



SILK WEAVERS IN TROUBLE
Their livelihoods are in jeopardy as sales drop because of pandemic
SEE PAGE 12

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Tricked into deathtrap

Rohingya refugees describe how they survived two months drifting in the ocean with scanty food and water while many of their people perished

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

On April 14, a wooden vessel crammed with Rohingyas reached the Teknaf jetty. Those Rohingyas, all of whom were residents of different refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, tried to go to Malaysia in search of livelihood. Failing to reach the Malaysian coast, they drifted in the ocean for two months.

They ran out of food and fresh water. Diseases broke out and about 50 Rohingyas died on the voyage. Finally after two months, when Bangladesh coast guard rescued them, they found 396 severely starved, emaciated and nearly lifeless Rohingyas in the vessel.

The Daily Star learnt this from two of the survivors -- Md Yasin and Md Jubair. The two also gave a shocking description of the perilous journey, which seems something straight out of a movie.

'I was too weak to swim. I hoped I would be drifted ashore or rescued by a fishing boat. Even if I was arrested, at least I would be able to eat and drink something.'

MD JUBAIR, ONE OF THE SURVIVORS

Yasin, 25, and Jubair, 22, are two brothers living in the Kutupalong refugee camp. They came to Cox's Bazar in their early childhood with their parents and other relatives in the early 1990s.

"We are a large family of seven siblings, my parents and other relatives. It is difficult for us to maintain such an extended family just with relief materials. There are thousands of Rohingya youths like us who want to work but do not find any work opportunities in the camps," said Yasin.

For this reason, Md Mohsin, one of their brothers, went to Indonesia by boat from Teknaf several years ago. And, according to them, Mohsin finally managed to go to the USA from Indonesia and he is now living a good life there.

Such a "success" in the family inspired Yasin and Jubair to look for ways to reach

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Amena Begum, a 60-year-old heart patient, leans back in a chair at the Covid-19 unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday. Doctors at Ad-din hospital in Keraniganj had referred her to the DMCH as she was having breathing problems for three days. She had to move again with her son, inset, as DMCH physicians referred her to Mitford Hospital.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BANGLADESH UPDATE

3,243
New cases in 24hrs

1,05,535
Total cases

1,388
Deaths

42,945
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

454,889
Deaths

8,527,672
Total cases

COVID-19 FALLOUT
Global funding for Rohingyas likely to drop

PORIMOL PALMA

The global funding for the Rohingyas may fall short as the non-government organisations' (NGO) activities have drastically decreased amid coronavirus pandemic.

Besides, there might be shortage of funding in the future due to the pandemic-related economic recession.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, a total of \$308.7 million was sought from the international community for the Rohingyas for 2020, but only \$87 million or 27 percent of that has been funded as of May.

Humayun Kabir, former ambassador and vice president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, said funding for the Rohingyas would be more challenging in the coming days as the donor countries would focus on rebuilding their own economy after the pandemic.

"The situation of the Rohingyas is likely

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

DMCH struggles to meet rising ICU demand

Only 14 ICU beds for Covid-19 patients or those with symptoms

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Dhaka Medical College Hospital is struggling with inadequate ICU facility as a large number of critical Covid-19 patients are thronging the country's largest public hospital.

Against the demand for at least a hundred, it has only 14 ICU beds dedicated for Covid-19 patients or those showing the symptoms. The hospital has around 35 other ICU beds for general patients.

DMCH doctors said most of the Covid-19 patients and those suspected to have coronavirus come here in critical condition with severe shortness of breath and low oxygen level. Many of them need ICU supports.

"There are only 14 ICU beds for Covid-19 treatment. There is a long queue for ICU beds," said Alauddin Al-Azad, deputy director of DMCH, adding that they were trying to increase the number of ICU beds but it will take time.

On June 12, a retired government official, Engineer Shafiq Islam, 67, was admitted to DMCH's Covid-19 unit at Ward-602 with shortness of breath.

His nephew Aminul Islam said doctors immediately advised that the patient needs an intensive care unit, but any ICU bed for corona

patients at DMCH could not be found empty.

After frantic efforts, they could finally manage an ICU bed on Sunday evening. Hospital sources said they were lucky to get it in just two days.

DMCH is currently treating around 625 Covid-19 patients with the capacity for 750.

Prof Dr Mujibur Rahman, head of medicine department, said the old burn unit started admitting Covid-19 and suspected coronavirus patients on May 2. At present, it has 100 patients of surgery, gynaecology and paediatrics, who are coronavirus positive or have Covid-19 symptoms. Besides, over 500 coronavirus or suspected patients have been admitted at DMCH's new 10-storey building as of Tuesday.

If beds are filled here, the hospital's newly arrived Covid-19 or suspected patients would move to Railway Hospital, which has a 100-bed coronavirus unit, DMCH authorities said.

With the surge in the flow of patients, the number of deaths at DMCH is also apparently on the rise, according to hospital sources.

Over the last two weeks, 12 to 15 Covid-19 patients and those with coronavirus symptoms have died here every day, the sources said, adding that 11 Covid-19 patients died on Monday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

POSSIBLE DURATION OF PANDEMIC DGHS boss says sorry for comment

His apology comes after huge criticism from govt high-ups; 45 die, 3,243 test positive in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid a barrage of criticism, the director general of the health services directorate yesterday apologised for his comments on the possible duration of the coronavirus pandemic.

"A confusion was created over the remarks of Prof Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, made yesterday [on Thursday] during the daily bulletin. He is deeply regretful for it," said the DGHS in a statement.

It said the script of the DG's speech, which he was reading from during the online briefing, had been hastily prepared as the time of the briefing was approaching, and he couldn't review its contents carefully before going public.

During the daily briefing on Thursday, Azad said, "According to the experience of different countries of the world and observations of health scientists and public health experts, the coronavirus situation is not going to end in one, two or three months."

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5 more die showing Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

At least five people died with what appeared to be coronavirus in three districts since Thursday night.

Three of them lived in different neighbourhoods of Madaripur town, officials said.

A 58-year-old man in Thantoli area died at his home around 7:00am yesterday with fever and breathing problems.

Another 65-year-old man died at his home around the same time in Horikumariya area with cold, persistent coughing and breathing difficulties.

The other deceased was a 50-year-old man of Rasti area. He died around 8:00pm on Thursday night while being treated at Madaripur Sadar Hospital with Covid-19 symptoms.

In Faridpur town, a 48-year-old school teacher of Durgaboldi area died

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MANPOWER BUSINESS MP Shahid earned 2m dinars a year

Kuwaiti newspaper reports quoting investigators

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Laxmipur lawmaker Mohammad Shahid Islam used to earn around two million dinars a year from his manpower business in Kuwait, investigators found.

The prosecution came up with the findings after interrogating a number of victims and associates of Shahid alias Kazi Papul, leading Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Rai reported yesterday.

The prosecution listened to the statements of three employees -- two are directors of Shahid's manpower company and the other is an officer at the rank of colonel in the interior ministry.

"Investigations revealed that the annual net profits of the Bangladeshi MP are estimated at about two million dinars, after deducting all the money spent on others from bribes, sums and gifts in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Workers who were repairing a part of the capital's Manik Mia Avenue take shelter under a polythene sheet amid sudden rain. Light rain in parts of the city caused sufferings to day labourers yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Approve rapid test kits swiftly

Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder urges drug administration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoshasthaya Kendra yesterday urged the drug administration to approve its rapid antibody test kit which proved to be effective in testing antibodies in people who recovered from Covid-19.

"We are grateful to the technical committee at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University for recommending the antibody kit developed by Gonoshasthaya RNA Biotech Ltd. We hope the drug administration will implement the recommendation, register and approve its distribution at the earliest, considering the emergency," Gonoshasthaya Kendra Founder Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury said in a statement yesterday.

Gonoshasthaya received the performance trial report from the BSMMU on Thursday.

Trialing the antibody kit on 509 samples, the BSMMU on June 17 concluded that the GR Covid-19 Rapid Dot Blot Immunoassay Kit works correctly 70 percent of the time.

Zafrullah said this year was the birth centenary of Banbabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who named Gonoshasthaya and approved its land acquisition. The BSMMU, which is named after Banbabandhu, found the kit effective.

BSMMU and Gonoshasthaya have jointly brought the good news for the nation during such a critical period of time. "Everyone should be congratulated for this. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made special arrangements for this kit with high hopes."

Zafrullah read in the news that drug administration

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



BOLTON'S EXPLOSIVE CHARGES AGAINST TRUMP

John Bolton, the former US national security advisor, is making explosive allegations about President Donald Trump in a new memoir, "The Room Where It Happened." Here are some of the key claims in Bolton's book, as reported ahead of its publication by The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal:

ALL ABOUT RE-ELECTION
"I am hard-pressed to identify any significant Trump decision during my tenure that wasn't driven by re-election calculations," writes Bolton, who left his position in September. Despite widespread disputes with China, Bolton said that Trump asked his counterpart Xi Jinping in a meeting to boost purchases of soybeans and wheat in an explicit bid to help his chances of winning a second term through support from farmers. The episode has echoes of Trump's freeze on military aid as he pressed Ukraine's leader to dig up dirt on US domestic rival Joe Biden, a revelation that led to the president's impeachment by the House of Representatives.

FLIRTING WITH AUTOCRATS
Bolton, known for his hawkish views, says he was alarmed that Trump warmed up to autocratic leaders. He writes that Xi explained to Trump why China has detained masses of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims, in what US lawmakers charge may be a crime against humanity designed to destroy minority groups. Trump, hearing Xi argue that the camps are meant to reduce Islamic radicalism, agreed that the camps were "exactly the right thing to do," Bolton writes. "In my government experience, it was the most irrational thing I ever witnessed any president do," writes Bolton, 71, who has served under Republican presidents since Ronald Reagan. Trump also appeared to envy the behavior of autocrats, once saying that journalists he dislikes should be executed as they are "scumbags."

IGNORANT OF BASIC FACTS
Bolton, in line with previous reporting, writes that Trump appeared ignorant of basic facts about the world. He writes that Trump asked whether Finland, where he met his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, was part of Russia and voiced surprise when a British official told him the US ally had a nuclear arsenal. "Oh, are you a nuclear power?" Trump is quoted as saying, in what Bolton writes "was not intended as a joke."

DISMISSED BEHIND BACK
Bolton writes that he was not alone in his views and that Trump's aides widely disparaged him behind his back. Even Secretary of State Mike Pompeo -- publicly a stalwart ally of Trump who traveled four times to North Korea in 2018 -- privately dismissed Trump and especially his outreach to Kim, according to Bolton. Pompeo slipped a note to Bolton during Trump's historic first meeting with Kim in Singapore, saying of the president, "He is so full of shit," Bolton writes. Pompeo yesterday blasted Bolton for "spreading a number of lies, fully-spun half-truths and outright falsehoods".

SOURCE: AFP

BOLTON'S BOMBSHELL BOOK, SUPREME COURT VOTE ON 'DREAMERS'

Trump presidency in turmoil

AGENCIES

Donald Trump's turbulent presidency hit another turmoil after top ex-aid John Bolton declared him unfit for office in a bombshell book and the Supreme Court blocked a key part of his re-election vow to deport undocumented migrants.

The mounting drama around the Republican's already rocky re-election bid raised the stakes for his rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on Saturday -- the first he will have held since the US coronavirus lockdown began, but mired in controversy over whether it is safe.

Trump's once supremely self-confident march toward a second term was already in a hole due to criticism over his responses to the coronavirus pandemic and nationwide anti-racism protests.

A Supreme Court ruling against his administration's bid to remove protections for hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrants classified as "Dreamers" struck another body blow.

The 5-4 ruling, with conservative Chief Justice John Roberts joining the court's four liberals, upheld lower court decisions that found that Trump's 2017 move to rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, created in 2012 by his Democratic predecessor



Barack Obama, was unlawful.

The administration's actions, the justices ruled, were "arbitrary and capricious" under a federal law called the Administrative Procedure Act.

The ruling means that the roughly 649,000 immigrants, mostly young Hispanic adults born in Mexico and other Latin American countries, currently enrolled in DACA will remain protected from deportation and eligible to obtain renewable two-year work permits.

The ruling does not prevent Trump from trying again to end the program. But his administration

may find it difficult to rescind DACA - and win any ensuing legal battle - before the Nov. 3 election in which Trump is seeking a second term in office.

Trump's platform rests in large part on his promise to crack down on illegal immigration. His push to get the "Dreamers" deported symbolized that hardline position.

The ruling was doubly stinging because Trump has long boasted that his appointing of two justices succeeded in tilting the nation's top court to the right.

In an outburst on Twitter, Trump

called this and other recent rulings he didn't like "shotgun blasts into the face of people that are proud to call themselves Republicans."

He also faced a blistering insider attack from Bolton, a lifelong Republican who saw Trump from up close as national security advisor.

"I don't think he's fit for office. I don't think he has the competence to carry out the job," Bolton told ABC News to promote his book, "The Room Where it Happened."

The book -- which the White House is trying desperately to get blocked by court order -- alleges that Trump asked Chinese President Xi Jinping for re-election help, obstructed justice, and was no match for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Putin thinks he can play him like a fiddle," Bolton told ABC.

Trump, who has assiduously built his image as a president who is tough on China, lashed back at Bolton, calling him a "sick puppy" and dismissing the book as "fiction."

In an apparent bid to underline his tough stance, Trump threatened in a tweet that a "complete decoupling" between the deeply entwined US and Chinese economies is an "option."

Just the previous day, his hawkish trade ambassador Robert Lighthizer had told Congress this would be unfeasible.

Australia under cyberattacks from 'state-based actor'

AFP, Sydney

Australia's prime minister yesterday revealed his country was under a broad cyberattack from a "state-based actor" targeting government, public services and businesses, with suspicions falling on China.

Warning Australians of "specific risks" and an increased tempo of attacks, Scott Morrison told a press conference that a range of sensitive institutions had been hit.

"This activity is targeting Australian organisations across a range of sectors, including all levels of government, industry, political organisations, education, health, essential service providers and operators of other critical infrastructure," he said.

Morrison levelled blame at a "sophisticated state-based cyber actor", but declined to name the culprit, while saying that it could only come from one of a handful of states.

China, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Russia, the United States and a number of European countries are known to have developed advanced cyberwarfare capabilities.

But suspicions immediately fell on Beijing, which has clashed repeatedly with

Canberra as it looks to increase the cost of Australia speaking out against Communist Party interests.

Most recently Australia enraged China by calling for an investigation into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic.

But Canberra has also pushed back against what it describes as China's economic "coercion", covert influence campaigns and the use of technology companies like Huawei as a tool of intelligence gathering and geopolitical leverage.

China has warned its students and tourists against going to Australia, slapped trade sanctions on Australian goods and sentenced an Australian citizen to death for drug trafficking.

Last year Australia's parliament, political parties and universities were targeted by state-backed cyberattacks, with China seen as the likely culprit.

Public broadcaster ABC cited "senior sources" confirming that China was believed to be behind the ongoing attacks as well.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian yesterday said that China was "a staunch defender of cybersecurity" and has "always resolutely opposed and cracked down on all forms of cyberattacks".



DEBATE ON RACISM, POLICE BRUTALITY UN resolution will not mention US

AFP, Geneva

The United States is no longer mentioned in a draft resolution before the UN Human Rights Council condemning systemic racism and police brutality, a revised version of the text showed Friday.

The UN's top rights body is due to vote Friday afternoon on a draft resolution initially presented by African countries this week ahead of an urgent council debate sparked by the police killing of George Floyd in the United States.

But the initially strongly-worded text, which called for a high-level international investigation into police violence against people of African descent in the United States, has been repeatedly watered down in recent days, sparking outrage from rights groups.

First the call for an international investigation was removed, and in what appeared to be a final revision circulated around midday Friday, the text no longer mentions the United States.

In its current form, the draft resolution calls for United Nations rights chief Michelle Bachelet to "prepare a report on systemic racism, violations of international human rights law against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies."

It adds that the report should especially pay attention to "those incidents that resulted in the death of George Floyd and other Africans and of people of African descent, to contribute to accountability and redress for victims."

US keeps its promise to Taliban on troops cut

The United States has reduced its military presence in Afghanistan to the level negotiated with the Taliban, around 8,600 troops, the top US commander for the region said Thursday. "What I would tell you now is we have met our part of the agreement," General Kenneth McKenzie, the head of US Central Command, said. Under the February deal reached with the Taliban, the United States agreed to reduce its forces in Afghanistan from 12,000 troops to 8,600 by mid-July.

Dylan releases album

Legendary US folk singer Bob Dylan releases his first album of original songs in eight years yesterday with the ten-track "Rough and Rowdy Ways." Dylan's 39th studio album features a 17-minute ballad about the assassination of John F. Kennedy, as well as a tribute to American electric bluesman Jimmy Reed. "Rough and Rowdy Ways" is the Nobel winner's first collection of new material since "Tempest" in 2012, although he has released a number of cover albums in the interim.

'Into the Wild' bus removed from Alaska trail



The "Into the Wild" bus is no longer in the wild. Alaska officials on Thursday airlifted from a remote trail outside Denali National Park the wrecked bus made famous by the 1996 book and 2007 movie "Into the Wild," removing an object that drew hundreds of fans and sightseers. Too many people were putting themselves at risk trekking to the site where adventurer Christopher McCandless died of starvation in 1992, officials said. The ultimate fate of the dilapidated bus is unknown.

Four Confederate portraits removed from US Capitol



Four portraits of senior 19th century lawmakers who served in the Confederacy were removed from the US Capitol on Thursday in the latest manifestation of efforts to confront systemic racism and injustice in America. The paintings of the men, all former speakers of the House of Representatives, were taken down at the order of current Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "There is no room in the hallowed halls of Congress or in any place of honor for memorializing men who embody the violent bigotry and grotesque racism of the Confederacy," the top Democrat wrote to the US House clerk Thursday requesting their removal. The symbolic action preceded Friday's observance of Juneteenth, which commemorates the end of slavery in the US.

SOURCE: AFP



Palestinian demonstrators carry a cement block and burn tires as they clash with Israeli troops during a protest against Israel's plan to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, near the city of Ramallah, yesterday. Israel intends to annex West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley, as proposed by US President Donald Trump, with initial steps slated to begin from July 1.

PHOTO: AFP

Does infection create immunity?

Study raises questions on coronavirus 'immunity passports'

AFP, Paris

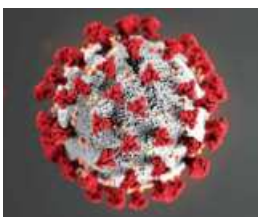
People who catch COVID-19 but don't show symptoms may have significantly lower levels of immunity against the virus than those who become severely ill, new research showed.

The majority of virus patients display relatively minor signs of infection, and a small proportion show no symptoms at all.

Very little is known about this group, given that they are far less likely to be tested than those who go on to develop severe symptoms including respiratory problems.

Researchers based in China compared two groups of individuals infected with COVID-19 in Chongqing's Wanzhou district: 37 who showed symptoms versus 37 who did not.

The researchers analysed blood samples from both groups taken a few weeks after recovering and found that just 62.2 percent of the asymptomatic group had short-term antibodies, compared with 78.4 percent of symptomatic patients.



After eight weeks of convalescence, antibody presence had fallen in 81.1 percent of asymptomatic patients, compared with 62.2 percent of symptomatic patients.

What's more, asymptomatic patients were found to have lower levels of 18 pro-inflammatory cell-signalling proteins than the symptomatic group, suggesting a weaker immune response to the novel coronavirus.

Authors of the study, which was published in Nature Medicine, said their findings called into question the idea that everyone who has had coronavirus are immune to future infection.

"These data might indicate the risks of using COVID-19 'immunity passports' and support the prolongation of public health interventions, including social distancing, hygiene, isolation of high-risk groups and widespread testing," they wrote.

Danny Altmann, a spokesman for British Society for Immunology said the research showed that natural immunity to coronaviruses can be quite short-lived.

NEWS IN brief

Seoul's unification minister resigns

AFP, Seoul

South Korea's Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul, its point man for relations with the North, stepped down yesterday over heightened tensions on the peninsula, days after Pyongyang blew up its liaison office with the South. Kim had offered to leave on Wednesday, a day after the North demolished the liaison office, saying he "takes responsibility" for the worsening of inter-Korean relations.

2 Canadians charged with spying in China

AFP, Beijing

China has formally charged two Canadians, ex-diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor, with spying, officials said yesterday, more than 18 months after they were arrested. The pair were detained shortly after Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was arrested in Canada on a US warrant. The move comes after a Canada court ruled that proceedings to extradite her to the US will go ahead.

8 J&K militants killed

AFP, Srinagar

Indian forces have killed eight militants in restive Kashmir, including two who hid in a mosque, officials said yesterday as New Delhi steps up offensive against separatists. The new fatalities take the death toll of alleged militants over 100 this year, officials said.



It's been a year...

Dr. Toufiq M. Seraj
(1956 - 2019)
Founder Managing Director,
SHELTECH

"To laugh often, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition, to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Thank you for your immense contribution toward making the world a better place.













How to Train your Dragon

FATHER'S DAY SPECIAL

Movies to watch with your dad at home

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Most of us will be spending Father's Day (June 21) at home this year, without any decadent outings. Luckily, streaming services have no shortage of family entertainers. Here's a list of movies you can enjoy with your dad at home.

Mayurakshi (2017)

Set in Kolkata, the movie revolves around 84 year-old Shushovan (Soumitra Chatterjee) and his middle-aged son, Aryanil (Prosenjit Chatterjee). Shushovan suffers from a neurological disorder, while Aryanil struggles to maintain healthy personal relationships. Their unplanned reunion sparks a ray of optimism in the latter's life as he travels to his next destination. This award-winning film, available on Netflix,

will definitely make you smile.

Sanju (2018)

Starring Ranbir Kapoor as Sanjay Dutt, *Sanju*, the popular actor's biopic, addresses his struggles with drug addiction and provides insights into his equation with his father, Sunil Dutt (Paresh Rawal). Directed by Rajkumar Hirani, the film is the story of a resilient father-son relationship. It is currently streaming on Netflix.

How To Train Your Dragon (2010)

Currently streaming on Netflix, this animated movie is based on a book of the same name by Cressida Cowell. The protagonist, Hiccup, has a troublesome relationship with his father. As the movies progress, their relationship improves to a great extent.

HowToTrainYourDragon brilliantly shows how the lack of communication often results in misunderstandings between people. Young viewers will be able to connect with the characters easily.

Like Father (2018)

This Netflix movie revolves around workaholic Rachel (Kristen Bell) and her father, Harry Hamilton (Kelsey Grammer). After her wedding is called off, Rachel sets off on an emotional journey with her estranged father on her honeymoon cruise. Although regarded to be a comedy film, the story progresses into certain emotional moments, as the duo reflect on their life choices of prioritising career before family. It is a great story about familial bonds and reconnecting with your loved ones.



Sanju



Like Father



Mayurakshi

"Corruption is at the root of the television industry's downfall"

- 'August 14' director Shihab Shaheen

SHARMIN JOYA

Acclaimed director and screenwriter Shihab Shaheen has gained prominence in the television fraternity with productions like *Romijer Ayna*, *X Factor* and numerous other tele-fictions over the past eighteen years. He made his debut in films with *Chhuye Dile Mon* in 2015. Recently, he directed *August 14*, the Binge series, featuring Tasnuva Tisha in the lead role. It is based on true events. In a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, the creator opens up about the problems in the industry and the popularity of web-based content in Bangladesh.

August 14 was widely appreciated by the audience and critics alike upon its release, for bringing a brave story to the forefront. Particularly, Tasnuva Tisha was lauded for her bold and brilliant performance. However, along with this series, some other productions streaming online have received legal notices, for their controversial content. "We have prepared the project with sincerity, staying true to all facts," explains Shihab. "I think the allegations made were absolutely baseless. I have reflected upon the plot points that were needed to build and understand the psychology of the lead character. I can confidently say there are no irrelevant scenes in *August 14*." Nonetheless, the director believes that everyone has the right to express their opinions and he is willing to respond to any questions accordingly.

According to Shihab, low budgets are a major obstacle for television productions. "Corruption is at the root of the television industry's downfall," he adds. "Some other obstacles include the lack of research and training. No one will go the extra mile if they aren't valued on the basis of their talent. Earning and survival are also necessary for artistes."

He further stressed that the huge number of productions that are usually made round the year are unnecessary. "I don't think a high-quality production can be made with a limited budget. Of course, there are exceptions, but those cannot be examples," he says. "There is no need to produce thousands of tele-fictions in a year. Rather, producing a few tele-fictions and increasing the budgets for each one

can result in excellent content." He also stated that the television channels are too business-oriented these days.

The objective of the television industry to provide entertainment and information, along with advertisement, was disrupted when corporates started dominating the sector. This monopoly feeds more advertisements and less entertainment. As



PHOTO: COLLECTED

a result, people are losing interest in the stories on television and are now leaning towards streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hoichoi, Binge and others. "Some directors have also moved to OTT platforms, where the budgets are higher and artistes have more scope to explore their talent," asserts Shihab. "The television industry needs to reform in order to compete with web platforms." Amid such conflicts, the quality of television projects is getting compromised. "When personal interests get in the way of a professional project, everything from the budget of the production to the selection of the cast, is hampered. The television industry has lost its grip over the content," adds Shihab. The director believes that the production culture can be changed by boycotting dishonest individuals and associations from the industry, who are only concerned about the revenues and not about how to draw the audience back to television through good content. He stressed that it is high time for sincere artistes and creators to join hands and overcome these challenges, otherwise the industry might lose its way in the long run.

"Shortcuts will not win you the love of the fans"

- Tahsan Khan

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

One of the most recognisable faces in Bangladesh's entertainment industry, Tahsan Khan has grown tremendously as an artiste over the past decade. The musician and actor, with his meticulous verbiage and gentlemanly charm, is a role model on conducting oneself as an artiste. The *No Land's Man* star talks to us about his latest projects, future plans and more.

Congratulations on A R Rahman joining No Land's Man as a co-producer and composer. Talk us through how you feel about this.

It is a dream for anyone to be associated with A R Rahman, one of the most sought-after musicians in the world. However, what makes me happy is the fact that after reading our script, he fell in love with

been live-recorded with my band, and the first song – *Protibadi Gaan* – is out now.

If returning to your roots was in your agenda this year, will we see you complete the 'full circle' with a Black reunion? I am definitely up for it. Although the former members might be in a different space musically as of now, we have no negativity among us. In fact, we discussed a Black reunion concert not too long ago.

Some musicians are implementing or condoning 'negative marketing' for their music, even disrespecting their own fans in the process. How do you feel about this kind of strategy?

It is said that anything negative, in any industry, spreads about five times faster than positivity. If artistes publicise their work in this way, it is completely their



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSEHD

it and wanted to co-produce the film. Echoing what he said in a recent interview, the film will capture the essence of the world of today.

You have been quite regular with your music, even amidst the pandemic. How do you motivate yourself amongst all the negativity?

This is a critical time for our industry. As artistes, we need to step up, if we have to survive. As for me, I plan out each year differently. Last year, I told you that I was going to focus on my films, which I was able to do. Even though the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted everyone's plans, I have decided that I will give back to the band music industry that has brought me where I am today. I have teamed up with Yamaha Music for Tahsan and the Band's upcoming album, *Shobar Jonno Na*. It has

choice. I will, however, say that these stunts will tarnish one's brand value for good, even if it garners them a few headlines in the short run. There is no substitute to hard work and good music, and shortcuts will not win you the love of the fans.

Do you have anything to say to the readers? I would like to request listeners to explore music and give a chance to different genres, so that artistes can go ahead and experiment with their sounds. If we all stubbornly stick to the one kind of music that we listen to, artistes will also become stagnant as they will hesitate to create anything that doesn't pertain to the 'formula' of success. Also, we should all appreciate the frontline workers – doctors, nurses and law enforcement agencies, for the sacrifices that they are making for us in these dire times.

ROKEYA SULTANA

The 'Madonna' of our time

ZAHANGIR ALOM

The saying, "The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world" rings true in the artistic journey and pursuits of renowned artist Professor Rokeya Sultana -- who has, over the years, created a hallmark of her own. Her vast volume of unique works speaks of that reality. Her art practice is largely focused on her internal life and exploration of the feminine as well as various fluid emotional states and sensual abstract topographies.

Rokeya Sultana completed her BFA in Printmaking from the Institute of Fine Art, University of Dhaka, and MFA in the same discipline from Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, India. A Fulbright Scholar from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, United States, she also received the French Government Scholarship. Many prestigious art galleries, museums and private collectors around the world have her works in their collections. For her outstanding contributions to different forms of art,



Rokeya Sultana

Rokeya Sultana has received many awards and accolades worldwide.

The sensitivity of womanhood and the creative power of motherhood have always shone through her artworks. The artist's *Relation* series sheds light on a symbolic meaning, with a deep philosophical connection.

Her *Madonna* series is a strong feminist statement of determined womanhood. In it,

'Madonna' represents the everyday woman, moving around in the world, jostled and always in peril, but, at the same time, carrying a conscientious omnipresence. She protests for safeguarding her own rights.

"*Madonna* is a movement," asserted Rokeya Sultana. "She is vulnerable because although she is a peacemaker, she is prepared to fight. She is a symbol for all women. She changes throughout time, but she is forever performing the same role." Rokeya Sultana explained that 'Madonna' is a symbol of protest against an unjust society. "She is always draped in a magenta shari, because I want to show that she is feminine and rooted in our own traditions," adds the artist. "Her rebellion is deeper. The colour, magenta, is a symbol of transforming negativity through the feminine psyche. Magenta is on the verge of being an aggressive form of red, but it is softer, more playful and more positive. 'Madonna' is every girl and every woman."



Artwork by Rokeya Sultana





Bangladesh to export Covid-22 to revive economy

THIS REPORTER USUALLY WORKS THE GARBAGE BEAT

The minister of commerce yesterday announced Bangladesh will soon start exporting Covid-22 to other countries.

"As always, we will begin on a limited scale," said Yet Another Businessman Turned Minister, welcoming loud cheers and applause from all those present at the press conference.

"Finally, we have managed to identify a resource that is available in abundance. Those who criticised our handling of the outbreak are now eating humble pie in jail. You know, since the Vague Safety Act got them before the virus could," said the commerce minister, and another round of applause was heard. This correspondent recognised the applause track to be from Indian Idol season one.

This is all part of the new normal, said the secretary of commerce. "Multiple ministries will be collaborating and coordinating to devise a robust plan. We will continue on our path to reaching a GDP growth of 86%, and not just buy inflating and doctoring data! This time, the growth will be real, much like the growing number of infections in the country," he explained, adding a few more vague remarks but offering no clear information on how disease exports can boost the economy.

When pressed for details, the minister said, "It is simple, really. If America can export obesity, we can also do our part in turning the wheels of the world economy."

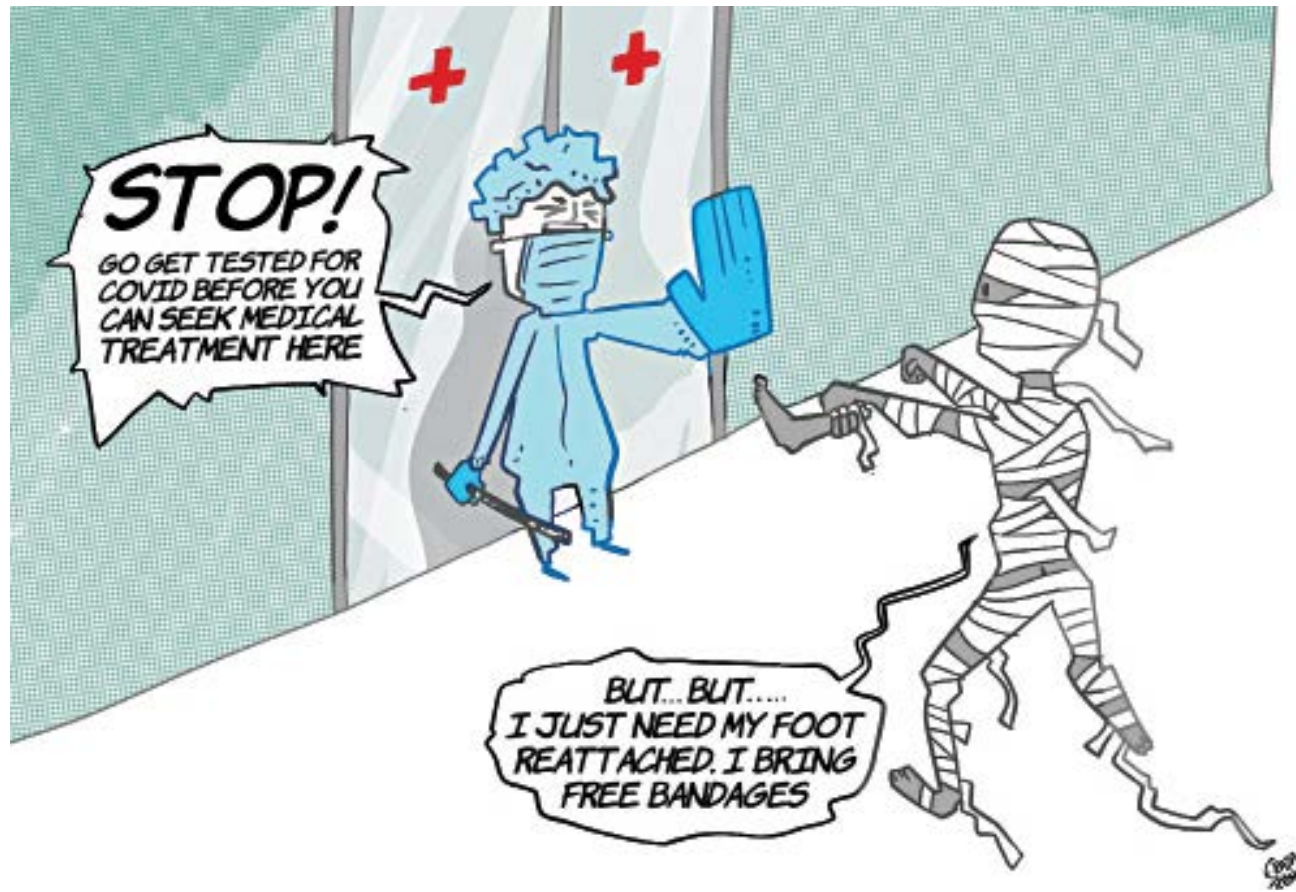
"The goal is to keep sending DVD-22 to different countries until they agree to meet our demands," said Yet Another Businessman Turned Minister.

"Demands for what?" asked a reporter. "Lax regulations for the business elite," the minister said matter-of-factly, "It will be a legendary move."

The ministry said it has already sent one man to an East Asian country, and the plan will soon be expanded. "In fact our exported citizens will definitely be treated in said foreign countries, decreasing pressure on our crumbling health system," said the health minister, famous for his lack of contribution in the health sector.

This correspondent reached out to experts to make some sense of the vague remarks. "The financeminister's irresponsible spending has led to such drastic steps," said Left-leaning Economist, "The guy is close to seventy, but his spending habits are worse than a twelfth grader who makes no money but buys ten drinks a month at Krimson Cup just to hog the smoking zone."

Finance minister Legume Kamal brushed off these concerns. "What we need to understand is black money matters. You give businessmen enough incentive and they'll pay you to buy a public office. Our new export sector will put us well on the way to become a pro-wealthcare nation."



Space flight now commercialised

Not for all lives of course

AAQIB HASIB

The date is May 30, 2050. American company SpaceHex has finally launched its services for commercial flights to Mars, 30 years after SpaceHex made its first successful manned launch.

CEO and the son of the founder of SpaceHex, MR. XXMX(.com|VII, known more popularly as the "bootleg version of Ironman no one asked for" to the masses, granted Satireday the opportunity to interview him.

"Mr XXMX(.com|VII," I said, trying my best to figure out how to pronounce this gibberish, "could you --"

"Wait. Hold on right there," Mr XXM-(I give up) interrupted, "Firstly, you just butchered my name. The MX is pronounced as ';;:;' not a literal 'MX'. Secondly, that's the name my parents gave me, and before you try and tell me what it means, let me tell you that everyone in middle school already made me quite aware. I would prefer it if you called me Alpha Wolf or just John is fine."

"Oh. Okay. Well, John, I'd like to congratulate you on your success with both SpaceHex and PleslaMoTors. Not only are you the first man to commercialise space flights, but you also monopolised the auto industry with your fleet of self-driven cars."

"Thank you, I've worked long and hard for this," he replied, before promptly adding, "That's what she said." I was painfully aware that he was not going to make this easy for me.

"So, John, could you give me the details regarding what are your exact plans for the upcoming commercial flights? How expensive will it be?"



What are your expectations from the program?"

"Well, just that," he said, "It's fully commercial now. You can pay to go to space. Ticket prices will be a bit expensive, but I guess that's the price you pay for exclusivity. I estimate that ticket prices will be \$5 billion per person, with a \$20 billion package for families. First blood relatives only, of course."

"Seems like not many people will be able to afford that. Have you had any customers as of yet," I asked.

"Well, of course. Plenty of people have already signed up. Trillionaire Jashim Basha actually signed up in

2030, just before he was cryogenically frozen. He left my father a blank cheque for two tickets. One for him, another for his ex-wife."

"Now, I must ask you this. How do you feel about the public outrage over the commercialisation of space flights? People seem to be quite unhappy that you used tax payers money to develop SpaceHex's technology, but now are commercialising this technology at an inane level of premium," I said, adding, "Not to mention that you also seem to have colonised Mars, without anyone's permission and crowned yourself its 'supreme leader.'"

"Look, you snooze, you lose," John replied, clearly starting to get annoyed, "That's what my father always said, and I stand by it. There are too many snowflakes who don't understand my vision. You have to be on the same level of intelligence as me to get it. As Tony Stark said, I AM IRON MAN."

He continued, "Everyone keeps complaining about capitalism and the capitalists, and how we're 'destroying' the planet. You think we don't care about you blue-collar workers, but look at this. When all of us capitalists eventually leave for space, who will have the planet all to themselves? All the poor pe- I mean blue-collar workers."

"But that doesn't answer my question regarding the use of taxpayers money. And what's the point of leaving behind a planet that, by most scientists' estimations will not survive another decade?"

"That's off-topic, we are here talking about space, not climate change, and

I don't answer off-topic questions," he replied, almost as if he was reading off a well-rehearsed script.

"What about this referral only system that some people are complaining about. We heard that rapper Vanilla Rice wasn't allowed, even though he was fully prepared to pay the money, upfront in cash. How could you deny someone willing to give you 5 billion dollars in cash?"

"Oh, that was just a misunderstanding. We simply thought he was one of those black rappers," he said in a matter of fact way, "Listen, I'm Willy Wonka and these space trips require the golden ticket. Not everyone can get on board; there isn't enough space. This is very exclusive. And we don't want someone called 'Lil Doggy' ruining the mood for all our esteemed guests."

"So with the referral program, and the incident with Vanilla Rice, it seems to me that you're implying that your space flights are exclusive to only a certain type of people. People of a 'fairer' disposition."

At that moment, John seemed flustered, "Listen, I'm not racist. If that is what you're trying to imply, sir. I just have a different vision for life on Mars."

"I have only one last question for you, John. What's this about all the women trying to purchase your 'golden tickets' having to sign Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs)?"

At this point, I had clearly hit a nerve with Mr XXMX(.com|VII, because he threw a chair at me while screaming profanities and saying I no longer have the right to call him John.

Studies reveal bamboo effectively blocks Covid-22 virus

E GAJA

It has been discovered that bamboo has a chemical compound that dissolves the lipid (fatty) bilayer of the Covid-22 virus. Bamboo during the curfew hours, when Covid-22 is most active, releases a chemical compound as it cools in the humid night air.

This compound (yet to be name but someone suggested New Market Chingri Matha Bhaaji) effectively beats the surrounding virus organisms to submission. The virus becomes as dead as Mel Gibson's career after his rant about Jews being responsible for all wars.



As a result, the city is urged to quickly place bamboo barricades at all entry and exit points of neighbourhoods. Some people have started eating with bamboo chopticks to add to their natural resistance.

Parents who are at their wits end stuck with their kids at home have also started using bamboo. One mother of seven kids has stated how her household is now more peaceful since the bamboo treatment. Bamboo is the latest savior not just for fake students in student protests, but also for humanity suffering from Covid-22.

The Underground Low-lying Agricultural Business University (ULAB-U) has conducted extensive tests in their laboratory in the now empty parking lot of Rapa Plaza shopping centre. An expert stated that this is highly effective as long as people do not actually jump over the bamboo barriers into the open microscopic arms of Covid-22 which are now mutating to develop much longer arms.



Criminalisation of criticism

Why fear the free flow of information?

We are deeply alarmed by the accelerating assault on free speech in the country since the onset of the pandemic, with the authorities seeming more eager to criminalise criticisms of the health sector and other public services rather than in ensuring accountability and transparency of its institutions. Each passing day, we seem to be falling further and further down the rabbit hole of repression—so much so, that it is no longer safe for the media, general populace or civil servants to raise questions, comment on or even “like” posts that are mildly critical of state mechanisms, even if they are objectively accurate.

According to data gleaned from the Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO), a project by Dhaka University's Centre for Genocide Studies, at least 142 people, including journalists, have been arrested or detained since March for reporting, spreading so-called “misinformed” news, or their social media activity. This excludes people who have been penalised within their workplaces for their expression of critical views or whose cases under the Digital Security Act were not reported in the media. Meanwhile, civil servants and health sector professionals have been instructed through multiple directives to stay silent and refrain from sharing any information with the media or on their social media platforms—or risk being arrested, suspended and transferred by being made “officer on special duty”.

Under the circumstances, media professionals are finding it extremely challenging to carry out their mandate of providing accurate and reliable information to the public. The situation is even more dire as journalists are unable to follow-up on or ask questions to top officials of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) since April 8 regarding the daily press briefings as no question is permitted. Yet, do the public not have a right to know and hold state institutions, which are run by taxpayers' money, to account? During a pandemic, when the public is particularly susceptible to misinformation and fear mongering, they need the free flow of authentic information to constructively engage in the decisions that affect them. The authorities in turn, need to listen to the grievances of the people, and take timely and adequate measures to address legitimate concerns rather than quell them through increasingly repressive measures, which only erode trust in state institutions.

Why are we so bent on criminalising criticism and controlling the free flow of information? No democratic government worries about an informed, connected and empowered populace.

Protect migrant workers and their families

Immediate steps are necessary to prevent them falling back into poverty

A recent report published in this daily highlighted the call made by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for supporting migrants and remittance-dependent communities who are impacted by the pandemic. The report forecasts that hundreds of thousands of migrant workers are expected to return to Bangladesh by the end of this year, and join the pool of the already existing domestic informal and formal sector employees who remain jobless.

The ongoing exodus sheds light on the plight of migrant workers, who play an integral role in keeping their households and local communities afloat, and keep the wheels of the economy turning with their remittances as well. Last year, Bangladesh was the third highest recipient of remittance in South Asia, with \$18.32 billion being sent back by an estimated one crore Bangladeshi migrants. However, the UN agency has warned of the stigmatisation of returning workers and urged their reintegration into the economy before there is too huge a detrimental impact on remittance-receiving households and communities.

The government announcement of Tk 700 crore for low interest loans that will help returning migrants to start new businesses, and its plans to re-skill the job-seekers for overseas employment, while commendable, are not enough. An IOM study found that the economic return on migration remains inferior in Bangladesh compared to other countries, since the majority of our migrants are low-skill workers who tend to remit less, and a larger portion of their earnings are spent on meeting short-term needs or paying off loans. In this scenario, it is imperative to make long-term investments in education and skills for lower skilled migrant workers so that they have better paid jobs in the future. The authorities should also consider incorporating the returnees and their families into government social safety net programmes in the short-term to prevent them from falling further into poverty. Financial literacy and remittance management capacity of households should be focused on as well.

It is unfortunate that the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment received an insufficient allocation in the recent budget to deal with Covid-19-induced unemployment. It will be a herculean challenge for the government to create enough employment to make up for the jobs that are lost abroad. A comprehensive plan is crucial to ensure that migrant workers do not become even more vulnerable upon their return.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Deal with deforestation

Recently, we witnessed how Sundarban protected us from the super cyclone Amphan. In the process, a large number of trees were damaged. We must compensate for such a big loss and build a coastal green belt. Deforestation and the lack of tall trees have also increased the number of deaths from thunderbolts. Palm trees not only serve as natural lightning conductors to save lives but also protect coastal areas from storms and cyclones. Planting trees will address issues like soil erosion and climate change. With the help of government and NGOs, we should start planting trees wherever possible. But care must be taken to maintain safety measures during the pandemic.

Fawzia Khanum Ahona, Rajbari



STEVEN CORLISS

changing the ways we live in profound and possibly lasting ways. We are in the fight of our lives and, at the same time, another human tragedy continues to smoulder and burn: the global displacement crisis.

Today is World Refugee Day, when we celebrate the resilience, tenacity and human dignity of refugees, asylum seekers and other forcibly displaced people. Every day, they show their will to face danger, overcome adversity and rebuild their lives. Place yourself for one moment in their shoes. Imagine how you would want others to see and treat you. Anyone can become a refugee.

Each year on World Refugee Day, a key report known as the UNHCR Global Trends in Forced Displacement is released. Every year for nearly a decade, UNHCR has announced that the number of forcibly displaced people has hit a new record high. We have also reported that lasting solutions remain elusive.

At the end of 2019, some 79.5 million people were displaced worldwide. This means that more than one in every hundred people in the world is a refugee, internally displaced person or is otherwise forcibly displaced. Behind this enormous figure are people—individuals and families. They are young people with dreams and older people who deserve better in their later years.

On World Refugee Day, UNHCR remembers with gratitude the humanity and compassion of the People of Bangladesh who received hundreds of thousands of desperate Rohingya refugees who fled across the border from Myanmar in August 2017. This was the largest and swiftest movement of refugees in Asia since the birth of Bangladesh in 1971.

The Rohingya refugees have also not forgotten. Bangladesh offered them safety and shelter when they needed it most. Many people—both Government officials and ordinary people—have told me how they dropped everything and went to Cox's Bazar to respond to the unfolding human tragedy.

These Bangladeshi “first responders” also included the poorest of the poor in the rural areas where the refugees arrived, who opened their homes and shared what little food they had. These true heroes will remain a bright point of light in the history of Bangladesh and humanity. They are the living embodiment of this year's World Refugee Day theme: “everyone can

make a difference, every action counts.”

Nearly three years on, the Rohingya refugees are facing a new crisis—one they share with everyone in the country. The Covid-19 pandemic is a viral cyclone that has now made landfall in Bangladesh. The virus is a great equaliser. It does not ask to see your passport or to know your status. Everyone is at risk, Bangladeshis and Rohingya refugees alike, as well as aid workers who have come to help.

Decisive action by the Government of Bangladesh restricting the humanitarian response to critical activities only and limiting contact between people inside and outside of the refugee camps delayed the arrival and slowed the spread of the

United Nations and NGO workers are on the job, working alongside government partners. For weeks, we have been in a race against time to strengthen the district's public healthcare facilities and build new isolation and treatment centres for Covid-19 patients—Bangladeshis and Rohingya alike.

For the Rohingya refugees to continue to shelter in the camps, critical humanitarian activities must continue. Frontline humanitarian workers—although in dramatically reduced numbers—are delivering lifesaving health and nutrition programmes, ensuring the distribution of food, fuel, soap and hygiene supplies.

health at risk each day so that others might pass safely through this tempest, reach the other side and have a future.

As we rise to meet the challenges of Covid-19, we cannot forget that no one should be a refugee forever. We have recently seen what happens when refugees lose hope and turn to dangerous, and for some deadly, journeys by sea in search of a better life.

Since the day that I arrived in Bangladesh, the Rohingya refugees have sent me a clear message, “We want to go home to Myanmar.” With equal strength, though, they say they want their children to live free from violence and have the most basic human rights, including



Hundreds and thousands of desperate Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh in August 2017.

PHOTO: AFP

Covid-19 virus. We used this window of opportunity to prepare as much as possible, heeding the advice of Rabindranath Tagore that, “You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water.”

Preparations for the Covid-19 continue at full speed, but the time for action has now come. Yesterday, the Civil Surgeon reported 1,852 confirmed Covid-19 cases in Cox's Bazar district, including 43 Rohingya refugees. These statistics are based on testing results. The actual number of persons infected is certainly higher, and each day brings reports of new cases in the camps and the surrounding Bangladeshi communities.

Even as we mark World Refugee Day,

Rohingya refugees are at the centre of efforts to support their own community. Refugee volunteers—thousands of them—work hard every day to ensure that people know how to protect themselves and their families against Covid-19 infection and what to do if they become ill. They play important roles in healthcare, sanitation and community mobilisation programmes.

We are facing the challenge of a lifetime in Bangladesh. I have been moved to see how the Rohingya refugees and local Bangladeshis have stepped forward to care for their communities. I am also inspired by the humanitarian commitment of government, UN and NGO partners and my own UNHCR team, who put their own

freedom of movement, and have a pathway to citizenship.

An important first step would be for all to heed the United Nations Secretary General's call for “an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world,” including in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Peace with justice must follow, so that Rohingya refugees can go home again voluntarily in safety and dignity and also sustainably, so that they are never again forced to flee.

Let this be not only our wish for them but also our commitment to them and to all forcibly displaced people on this World Refugee Day.

Steven Corliss is Representative of UNHCR in Bangladesh.

Time to rethink our examinations



SHAMSAD MORTUZA

had other plans to befool more than a million students who were supposed to occupy 9,000 educational institutions under eight general, one madrasa, and one technical education boards for their GPA chase. Compelling medical evidence now suggests that it may not be possible to hold the exams any time soon. Then the options are either to wait for a final clearance from WHO (pun added) or to treat the students' earlier results as predicated grades. Many countries have already done it, are we up for it?

The UK government website reports, “The coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak is expected to continue having a significant impact on the education system, and the country, for months to come. Therefore, exams and assessments have been cancelled to give pupils, parents, and teachers certainty, and enable schools and colleges to focus on supporting vulnerable children and the children of critical workers.”

Both GCSE and International Baccalaureates (IB) have decided to release their predicted/calculated grades so that there is a seamless transition from the secondary to the tertiary. Desperate times require desperate measures. Even our big neighbour is considering the grades received in their 11th grades as the calculated grade for school leaving certificates. We are yet to hear any such whispers, let alone announcements. To leave over a million of students waiting in uncertainties is a dangerous proposition. It will not only see the return of the academic session jam which haunted the university system for a long time but also create social unrest and economic loss. The demographic dividends that we want to profit from will receive a dent if these students are not made ready for the workforce. I cannot imagine what

these candidates, their parents, teachers and mentors are going through at this point. These terminal exams are a major source of anxieties and stress for students who have to retain knowledge of the large syllabus taught over two years. The system therefore encourages, if not obligates, students to memorise for their examination.

Then again, when they move beyond their colleges, how much value does our

changed their position.

UGC's benchmark is the public system, where competition for seats is very high. These publicly funded subsidised universities with more prestige factors are the top choices for candidates. The institutions rely on a testing system that aims to eliminate admission seekers. HSC and SSC results are given little or no weightage, but they are mostly treated as qualifying points. The primary emphasis is on testing. There are some prestigious institutes that do not even give any weightage to public examination results as they rely on their own written and oral examinations. The last example testifies the autonomy exercised by, and the anomalies that exist among, the universities. At the same time, it shows that the universities do not necessarily think of examinations as shapers of learning. In most cases, universities feel that the grades are indicative of students' over reliance on rote learning, and may not reflect students' real aptitudes.

If that is the case, what is the point of having two public examinations in such close proximity whose value is of little consequence? The GPAs, indicative of summative assessments (i.e. evaluation after the course completion), are ultimately reduced to qualifying points, and universities set their own admission criteria. Can we not have an integrated test for middle school and high school? Students have to sit for Primary School Certificates after grade five and Junior School Certificate after grade eight. Four public examinations in the primary and secondary system—yet our universities do not properly acknowledge their outcome. What is missing in this assessment process is an emphasis on the formative assessment (evaluation during the learning process). In the public schooling system, the formative assessments carry no weightage (tutorials, quizzes and presentation); labs are the only exceptions. In the public tertiary system, the mid or semester ending exams are summative tests where questions are set theoretically to judge what students have learned in the course. Such exams can easily be phased out and evaluated through frequent class tests and class performance.

The problem is that there is no

academic system actually ascribe to these school leaving exams? Of course, they are national events studded with golden stars and sweet-meats. The importance of exams became contentious when the University Grants Commission (UGC) asked private universities to refrain from admitting students during the migration to online teaching. When some private universities started admitting students based on their HSC marks, UGC intervened saying that students should not be admitted without any admission tests. After a parley, they have slightly

UGC's benchmark is the public system, where competition for seats is very high. These publicly funded subsidised universities with more prestige factors are the top choices for candidates. The institutions rely on a testing system that aims to eliminate admission seekers.

institutional trust. In the absence of accountability and transparency, we have cultured mistrust. In the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, UGC, for instance, initially allowed the universities to teach but not to assess online. The implied logic was that students could cheat if they attended their exams without any faculty invigilation. How do we re-instill the trust that is gone? In the long run, we can do it by revamping our entire academic infrastructure, but in the short haul, we can change our evaluation and assessment system.

The current education system was founded on the Industrial revolution model. The work environment required a limited skillset, knowledge and intelligence (IQ). The organisational behaviour, inherited from our colonial past, focused on whether we could follow instructions and maintain the required standard of the institution. It was aimed at creating a middle class who will be a cog in the machine. In this revolutionised era of innovation, when we are entering the fourth industrial revolution, the education system must learn to adapt constantly. So if students are tested for their memorisation and standardisation, they will soon be replaced by the machine. Just remember how obsolete the times table has become now that your phone has become a super computer.

Exams must go beyond testing IQ alone. In order to unleash a student's potential, a student must be tested for a cocktail of IQ (intelligence), EQ (emotional intelligence), and RQ (resilience). These tests can be done when a teacher is teaching and observing each individual's growth. A large hall exam with a larger syllabus may miss those fine shades latent in an individual. The change in exam system will require a change in the teaching method. We will need a lot of trainings and piloting for sure. Once the public exam system is revised, we will start getting creative individuals who are not only ready for the tertiary level but also for the brave new world where they will have to compete against smart machines for jobs.

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

Everyone's Sufia Khalamma

SARWAR ALI and ZIAUDDIN TARIQ ALI

JUNE 20, 1911 is the birthday of Poet Sufia Kamal, who has played more than a defining role in the history of Bangladesh. In a lifetime dedicated to creating an open and democratic society, she championed the cause of the underprivileged, especially women and minority communities. Her diminutive figure, in fact, belied the energy and resolve that characterised her life and struggle. Despite the dangers of courting the wrath of the Pakistani ruling machinery, whose stridently nefarious objective was to weave the two-nation theory and the Urdu dominated UP culture into the minds of the Bengali people, she dedicated her life to etch out a separate identity for the Bengalis. We see the same values championed by Bangabandhu—from his memoirs and other more recent publications.

It was a difficult war that she waged. Her modest home in Tarabag—where they had taken up residence after they moved from Kolkata and which came to be known as “Khalamma Tarabager basha”—was a beehive of activists from the world of literature, art, politics and social work, including Zainul Abedin, Dr Dani, Dr Q Motahar



Sufia Kamal (June 20, 1911–November 20, 1999)

In a lifetime dedicated to creating an open and democratic society, she championed the cause of the underprivileged, especially women and minority communities. Her diminutive figure, in fact, belied the energy and resolve that characterised her life and struggle.

Hossain, Quamrul Hasan, Wahidul Huq, Sukhendu Dastidar, Shaheedullah Kaiser, Rokonzaman Khan, Abul Hashim, Nurjahan Murshid, Anwara Bahar Chowdhury and the like. There they would debate issues relating to the unfolding battle for the Bengali language, succour for the minority communities displaced by the mindless violence of Partition and most importantly, guide the journey that women would have to undertake in this “wonder world” called Pakistan.

She had been the editor of the women's weekly *Begum* from its inception in Kolkata, which had created a space for women in East Bengal to cultivate their literary skills. When *Begum* moved from Kolkata to Dhaka, so did she. The void that had been created when personalities such as Leela Naag and Ashalata Sen (the vanguard of the women's movement in East Bengal) were forced to leave Dhaka under the stresses of Partition, was filled by Sufia Kamal with an ease that has characterised her leadership in all the institutions that she led. She drew her

inspiration from having worked, in the early years of her career, with Begum Rokeya. She was the moving force behind the “Kachi Kanchar Mela”, a movement that has shaped the minds of the next generation of cultural activists. She was elected as the President of Mahila Parishad, a women's group fighting for women's rights.

Throughout the late fifties and sixties, the Bengali aspirations for democracy and self-rule continued to be dealt with a heavy hand by a bludgeoning Pakistani Army and its chief, Ayub Khan. In one famous encounter, where the General had invited the Bengali intellectuals to harangue them, and went so far as to refer to the Bengalis as being no better than *haywans* (Arabic for animal), a lone frail figure stood up to tell him that as the *Badsha of haywans*, he in turn, also was a *haywan*. Aghast and speechless, Ayub left the meeting.

The democratic aspirations of the Bengalis and their natural tendency towards tolerance in a secular space, which had so permanently been imprinted into the Bengali psyche by

the towering traditions that Tagore and Nazrul left behind, made the Bengalis sufficiently immune to the Junta's false cries of “*Islam khatrey me hain*” (Islam is in danger). The Pakistanis tried to make use of it in 1964 to churn up communal tensions, but the Bengalis responded unequivocally to the call by political parties and cultural activists under her leadership, of “*Purbo Pakistan Rukhha Darao*” (East Pakistan stand together), and frustrated Pakistan's evil designs. She was a devout Muslim, proving that being deeply religious did not nullify cohabitation with other religions, as is unfortunately interpreted in society these days. She did not confine herself to merely issuing statements against the divisive intentions of the Pakistani state, but actually took to the streets to root them out from society. In all these efforts, she received unstinting support at the home-front from her husband, the self-effacing Kamaluddin Khan.

In the early sixties, at a time when politicians were barred from their professions by an ill conceived Act called the Elective Bodies

Disqualification Order (EBDO), it was the tireless effort of cultural activists, student bodies adhering to different political leanings, and a dedicated band of teachers at the universities, that kept the flames of democracy alive in the minds of the Bengalis. When the mass Six Points Movement gained strength in 1969, their common meeting place was the verandah of Sufia Khalamma's home. After the Tagore centenary in 1961, when Chhayanaut was formed, she was elected as its President and remained so till her death in 1999. She was a family-friend of Bangabandhu and he is reported to have told his daughter, our Prime Minister, that if ever something should go wrong, her first destination should be her “Phupamma's” home.

During the harrowing days of 1971, her stoic stand against giving the marauding Pakistani army any legitimacy was demonstrated by her refusing, time and again, to issue statements to the effect that life was normal in East Pakistan. She was, again, the first to condemn the killing of Bangabandhu in 1975 and was a supporter of the trial of the killers. She was the pillar that we leaned against during the heady days of demand for the trial of war criminals by a public tribunal in 1992, which paved the way to putting the war criminals on trial during the Awami League government, under the International War Crimes Tribunal, 1973.

The first journey of *Muktijuddha Jadughar* (Liberation War Museum) was taken only after its trustees went to her home in 1996 to seek her blessings in this endeavour. Her journey from darkness to light may be summed up by the *shloke* from the Upanishads: “*Asatyo maa sadgamaya, Tamaso maa jyotirgamaya, Mrituru maa amritangamaya, Om, Shanty*”. Lead me from the untruth to the truth; keep me not in darkness, but lead me towards spiritual knowledge, hold me not in the world of mortality, guide me towards self-realisation.

This was Poet Sufia Kamal, everyone's Sufia Khalamma. She epitomised all that is great in the Bengali mind—a humble mother figure, and yet a life dedicated to championing the cause of democratic expression, especially that of the underprivileged.

Dr Sarwar Ali and Ziauddin Tariq Ali are trustees of the Liberation War Museum of Bangladesh.

Begum Sufia Kamal: A moral hero

SHIFTING IMAGES



MILIA ALI

TODAY, after a period of hiatus, I have once again taken up my pen (metaphorically) to remember and celebrate a hero—a woman of courage and integrity who changed the world, not with fire and fury but with her soft touch. As I began to write this piece on the birth anniversary of our dear Sufia Khalamma (writer and activist Begum Sufia Kamal to the world), I was conflicted over a question that I have been asking myself of late. Can one person spark a social change with far-reaching and long lasting implications?

I found my answer in the sad death of George Floyd, killed mercilessly by a policeman in Minneapolis, USA. One black life ignited not only countrywide protests, but its reverberations were felt around the globe. However, there are many silent heroes who also make a difference. They live ordinary lives—they are loving parents and spouses, dutiful siblings and sincere friends, yet they leave their indelible mark on communities, societies and countries. I call them our “moral heroes”.

For me, Begum Sufia Kamal was one such moral hero. Being a close friend of the family, I spent many evenings on her front porch with her daughters, consuming numerous cups of tea and

snacking on *samosas* and biscuits. Her kind demeanour and simplicity touched my inner core. I was never overawed by her persona as a notable author or a national leader, because Sufia Khalamma never created a distance between her and “us”. This to me was her greatest quality—she was extraordinary in her “ordinariness”.

Reflecting on the time that I spent with her, I wonder why I never asked her to share her experiences of how she evolved from a simple girl born in Barishal to an agent of change who espoused women's rights and social equity for all. I regret that I did not learn the many lessons she could have taught me. But then, she was the kind of person who impacted others through her precept and stoic lifestyle. I marvelled at her simple manner of dressing in a white cotton sari. She once mentioned casually that this was the result of her short meeting with Mahatma Gandhi. I also wonder how she acquired that vast sea of knowledge about English and Bangla literature, despite the fact that she never attended formal school. Was it her association with Begum Rokeya that inspired her to be a self-learner?

These are questions I never asked because there was so much about Sufia Khalamma that I took for granted. In many ways, I also think the answers to these questions may be irrelevant because she was not of the brand of leaders who choose their path—she was chosen by destiny. She worked for Hindu-Muslim unity during the Partition of India. Her activism

continued in 1952, during the Language Movement and in 1961, when the Pakistani government banned the songs of Rabindranath Tagore from the media. She led the women of East Pakistan during the mass uprising against the Pakistani military in 1969. Later, she made women's rights her top priority and headed Bangladesh's largest women's organisation, Mahila Parishad, for many years. And yet her social work was only a part of her life, for she was known to the world as a writer, having published several short stories and poems, as well as her memoirs.

Khalamma's many achievements, if I were to list them, would take up this entire column. But my intention is to highlight her humane side, which



PHOTO: COLLECTED

What struck me the most was the simplicity of her moral response to a true cause. She never weighed the costs and benefits or entered into useless debates—she just plunged into the movement if she believed in it.

I experienced intensely—so much so that it changed my entire perception of feminist movements and freedom struggles. What struck me the most was the simplicity of her moral response to a true cause. She never weighed the costs and benefits or entered into useless debates—she just plunged into the movement if she believed in it. But once she became a part of it, she gave it her all. Risks were ignored and consequences went unweighed. It was done with an effortless elegance that is hard to explain. She embodied what Mother Teresa once said of her own work: “What I do is as simple and common as the laughter of a child.”

When Khalamma chatted with us, her self-identity was fused with ours, yet

she was perfectly at home in performing great acts that we would hesitate to take on. I saw her walking in protest marches and sitting in musical concerts with equal ease. She would be frying pieces of *hilsa* fish in her kitchen one moment and within minutes, she would be sitting on a cane chair on her front porch with a national leader, the two discussing an emerging political crisis. The transition was so seamless that I never questioned how she did it.

As I remember Sufia Khalamma on her birthday, I salute her in humble recognition of the fact that we gave her so little in return for what she gave to our nation and to the cause of women. But then, that is how she wanted it to be—her efforts were built around “healing some rupture in society, reconciling differences, bringing the unlike together, a move from fragmentation to wholeness”. And never expecting anything in return. Her reward was to see that humanity remains connected in empathy—a message that has become so relevant in the time of the coronavirus.

Khalamma, let me end by saying that you were not part of a struggle. You were the struggle. You were so human, yet you created a feeling of innate humanity in those around you. At a personal level, you touched me at a very sensitive stage of my life and did to me what “spring does with the cherry trees.”

May you rest in eternal peace.

Milia Ali is a Rabindra Sangeet exponent and a former employee of the World Bank.

QUOTABLE Quote

RABINDRANATH TAGORE
(1861-1941)
Bengali poet, writer, musician and painter.

Everything comes to us that belongs to us if we create the capacity to receive it.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Hits with the palm
- 6 Sports figure
- 10 Infant's ailment
- 11 Tennis setting
- 13 Heartburn
- 14 Canadian lout
- 15 Drill part
- 16 On the – (fleeing)
- 18 Letter before epsilon
- 19 Ballpark fixtures
- 22 Co. abbr.
- 23 Mob revolt
- 24 Lower in esteem
- 27 Chili need
- 28 Rescue
- 29 Swindle
- 30 Movie planning sketches
- 35 List shortening abbr.
- 36 Snaky shape
- 37 Lyricist
- 38 Closes with a bang
- 40 Kind of pool
- 42 Car type
- 43 Happening
- 44 Extinct bird
- 45 Office sights

DOWN

- 1 Strike defiers
- 2 Deductive thinking
- 3 Justice Samuel
- 4 Deep hole
- 5 Triangle type
- 6 Doofus
- 7 Overly
- 8 Vienna setting
- 9 Trample
- 12 Has faith in
- 17 Alphabet start
- 20 Start part
- 21 Sports setting
- 24 Rate
- 25 Fought
- 26 Guacamole base
- 27 Increased
- 29 “60 Minutes” network
- 31 Like some questions
- 32 Carnival attractions
- 33 Guzzled
- 34 Sea dogs
- 39 Seething
- 41 “Now – seen everything!”

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

B	O	S	S	B	E	A	D		
L	E	R	O	I	L	A	N	E	S
A	W	A	R	D	A	R	O	S	E
B	A	T	T	E	R	S	D	I	N
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R	E	D	C	A	P	I	S	E	E
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B	I	T	T	E	R	S	M	I	A
A	P	E	B	E	T	T	E	R	S
S	T	A	T	E	E	R	I	E	R
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BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

POETICS OF PANDEMIC

MOHAMMAD SHAMSUZZAMAN

Any pandemic is crushing. COVID-19 is no exception. It strains cognition and emotion. It tanks economies. It disrupts communication. It alters psychology. It breeds panic and paranoia. It kills. What follows is an elegy that glorifies grief. In the debris of devastation, the foundation of art and creativity is built. Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/ La Frontera* cites the following Mexican proverb: "Of pain, poem; of sorrow, song." It's too early now to assume how this pandemic will affect and enrich the field of arts and letters. This much is already obvious, though, that we humans are

has freed us from the prison of our time-driven lives that had begun since the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. We've gradually slipped into a frenzied lifestyle that defines time in terms of speed and productivity. Time is no longer a personal possession to be used to rest and reflect. Time is, instead, capital as well as a commodity driven by market forces. When we lose autonomy over our time, as was the case until the pandemic locked us down, we become prisoners of our jobs, our money, and our ambitions. We become workaholics. Work is obviously important, but we

simmers in anxiety and apprehension. It can't imagine, dream, and explore. And it can't be prodded to be productive, as Irish statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke famously said, "The march of the human mind is slow." It needs occasionally, as a farm does, to lie fallow. It replenishes only when it does nothing in particular. When the human mind rambles through undirected, divergent, and un-purposeful thoughts, it soaks in creativity. Lightman cites Carl Jung and Gertrude Stein as validating examples. Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist, did his most creative thinking and writing when he took time off from his frenzied practice in Zurich to go to his country house in Bollingen, Switzerland. Gertrude Stein, an American novelist, needed similar stimulation. In the middle of a writing project she would wander about the countryside looking at cows. Religions (Hinduism and Buddhism, in particular) and psychology abound with further examples and explanations to indicate a connection between creativity and tranquil reflection. With the forced slowing of life granted by the coronavirus, we can re-think about our involvement with and management of time. Several of us have used our stay-at-home time to do creative things with our families, and in a surprising number of cases we have produced music, poetry, art, or video that millions of other people have enjoyed on Youtube. We have time, finally, for the poetics of pandemic.

The ancient Greeks had thought along this line millennia back. They had two words for time: *Chronos* and *Kairos*. Both the words stand for "time" in the English language, but with different connotations. While *chronos* refers to numeric, chronological time, *kairos* refers to a proper and appropriate time of action. *Chronos* measures time in such as terms as seconds, minutes, and hours, but *kairos* judges time in such terms as time for rest, for reflection, and time open to epiphany. Ideally, as life unfolds, it embodies both the versions of time. Unfortunately, however, because of the hedonistic drive of modern life, the *kairos* time is all but missing. We're helplessly stuck in a vicious equation where time-equals-money. Henry David Thoreau, an American philosopher of the 19th century, claims in his famous essay "Civil Disobedience," "Absolutely speaking, the more money, the less virtue." So, we've gradually shifted away from ethics and

aesthetics into greed and gratification. The virus may have used this fault-line to expand and attack. So, we're stopped. Time on *chronos* hasn't stopped, but we still can it pace it down a bit by intervening with the *kairos* time.

Like time, space too is critical to creativity. One of the finest writers in the annals of American literature, Marjorie Kennan Rawlings, validates that. She was born in Washington D.C. in 1896. Since her childhood, she had taken herself seriously as a writer. She, however, could not accomplish anything until 1928 when she moved to Florida at the age of thirty-two. Her move from Washington to Florida, incidentally, spurred her creativity, for she churned out novels to establish herself as an accomplished writer in the U.S. and beyond, culminating in winning the Pulitzer Prize for her novel, *The Yearling*, in 1938. She articulated what she discovered about life in many of her writings: "for a person to find lasting happiness or fulfillment, it is essential for him to find a place with which his spirit can live with harmony." Until this radical relation between place and happiness as well as fulfillment is developed and sustained, she contended, one can't activate and actualize one's creative potential. Similarly, influential postcolonial scholar Edward Said speculated about "poetics of place" in *Orientalism*, where he argues that the objective place of a house becomes less important than the imaginative and figurative power it possesses to kindle one's creativity. No place is pristine and romantic these days. We live in a sterile wasteland. The harmony between humans and space is diminished, so our creativity -simmered in imagination- is no longer unbidden and abundant.

The world was so fantastic before the pandemic that imagination was hardly essential to the modern world. Things beyond imagination had already happened. We already have had a world of silver jets stitching together cities of towering skyscrapers and a globe of soaring markets and smartphone connectivity. We've reduced the whole world to some dots and digits and bytes. Now several months into this disease and it's all tottering—the jets grounded and the cities silent and the markets reeling. No bytes of virtual space capture the magnitude of the horror the virus has unleashed on us. We've experienced a complete credit crunch for our civilization. The pronouncement of Charles Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities*

reverberates, "It was the worst of times." Indeed, it is! Our shiny world was not sturdy. It was operating on a thin margin. So, it falls apart. Was that consequence so difficult to imagine?

Not really! However superstitious I might sound, I'll hazard to sound like a quack psychologist or a voodoo scientist with the following anecdote. Back in the 90s, I consulted some books by Norman Lewis to enrich my vocabulary in the English language. He would split a compound English word into its basic constituents to uncover its Greek or Latin root to show how the same root has contributed to creating many words in English. When he was dissecting the word *disaster* and was discussing its origin, I was struck. It combines a negative prefix, *dis*, and a Greek word, *astron*, which stands for "star" in English. The ancient Greeks used to look at the alignment of the stars in the sky to predict luck. When the stars were in bad alignment, it presaged a disaster. Years later, it was déjà vu all over again for me when I came across the similar ancient Chinese concept, *Feng Shui*. *Feng Shui* harmonizes cosmic and spiritual forces with houses or surroundings that humans inhabit to ensure happiness, success, and creativity. The import of both *disaster* and *Feng Shui* is clear: Humans can't force themselves to be happy or creative until they reconcile with the forces and factors around and above.

The pandemic, however, is an opportunity for us to slow down to restore our inner self, as Professor Lightman suggests in his article in *The Atlantic*. Our beliefs and values seem problematic. Our understanding and management of time and space require modification. We must stop pretending that we own the world. We must acknowledge that we're a tiny part of an ecosystem that is complex and organic. We need to have a harmonious coexistence with the spatial and temporal cycles of our life. When that happens, we can draw upon a collective fount of intelligence and empathy. We're, then, empowered to weather this pandemic. So, the pandemic will pass. In the meantime, I say my earnest prayer for all of us, as T.S. Eliot did in *The Waste Land*, "Shantih Shantih Shantih."

Mohammad Shamsuzzaman is an Assistant Professor, Department of English and Modern Languages, North South University, Bangladesh.



jolted to pause and ponder so that we will be able to molt anew. Scientists and psychologists as well as poets and priests are now grieving alike. Everyone, however, is not completely consumed by their helplessness. Some of them do look forward to the times ahead to remind us some of the silver-lining of the pandemic.

A crushing pandemic is not all bad, not even COVID-19. Professor Alan Lightman, a physicist at MIT, in his recent article, "The Virus Is a Reminder of Something Lost Long Ago," in *The Atlantic*, claims that the pandemic

are more than workers. We're social, emotional, and cognitive creatures. We need unstructured, beckoning time to imagine as well as to socialize. Whether menial or white-collar, jobs these days overwhelm and turn someone brilliant into someone dutiful. Now that the pandemic has slowed us down and has given many of us back full access to our time, we can waste some of it for the first time we can remember.

Wasting time is as important as utilizing it, as Lightman claims in *In Praise of Wasting Time*. Our mind fatigues. It needs to rest. A restless mind

POETRY

Like a Blink of an Eye

SYEDA SAMARA MORTADA

One year goes by in the blink of an eye
But the memories remain as livid as ever.
Like silver handcuffs, they remain encased
Like cold metal, biting into fresh flesh.

The beeping machines, the white wish-wash
Clasped to perfection, sterile blue gowns like machine guns.
Your scent, there too I smelt
Your Brut cologne, my familiar safety.

Sometimes rustic, sometimes drastic
The dreams I dream too real.
Like your buttoned-up shirts, crisply lined in folded shrines
In your closet, like the graves stocked up in a new graveyard.
A peck on the shoulder, as if you are standing right behind me
A silent sunlit-smile, at the end of a hard day's ride.

But this too shall pass, like the blink of an eye
This life, this world-uneternal.
And we will meet again, tomorrow or day after
At the start of a new dawn.
Like the first chapter of a book.
A new recipe waiting to be cooked.
A new grave, waiting to be booked.
We shall yet again meet, when the sand turns cold-sweet
And the grey wind, blue gold.

Syeda Samara Mortada works at UN Women as the Communications Analyst and is a firm believer of equal rights.



Barricaded Dream, Detained Sun

YASIF FAYSAL

Now that we are fortunate enough
to be left behind,
we have time to talk gaily,
in the strange air of this summer,
of how we could be the ones
like them to go,
as we lounge listlessly
over the terrace where
a yellow cat creeps to surprise a sick rat.
The ice-cream man has stopped coming,
and now little angels within four walls cry
blind without their wings,
doors open backward into silent room,
and copper-road, like god in fury, reflects

empty sun.
Now that we are left behind,
we press clichéd lips into tired prayer,
"we will be good."
"all will be good"-
we murmur in our barricaded dream,
under the detained sun.
The delicate sky that roofs our still-
unbroken heads,
have collapsed upon millions-
to their earthen beds, they all run.

Yasif Ahmad Faysal teaches English at the University of Baishal.



RONALDO'S SISTER SLAMS JUVENTUS

Cristiano Ronaldo's sister hit out at Juventus after their Coppa Italia defeat to Napoli. The defeat was the first time Ronaldo has ever lost consecutive finals in his career with the Portugal forward criticised for his performance by Luca Toni. Elma has however leaped to her brother's defence on social media as she seemingly slammed Sarri's tactics and pleaded for Ronaldo's Juventus teammates to step up. "What more can you do?" wrote Ronaldo's sister Elma Alveiro on Instagram. "That's all there is, my darling can't work miracles and do it all by himself... I don't understand how they can play like this... Anyway, keep your chin up, but you can't do it all, my King."



AGENCIES



Real Madrid frontman Karim Benzema (R) celebrates one of his two goals with Eden Hazard during a La Liga match against Valencia on Thursday. The Frenchman scored his second from a sensational volley.

PHOTO: AFP

Zidane hails Benzema's brilliance

AFP, Madrid



LaLiga

Zinedine Zidane said Karim Benzema "shuts people up a bit" when he scores goals like his stunning volley against Valencia on Thursday. Benzema brilliantly lifted the ball over defender Hugo Gillamon with his right foot and then shot with his left into the top corner as Madrid beat Valencia 3-0 at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium. Marco Asensio had earlier made it two after Benzema gave Madrid the lead, his brace taking his tally for the season to 21 goals in 38 games. "His performance was magnificent, like the whole team,

but his goal was extraordinary," said Zidane. "We know that he is comfortable with his left foot but wow, to lift the ball in that way and to swing like that with his left foot, without the ball touching the ground, truly it's a very complicated piece of skill. "It's beautiful to see it and I'm happy for him. "Often we see Karim as the number nine of Madrid and he must score goals, but he doesn't only do that. So when he does score, I'm happy because he shuts people up a bit, and the work, he always does that no matter what." Benzema is a controversial figure in France after his alleged involvement in a blackmail plot

against former teammate Mathieu Valbuena. He has not played for the national team since 2015. But the 32-year-old has been in sensational form for Real Madrid this season and his latest goal was his 243rd for the club, putting him fifth on Madrid's all-time list. "We know all these matches are finals so this was very important for us and for me personally as well," said Benzema. "It was a beautiful goal, I think I can say it was beautiful, it went in and that was great. Sometimes I do that in practice and today I did it in the match." Meanwhile, Asensio came back with a bang. On his return to action, he needed just 29 seconds

and a single touch to score a fine goal, before turning provider for Karim Benzema. It was a dream return following the serious injury he suffered in Maryland on July 24. "We started well but after that Valencia grew into the game and we knew we had to change something and push higher up the pitch, that's what we did and we won the game," said Asensio, who had a dream return after expecting to miss the whole season before the campaign was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. "I feel a lot of emotion and satisfaction but there was a lot of work behind this goal but the most important thing is that we won and I'm here for the rest of the season."

An ageless pioneer departs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh



Ram Chand Goala, a legendary figure in the country's domestic cricket circuit during the 80s, passed away at the age of 80 at his Brahmapally residence in Mymensingh city yesterday morning. With his long curly figure and thick moustache, he became a beloved figure amongst the cricket lovers in the country during long career and was popularly known as 'Goalaji'. A complete bachelor, he left behind sisters-in-law, niece, nephew, grandchildren and a host of relatives, well-wishers and admirers. Prangon Ghosh, a grandson, informed that Goala suffered a stroke on June 9 and was under treatment at home after undergoing necessary examinations at a local hospital. "He had also suffered a massive stroke four years ago and since then he was almost bed-ridden and could not go outside," Prangon said. "He also had some other old-age complications including high blood pressure".

His cremation took place at the Bolashpur cremation ground on Friday afternoon.

"He was a legend in the truest sense of the word and inspired many generations of cricketers in Bangladesh," BCB director Sajjadul Alam Bobby told The Daily Star.

Considered one of the pioneers of left-arm spin in the country, Goala played for various reputed clubs in Mymensingh and Dhaka in a career spanning three decades. In 1981, at the age of 40, he joined Abahani and played there for 12 years up to 1993. At the age of 43, he became the oldest cricketer to debut for the national team and was included in the side that toured West Bengal in 1983. During that tour, he went on to play at the Eden Gardens in a match against West Bengal.

Goala has played with nationally

and internationally reputed players like Raqibul Hasan, Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, Jahagir Shah Badsha, Shamim Kabir, Dulatuzzaman, Sadrul Anam, Jalal Yunus, Naimur Rahman Durjoy, National Team Captain Minhazul Abedin Nannu, Javed Omar Belim and Habibul Bashar Sumon.

He continued playing club cricket till the age of 57.

Goala offered his whole life for cricket and also served as a coach for various local clubs and organisations including Abahani, Mohammedan, Pandit Para and Al-Helal.



Ram Chand Goala (1940-2020)

"Mymensingh produced many cricketing talents who enriched the game through their great devotion. Of them, the oldest one, Ram Chand Goala, had been inspiring and grooming the younger generations of players, passed away today," Amir Ahmed Chowdhury Ratan, a veteran sports organiser of Mymensingh region, said yesterday.

In an interview with The Daily Star in 2007, Goala had said in an emotion-choked voice, "I want to stay alive in the field forever through my boys".

Juventus supremacy under threat

AFP, Milan



Serie A

Juventus's Serie A supremacy faces a stiff test with the champions just one point ahead of Lazio as the Italian league kicks off again this weekend following a three-month shutdown. A return had looked unthinkable back in April as Italy counted their daily coronavirus deaths in the hundreds for nearly 35,000 victims in the country. But the situation has improved with strict health protocols in place and all matches being played behind closed doors. Four postponed games will take place first this weekend involving teams at the epicentre of the COVID-19 outbreak. Atalanta host Sassuolo in Bergamo on Sunday, and Inter Milan are at home against Sampdoria. On Saturday, Torino host Parma and Cagliari travel to Hellas Verona. Next week all teams will have 12 games left to play with Juventus at Bologna on Monday, and Lazio travelling to Atalanta on Wednesday.

Maurizio Sarri's Juventus fell in the Italian Cup final to Napoli on penalties midweek, having also lost the Italian SuperCup to Lazio in December. "Ronaldo, (Paulo) Dybala and our great soloists lack that little bit of brilliance, but I consider it quite normal in this period," said Sarri. "I didn't say anything to the players, we

were all very angry and disappointed and I think it's better to be silent right now." Sarri's woes have been compounded with Brazilian defender Alex Sandro tearing a knee ligament against Napoli and Sami Khedira picking up a potentially serious tendon problem. Argentine forward Gonzalo Higuain and captain Giorgio Chiellini are also not yet at full fitness. Juventus will be counting on their top scorer Cristiano Ronaldo to react after suffering two defeats in a final for the first time in his career, and missing a penalty in the Italian Cup semi-final. Lazio's Ciro Immobile has scored 27 goals this season, six more than Ronaldo, as the in-form Romans target their third Scudetto and first in two decades. Simone Inzaghi's side have already beaten Juventus twice this season, in the Italian SuperCup final and 3-1 in the Stadio Olimpico in Rome.

The top two teams will meet in Turin on July 20. Inter Milan are third, nine points behind Juventus. Inter lost to Lazio (2-1) and Juventus (2-0) just before the suspension. "If I have to find a positive part of this crisis, it's that I've had time to focus and try to find different areas in which the team can improve," said coach Antonio Conte. Atalanta occupy the final Champions League berth, three points ahead of Roma, with Napoli sixth a further six points back.



Flamengo players vie for the ball with Bangu players during their match at the iconic Maracana stadium in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday. The Carioca Championship fixture, played behind closed doors, ushered the resumption of football as the city started to ease its social distancing measures.

PHOTO: AFP

Football back in Brazil

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazilian football resumed after a three-month hiatus on Thursday night, with Flamengo beating Bangu 3-0 at an empty Maracana stadium in the first game of the restarted Rio de Janeiro state championship.

The match marked the return of Brazil's state leagues, most of which were halted in March as the novel coronavirus spread.

The resumption in Brazil has caused controversy, with two top clubs, Botafogo and Fluminense, saying they will not turn up for scheduled games this weekend.

Thursday night's game at the Maracana began after the two sides arrived to be met by a handful of fans, some of whom were protesting the policies of Brazil's far-right president, and others who carried placards celebrating the 70th anniversary of the stadium.

Foreign booters still stuck in Dhaka

ANISUR RAHMAN



Soccer

Even though Bangladesh has resumed international flight operations on a limited scale from Tuesday after three months' halt due to the coronavirus pandemic, a total of 52 foreign footballers of different clubs are still stuck in the country due to the closure of certain routes. 65 foreigners from Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America were signed by 13 clubs for the 2019-20 BPL season which was later cancelled. Even after settling payments as per the FIFA-prescribed mutual understanding, the clubs are still arranging accommodation and food for the players on humanitarian grounds despite going through financial constraints themselves. According to the BFF, only 13 of the 65 -- one each from

Abahani, Sheikh Russel KC, Sheikh Jamal DC, Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Brothers Union and two players each from Bashundhara Kings, Saif SC, Mohammedan SC and Bangladesh Police FC -- have left Bangladesh during the pandemic with a few embassies arranging for special flights to take their citizen home. However, no players from Arambagh, Chattogram Abahani, Rahmatganj or Uttar Baridhara Club could leave the country. "All five players are still in the club because the airports of their respective countries have not opened yet. The players told us that they are searching for available flights to leave Bangladesh but at the moment, ticket prices are very high," Rahmatganj MFS general secretary Imtiaz Hamid Sabuj said, adding that they have players from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Nigeria, Guinea and Gambia.

"Our foreign players were supposed to leave Bangladesh on June 16 but they either can't ensure their return tickets or the airports in their countries are closed," said Brothers Union manager Amer Khan. Amer also mentioned that Nigerian striker Nkwocha Kingsley, who has a residential card in the USA, and German coach Reza Parkas had left the country. "Two of Brothers' players from Cameroon and Ivory Coast are now counting days to join their families back home. Chattogram Abahani manager Arman Aziz said: "All five players from Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Brazil and Uzbekistan are trying to leave Bangladesh after June 25 as the flights for their destinations haven't resumed yet." "Chattogram Abahani are still arranging everything such as

accommodation, food, internet for the players even after clearing all the payments," said Aziz. However, Brothers manager Amer said that they are struggling to arrange everything for the foreign players due to financial constraints. "Brothers Union are not strong enough financially, so it is an extra burden for us." Foreign players of other clubs are also facing similar problems. BFF's competitions manager Taher Bin Ansari informed that Uzbekistani players, who tried to go to India to catch special flights to Uzbekistan, had to stay put as flights from India to Uzbekistan got cancelled. However, the Uzbekistan embassy in Dhaka is trying to arrange for a chartered flight for its citizens. Ansari added that five Brazilian footballers are in touch with the Brazilian Embassy to leave Bangladesh.

WHAT TO WATCH

LA LIGA

FACEBOOK
Espanyol v Levante
Live from 6:00pm
Athletic Club v Real Betis
Live from 9:00pm
Getafe v Eibar
Live from 11:30pm
Atletico Madrid v Real
Valladolid
Live from 2:00am
(Sunday)

PREMIER LEAGUE

Star Sports Select 1
Wartford v Leicester City
Live from 5:30pm
Brighton and Hove v
Arsenal
Live from 8:00pm
West Ham v Wolves
Live from 10:30pm
Bournemouth v Crystal
Palace
Live from 12:45am
(Sunday)

SERIE A

Ten 2
Torino v Parma
Live from 11:30pm
Verona v Cagliari
Live from 1:45am
(Sunday)
BUNDESLIGA
Star Sports Select 2
Bayern Munich v Freiburg
Live from 7:30pm



PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK PROJECT IS BEING BUILT WITH BSRM
COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT **BSRM** building a safer nation

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES
World's Largest VRM
SHAH CEMENT

Silk business faces tough times

RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

Life for weavers and workers of handloom silk clothing in Chapainawabganj has taken a rough turn as sales of these dearer garments dipped due to the pandemic.

Since the countrywide shutdown began on March 25, the weavers in different villages of the district's Shibganj and Sadar upazilas have halted their operations, leaving hundreds of handloom workers temporarily jobless.

"I usually weave silk cloths and sarees at my four handlooms and supply the items to Rajshahi, Dhaka and other districts. But the business stopped after the government declared a countrywide shutdown for Covid-19 and I suspended production since then," said Bibhuti Bhusan Das of Horinagar village in Shibganj upazila.

"Even with the shutdown eased now, buyers are not showing interest in purchasing our products. So, I have not started production," he told this correspondent, who visited Horinagar last week.

Monojit Chandra Singha, owner of 15 handlooms in the Sadar upazila's Laharpur village, said, "Chapainawabganj is famous for traditional silk fabric, popularly known as Rajshahi silk."

Monojit's stock of silk clothing worth Tk 15 lakh has remained unsold since the shutdown.

Another handloom owner Samir Chandra Das of the same village also has unsold stock worth around Tk 7 lakh.

Owner of six handlooms, Samir has been running this ancestral business for a long time and never faced such a crisis. He said until now buyers have always shown interest in their product.

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This photo taken recently shows a man in Chapainawabganj working a handloom. Due to the coronavirus-induced shutdown, which ended at the beginning of this month, the sale of handloom-crafted materials had stalled for nearly two and a half months and handlooms such as these had remained unused.

PHOTO: ROBIUL HASAN

CHINESE MARKET No tariff for 5,161 more Bangladeshi products

UNB, Dhaka

China gives duty-free access to 5,161 more Bangladeshi products in its market from July 1.

With the announcement made by the State Council of Ministry of Finance of China, a total of 8,256 Bangladeshi products will come under the 97 percent of products that would be exempted from tariff.

Bangladesh described it as a success of its economic diplomacy.

"We are glad to inform that as part of our economic diplomacy and the consequent outcome of exchange of letters between Bangladesh and China, Tariff Commission of the State Council of Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China issued a notice on granting zero treatment to 97 percent of Bangladeshi products," said a foreign ministry official.

He said Bangladesh is

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC Latest outbreak in Beijing 'came from Europe'

Say Chinese officials; EU seeks recovery plan; lockdown re-imposed in Chennai

AGENCIES

EU leaders yesterday debated a giant post-coronavirus recovery plan as China raced to prevent a second wave that it said may have originally come from Europe.

The disease was meanwhile already present in Italy as far back as December, experts said, underscoring the difficulty of tracking and containing the pandemic.

But with the world trying to both limit the economic pain of Covid-19 even as it guards against a resurgence, top US expert Dr Anthony Fauci offered a ray of hope as he said he did not see America returning to fresh lockdown.

The disease has so far killed 454,000 people and infected 8.5 million people worldwide, as well as causing historic levels of economic disruption as countries and continents shut down to stop its spread.

Many European countries began reopening this month after painful

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Bangabandhu is a role model for Asians

June 20, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU WELCOMES INDO-PAK SUMMIT

In an interview with Reuters, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today welcomes the upcoming Indo-Pak Summit which will be held at Simla on 21 June.

"This is a bilateral summit between the two countries. Let them discuss their issues. I don't want to be a part of that," he adds. The prime minister categorically denies any possibility of talks with Pakistan unless and until the country recognises Bangladesh.

When asked if there is any possibility of abandoning the trial process, Bangabandhu reiterates that the trial of war criminals will be held on the soil of Bangladesh at any cost. "They have committed the worst forms of crimes against humanity in Bangladesh. They killed 30 lakh Bangladeshis, raped 2 lakh women and one crore people had to take refuge in India fleeing their atrocities. The world must know about the brutalities committed by the Pak Army," he adds.

He further says that India has no authority to hand over the prisoners of war to any other country since the POWs surrendered to the command of Bangladesh.

SD GOKHALE CALLS ON BANGABANDHU

SD Gokhale, the president of International Council on Social

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Man shot dead by criminals in Rajbari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A man was shot dead by a group of miscreants at Kazipara in Sadar upazila of Rajbari around 11:00 am yesterday.

The victim is Shaheed Sheikh, 55, son of late Ibrahim Sheikh, of Kholabaria village in the upazila's Pachuria union, said police.

Quoting witnesses, Pachuria Union Parishad Chairman Kazi Alamgir said three men were involved in the murder.

"The trio interrupted Shaheed's road with a motorbike in Kazipara area when he was returning from Khankanapur Bazar. The miscreants shot him there and fled the scene."

Shaheed died on the spot, he added.

Sawpan Majumdar, officer-in-charge of Rajbari Sadar Police Station, said they recovered the body on

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Deceitful plants! Scientists say plants can mask odours to avoid getting eaten

AFP, Paris



Plants in dense tropical forests are able to mask their chemical scents in order to avoid being detected and eaten by insects -- a key advantage in the "information arms race" between themselves and plant-eating herbivores, according to a new study.

International researchers from Europe and North America examined 28 species of insects and 20 plant species in Chamela-Cuixmala, a tropical forest reserve on the western coast of Mexico.

Their research -- published Thursday in the journal Science -- sheds light on how individual members of "complex plant communities" evolve to emit similar odours, a pack mentality that keeps

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

BOLTON MEMOIR Trump moves court to stop publication

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump's last-ditch bid to stop former top aide John Bolton's book from publication goes to court yesterday, even though much of the damning contents, painting the president as corrupt and incompetent, is already out.

A federal court in the capital Washington will hear arguments from the government that ex-national security advisor John Bolton's 'The Room

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



PRAYER TIMING JUNE 20

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:05	12:45	5:00	6:52	8:17
JAMAAT 4:40	1:15	5:15	6:55	8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Virus claims life of one more doctor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Another doctor died of Covid-19 while undergoing treatment at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) in Barisal yesterday.



Emdad Ullah

Emdad Ullah, 58, a senior consultant at Barisal General Hospital, died around 5:35pm while receiving treatment at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

According to the Bangladesh Medical Association, 42 doctors have so far died from Covid-19.

Bakir Hossain, director of SBMCH, said he was admitted to the corona unit of the hospital on Thursday afternoon with Covid-19 symptoms.

Emdad was transferred to the ICU yesterday afternoon as his oxygen saturation level dropped below 70, he said.

Test results, which was

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A plethora of to-let stickers hung on the wall of a house just off Malibagh junction. The economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic has led to many tenants opting for lower-rent housing, leaving many landlords in the lurch. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

VIOLENT BORDER FACE-OFF China releases 10 Indian soldiers

Modi hosts all-party meet; US offers condolences to India over deaths of soldiers

AGENCIES

China has returned 10 Indian soldiers captured during a deadly border clash earlier this week, an Indian government source said yesterday, as two Asian nuclear powers sought to de-escalate tensions on their disputed border in the western Himalayas.

The Indian army did not comment on the release, which according to the source took place on Thursday evening, instead referring to a government statement that said all of its soldiers were accounted for.

In a briefing in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian denied any Indian troops had been in its custody.

"As far as I know China hasn't seized any Indian personnel," Zhao said.

According to Indian media, the freed personnel include two officers of the rank of major.

Twenty Indian soldiers, including an officer were killed in vicious hand-to-hand combat on Monday night in the Galwan Valley, according to the government, making it the deadliest clash on the India-China border in more than five decades.

India has said the Chinese side also suffered casualties too, but the Chinese government has not disclosed any.

Despite the tensions, India yesterday said it will receive 750 million dollars from China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to cope with the effects of Covid-19

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