heading to AC Milan for free. Kluivert, who came off the bench to prod home the winner in Vienna, ended up at Milan in 1997. "It was difficult to prepare, as no one really knew what the consequences would be," Van Gaal recalled of the ruling in an interview years later. Van Gaal went on to win trophies with Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Manchester United but acknowledged the impact on clubs outside the elite, saying they "suffered negative consequences". The ruling contributed to the concentration of talent at the very

top, although it also opened up some unlikely opportunities. Take the example of striker Scott Booth, who in 1997 left an Aberdeen team who were sixth in Scotland's top flight to join Champions League winners Borussia Dortmund. "The Bosman thing was sort of hanging around, knowing I had three months left on my contract and then I was a free agent," Booth tells AFP. Booth then went on to enjoy success in the Netherlands. Such a career path is now the norm for footballers in Europe, a far cry from the days before the Bosman ruling, when clubs could only field three foreigners in their line-ups in Champions League games. Fast forward to 2019 and only seven Englishmen lived the all-English final between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur. In the 10 years up to 1995, clubs from seven different countries won the European Cup, including Steaua Bucharest and Red Star Belgrade. Such diversity is unlikely to be seen again, even if Ajax came close last season, losing in agonising fashion to Spurs in the semifinals. A select few now dominate the European landscape, something that is unlikely to change even in the post-pandemic world.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার					
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় লালমনিরহাট					
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০১/২০২০-২০২১					
২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বছরের ১ম কোয়ার্টারের (জুলাই, আগস্ট ও সেপ্টেম্বর/২০২০) লালমনিরহাট জেলা পুলিশ বাহিনীর সদস্যদের জন্য নির্ধারিত রেশন সামগ্রী ত্রয়, গম পেয়াই, খালি বস্তা বিক্রয় এবং কুলি সহ রেশন সামগ্রী পরিবহন এর নিমিত্তে "পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন, ২০০৬" এবং "পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা, ২০০৮" ও এ সংক্রান্ত তৎপরবর্তী সংশোধিত বিধিবিধান মোতাবেক অভিজ্ঞ ডিকালার/সরবরাহকারীর নিকট হতে নির্ধারিত সিডিউলে সীলমোহরকৃত বামে প্রতিযোগিতামূলক পৃথক পৃথক দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।					
১। মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	৪। স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়/পুলিশ বিভাগ।				
২। সংস্থা	৫। বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।				
৩। দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী প্রধান	৬। পুলিশ সুপার, লালমনিরহাট।				
৪। কি কারণে দরপত্র আহ্বান	৭। জেলা পুলিশের রেশন সামগ্রী ত্রয়।				
৫। দরপত্র সূত্র নং	৮। ন্যাক নং-৬০/রেশন, তারিখঃ ২৭/০৪/২০২০ত্রিঃ।				
৬। তারিখ	৯। ২৭/০৪/২০২০ত্রিঃ।				
কাজের বিবরণঃ					
১। দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি	২। উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র।				
৩। অর্থের উৎসঃ					
৪। বাজেট ও অর্থনৈতিক খাত	৫। রাজস্ব খাত।				
তথ্যাদিঃ					
৬। দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ	৭। ০১/০৬/২০২০ খ্রিঃাব্দে মাসে।				
৮। দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	৯। ২১/০৬/২০২০ত্রিঃ বিকাল ১৭.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।				
১০। দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১১। ২২/০৬/২০২০ত্রিঃ দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা।				
১২। দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	১৩। ২২/০৬/২০২০ত্রিঃ দুপুর ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা।				
১৪। দরপত্র মূল্যায়নের তারিখ ও সময়	১৫। ২৩/০৬/২০২০ত্রিঃ দুপুর ১৪.০০ ঘটিকা।				
	অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা				
১৬। দরপত্র তত্ত্বাবধি/সিডিউল বিক্রয়কারী অফিস	১। পুলিশ সুপার, লালমনিরহাট-এর কার্যালয়।				
	২। ডিআইজি, হংপুর রেঞ্জ-এর কার্যালয়।				
১৭। দরপত্র গ্রহণকারী/অফিস	৩। পুলিশ সুপার, লালমনিরহাট-এর কার্যালয়।				
১৮। দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	৪। পুলিশ সুপার, লালমনিরহাট-এর কার্যালয়।				
১৯। দরপত্র সম্পর্কিত তথ্যঃ					
২০। দরপত্রের যোগ্যতা	১। হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স ২। আয়কর সনদ ৩। ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদ ৪। ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি সনদ ৫। অন্যান্য যোগ্যতা যাচা টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট/সিডিউল (PG-2/PG-3)-এ উল্লিখিত আছে।				
২১। মালদানের বিবরণঃ					
ক্রম নং	আইটেম	পরিমাণ	সিডিউলের মূল্য প্রতিটি (অফেন্ডেডেড)	জামানতের পরিমাণ	কাজ সম্পন্ন করার সময়
১।	মতর জাল (দেশী-উন্নতমানের ১,৫০০ কেজি ও ২,০০০ কেজি স্বচ্ছ পলিপ্যাকে)	১৯৫ কুইন্টাল	=৭৫০/-	=৫০,০০০/-	কার্ভোদেশ মোতাবেক
২।	সয়াবিন তেল-সিডিউল "এ" সমূহ (BSTI অনুমোদিত)	১৮০০০ লিটার	=৭৫০/-	=৫০,০০০/-	ঐ
৩।	আলানি কাঠ (আম খড়)	২৫০ কুইন্টাল	=৪০০/-	=২,০০০/-	ঐ
৪।	পোশাও-এর চাউল (কালিজিরা)	৮৫০ কেজি	=৪০০/-	=২,০০০/-	ঐ
৫।	গম ভাণ্ডানো (৫ কেজি ও ২ কেজি স্বচ্ছ পলিপ্যাকে)	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	=৪০০/-	=১০,০০০/-	ঐ
৬।	ক) গমের পুরাতন খালি চটের বস্তা (৫০ কেজির) বিক্রয় খ) চাউলের পুরাতন খালি চটের বস্তা (৩০ কেজির) বিক্রয় গ) চিনির পুরাতন খালি সিনথেটিক বস্তা বিক্রয়	২৪৪২টি ২৬৬৭টি ২২০টি	=৪০০/-	=২,০০০/-	ঐ
৭।	কুলি সহ পরিবহন (চাউল, গম ও চিনি)	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	=৪০০/-	=৪,০০০/-	ঐ
১৭।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম	৪। আবিদা সুলতানা বিপিএম, পিপিএম।			
১৮।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী	৫। পুলিশ সুপার, লালমনিরহাট।			
১৯।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা	৬। পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, লালমনিরহাট।			
২০।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম	৭। email: splalmonirhat@police.gov.bd			
২১।	বিশেষ শর্তাবলীঃ				
	ক) নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের পর আর কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।				
	খ) কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন অথবা সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ কিংবা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।				
	গ) দরপত্র উন্মুক্ত হলে কোন আইটেমের পরিমাণ বৃদ্ধি অথবা কমানোর বিষয়ে কর্তৃপক্ষের ক্ষমতা রয়েছে।				
	ঘ) দরপত্র পিপিআর/২০০৬ ও পিপিআর/২০০৮ মোতাবেক সকল শর্তাবলী কার্যকর হবে।				
আবিদা সুলতানা বিপিএম, পিপিএম বিপি-৭৩০৩০২৭৮০৯ পুলিশ সুপার লালমনিরহাট ফোনঃ ৬১৪০৩/ফ্যাক্সঃ ৬১৫৬৮					
তারিখ-১৯৯					

Buy paddy, not rice

A study on govt's Boro procurement suggests this will increase market price of paddy

PINAKI ROY

To ensure fair prices for Boro farmers, the government under its procurement programme should only buy paddy from the growers instead of rice from millers, a study suggested.

It showed that last year the market price of Boro paddy could have increased by 45 percent had the government purchased only paddy from farmers for its rice stock.

Analysing last year's data, the research, titled "Boro Rice Procurement in Bangladesh: Implications for Policy" revealed that rice procurement from millers accounted for 81.1 percent of total government procurement.

The remaining 18.9 percent of the procurement was purchased in the form of paddy from farmers.

In 2019, the government bought four lakh tonnes of paddy from farmers at Tk 26 per kg and 11.5 lakh tonnes of rice from millers at Tk 36 per kg.

Only 1.34 percent of all farmers, who sold Boro last year, could supply their produce to the government depots.

Others sold Boro paddy for an average of Tk 15.4 per kg in the open market.

This prompted the Ministry of Agriculture to commission the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to conduct a research on the government's Boro paddy procurement, said Akhter Ahmed, country representative, IFPRI Bangladesh.

Last week, the study, funded by the United States Agency

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Farmers carrying the Boro harvest that was submerged under collected rainwater in a field in Sylhet's Companiganj yesterday. Heavy rainfall over the past few days has inundated the farmlands of the area. This photo was taken in Companiganj's Khagail area.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

India's virus death toll tops that of China

The Americas, Russia see surge in deaths

AGENCIES

India's coronavirus death toll passed neighbouring China's yesterday, with 175 new fatalities in 24 hours taking the total to 4,706, according to official data.

India, home to some of the world's most packed cities and a creaking healthcare system, is emerging as a new hotspot with record jumps in new cases in recent days.

Figures from India's health ministry showed 165,799 infections, with western Maharashtra state -- home to the finance hub of Mumbai -- accounting for 36 percent of cases and 42 percent of deaths.

China, where the deadly virus emerged late last year, reported no new deaths or new suspected cases yesterday, with the toll still at 4,634 and a total of 82,995 infections.

Even though the number

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

First treaty with the US inked



A French delegation calls on Bangabandhu at Bangabhaban on 30 May, 1972.

May 30, 1972

SHAMSIDDOZZA SAJEN

JUTE EXPORT NATIONALISED

The government has taken a decision to nationalise export of jute, informs Commerce Minister MR Siddiqi today at a meeting organised by the Bangladesh Jute Association. A Jute Export Corporation will be set up soon, he adds, which will handle all the exports of jute abroad. It will also explore new markets for Bangladeshi jute products. Existing jute exporters can work as agents of the Corporation. The main reason behind this government move, says the minister, is to check corruption in the jute sector and ensure fair price for jute producers.

TK 66 CR AMERICAN AID FOR BANGLADESH

Donald G MacDonald, deputy director of USAID, today informs

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Zia's death anniversary today

UNB, Dhaka

The BNP will observe the 39th death anniversary of its founder and former president Ziaur Rahman today.

The BNP and pro-BNP socio-political organisations have drawn up different programmes, including online discussions, and distribution of food and clothes among the destitute, to mark the day.

Zia founded the party in 1978. He was assassinated by some army officers at Chittagong Circuit House on May 30, 1981.

Born on January 19, 1936, in Bogura's Bagbari, Zia was a sector

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

TREATING COVID-19 PATIENTS

Expand scope for plasma therapy

Health experts urge govt, say this could save lives

PORIMOL PALMA

Medical experts have urged the government to undertake a national programme to expand the scope of convalescent plasma therapy for treating Covid-19 patients as the method has been gaining traction for its effectiveness.

The technical sub-committee on Covid-19 diagnosis and laboratory observed that there is a huge demand for the therapy and recommended that the government take action so that the people can have better access to the treatment.

The committee said public and private hospitals with necessary equipment can collect plasma and administer the therapy.

But there should be a regulatory body to guide and monitor the whole process, said a member of the sub-committee that made the recommendations at a meeting on May 20.

"Plasma of 21 people who recovered from Covid-19 has been collected at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. So far, 18 patients have received the therapy," said Prof MA Khan, haematologist at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

He said it was not possible for DMCH alone to meet the increasing demand for the therapy and recommended that the other hospitals be involved.

He also encouraged the initiatives of some private hospitals that have been collecting, supplying and administering the therapy.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra Founder and Trustee Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, who tested Covid-19 positive on May 24, has also received the plasma therapy.

The 79-year old physician, also a kidney patient, said he found plasma therapy very effective and that his organisation had decided to establish a plasma bank.

"Plasma therapy works like magic. I have realised it after receiving the therapy. I felt much energised after the therapy [on Thursday]. All patients should have access to this therapy," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Convalescent Plasma therapy can quickly develop a passive immune system in a patient's body which helps the person to fight against the virus, said Prof Khan, who is also the head of the technical

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Mammoth skeletons found at airport site in Mexico City



REUTERS, Zumpango

Alongside construction crews racing to build the Mexican capital's new airport, skulls and curving tusks of massive mammoths peek through the dirt as archaeologists dig up more and more bones belonging to the ice age's most famous mammal.

The latest discoveries include two huge skulls, along with scattered ribs and limbs, found just inside the perimeter of where a new civilian airport is being built, about 30 miles (50km) north of downtown Mexico City.

To date, some 70 individual

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Three more die with Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

At least three men died in the last two days with what appeared to be Covid-19 in Madaripur and Noakhali.

In Madaripur town, a 40-year-old man of Housedi area died at the isolation ward of Madaripur General Hospital yesterday morning.

He was admitted to the hospital on Wednesday with fever and breathing difficulties, but the symptoms kept getting worse afterwards, said

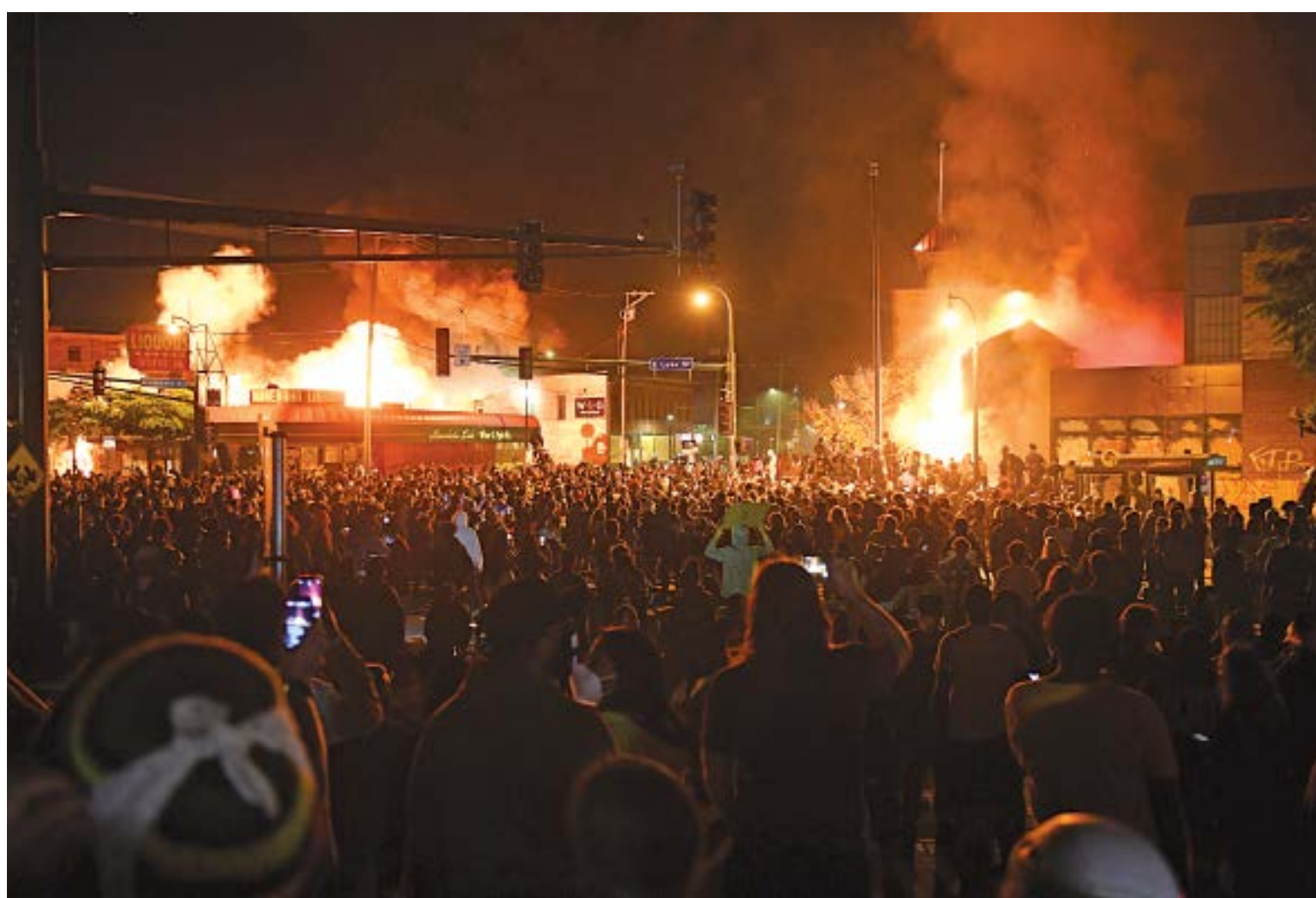
SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



PRAYER TIMING MAY 30

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-43 8-05
JAMAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-47 8-35

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Hundreds of demonstrators gather near the Minneapolis Police third precinct during the third day of demonstrations in response to the death of African-American man George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, US, on Thursday night.

PHOTO: REUTERS

POLICE BRUTALITY IN US Troops deployed amid raging riots

Police station set on fire in Minneapolis, shops looted as anger over killing of Afro-American man spread across the country

AGENCIES

Hundreds of troops deployed to the streets of Minneapolis and St. Paul early yesterday after a third night of rioting over police brutality against African Americans left hundreds of shops damaged and a police station on fire.

After the angry demonstrations spread overnight to multiple US cities, from New York to Phoenix, President Donald Trump blasted local officials and labelled the protestors "thugs" and threatened a harsh crackdown.

Black leaders continued to express outrage over the videotaped death of George Floyd, 46, while handcuffed on the ground and in custody of Minneapolis police on Monday. He died after one officer knelt on his neck for more than five minutes.

"People are angry they are frustrated because this is not the first police killing they have seen around the country," Al Sharpton, a prominent black rights activist, told MSNBC.

Trump indicated he would counter more street violence with more troops on the streets.

"These THUGS are dishonoring the memory of George Floyd, and I won't let that happen," Trump tweeted.

"Just spoke to (Minnesota) Governor Tim Walz and told him that the Military is with him all the way. Any difficulty and we will assume control but, when the looting starts, the shooting starts."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2