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HEALTH SECTOR GRAFT REPORT 2019

ACC warnings go unheeded

Chief of anti-graft body disappointed as ministry hardly took ACC recommendations seriously

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

More than 16 months ago, the Anti-Corruption Commission sent a report to the health ministry identifying the sources of graft in the health sector, setting off alarm bells.

One of the findings was that corruption takes place during the purchase of medicines, surgical equipment and other machines due to absence of proper monitoring by the government. An alleged nexus of contractors and officials from different organisations under the ministry buy many "inessential machines and equipment to misappropriate money," said the report.

In the report, submitted in January

2019, the ACC also mentioned 25 recommendations on preventing graft and other corrupt practices in the sector.

All those recommendations, however, appear to have fallen on deaf ears as allegations of corruption in the procurement of N95 masks, PPE units and other safety gear surfaced even during the Covid-19 pandemic, which hit the country around March.

In such a situation, ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmood yesterday in a written statement said, "Had the health ministry followed the ACC's recommendations made last year, unbridled corruption in the health sector could have been reined in."

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Wearing face shield and mask, a man and a woman enter the icddr,b building in the capital's Mohakhali to give samples for Covid-19 testing. They were allowed in after verification of their appointments which were done online in advance. The research organisation launched the coronavirus testing service yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Covid-19 vaccine uncertain

Says WHO chief, seeks 30.1b funding for next 12 months to find one

AGENCIES

It is not certain that scientists will be able to create an effective vaccine against the coronavirus that has caused the Covid-19 pandemic, but it could take a year before one were to be invented, the head of the World Health Organisation said.

Speaking by video-conference to deputies from the European Parliament's health committee, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that if such a vaccine became a reality, it should become a public good available to all.

"It would be very difficult to say for sure that we will have a vaccine," Tedros said. "We never had a vaccine for a coronavirus. So this will be, when discovered, hoping that it will be the first one," he said.

He said the WHO had already more than a 100 candidates for a vaccine of which one was at an advanced stage of development.

"Hoping that there will be a vaccine, the estimate is we may have a vaccine within one year. If accelerated, it could be even less than that, but by a couple of months. That's what scientists are saying," he said.

More than 489,000 people worldwide have

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BANGLADESH UPDATE

3,868 New cases in 24hrs

1,30,474 Total cases

1,661 Deaths

53,133 Recoveries

COVID-HIT OVERSEAS JOBS

Workers abroad get little help

Govt focuses on assistance for returnees

JAMIL MAHMUD and RASHIDUL HASAN

In contrast to their major contribution to the country's economy, thousands of migrant workers living abroad have received little or no help from Bangladesh government to fight their financial hardship during the pandemic.

There is a growing concern that several lakh out of more than one crore Bangladeshi migrant workers may lose jobs due to the economic downturn.

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Bangladesh in recent a statement said, "Due to the economic and labour crisis created by the Covid-19 pandemic, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers are expected to return by the end of the year."

Against this backdrop, migrant rights activists have called for financial support directly from the government coffers, for both returnees and those staying overseas.

They urged the government to show "commitment" by adequately

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

2 coronavirus cases detected every minute

Shows DGHS data since June 10; 40 die, 3,868 infected in a day

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

At least two people are testing positive for coronavirus every minute, and five are reported dead every three hours from the highly transmissible virus, according to government statistics released yesterday.

A total of 3,868 new cases were detected in 24 hours until 2:30pm yesterday and 40 people died in the same period, said Nasima Sultana, additional director general of Directorate General of Health Services, at the daily briefing.

The death toll from the deadly virus rose to 1,661 and the number of total infections to 130,474.

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GONOSHASTHAYA RAPID TEST KIT

Drug admin rebuffs it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The drug administration said Gonoshasthaya Kendra's rapid test kit will not be registered because it had not met the standard set by the government's technical committees.

The Technical Committee on Investigational Drugs, Vaccines and Medical Device formed by the health ministry fixed the sensitivity and specificity of a rapid antibody test kit at 90 percent and 95 percent.

But Gonoshasthaya's antibody test kit's sensitivity is 69.7 percent and specificity is 96 percent, said a letter sent to Gonoshasthaya Pharmaceuticals on

Thursday by the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA).

The committee followed the US Food and Drug Administration guidelines in fixing the levels, said the letter.

DGDA's Technical Committee on Medical Device also made similar recommendations.

"It has not been possible for the drug administration to register the GR Rapid Dot Blot test kit," said the letter signed by Director General Maj Gen Md Mahbubur Rahman.

However, the DGDA will provide technical assistance for further development of the kit.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Holding Jamdani sarees in their hands, weavers try to attract customers at the age-old Jamdani haat in Narayanganj's Tarabo yesterday. The weekly haat opened last week after the Covid-19-induced break of over two months, but the sales were poor. Inset, people hardly follow health guidelines at the market.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'GUNFIGHT' WITH COPS Four Rohingya robbers killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Four suspected members of a notorious Rohingya robbery gang were killed in a "gunfight" with police in a remote forest in the district's Ukhiya upazila yesterday.

The dead are Bashir Ahmed, Hamid Hossain, Royingya, and Mohammed Rafiq, all Ronhigyas from Myanmar and aged between 35 and 45.

Police said the four were active members of Rohingya robbery gang "Hakim Bahini". Deceased Bashir and Hamid are younger brothers of Abdul Hakim alias Hakim Dakat, the chief of the gang, they said.

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Strong will shows way

A group of visually impaired performers takes up the challenge to produce dramas

MD MIZANUR RAHMAN HIMADRI

Audio dramas written and directed by someone visually impaired since birth, acted by a team of such challenged persons and made entirely on a mobile application, usher in hopes for those facing obstacles in life.

Mahbubur Rahman Rony, an English lecturer in Sylhet, came up with the initiative using technology.

As part of his efforts, he formed Ganga Padma Shilpighushthi in February. Since then, the platform has produced 14 audio dramas, all performed by visually impaired artists from Bangladesh and India.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rony, who is also Bangladesh's first visually impaired BCS cadre, said, "We see people like us taking part in singing or reciting poetry, but it is rare that they are in acting. Though it is slightly

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Rony

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ঢাকা মহানগরী পরিবহন ব্যবস্থাকে সুষ্ঠু, পরিকল্পিত, সমন্বিত ও আধুনিকীকরণ করার লক্ষ্যে ২০১২ সালে গোল্ডেন প্রায়ের মাধ্যমে ঢাকা পরিবহন সময় কর্তৃপক্ষ (ডিটিসিএ) প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। ডিটিসিএ'র ভিশন ও মিশন বহুক্ষেত্রে বৃহত্তর ঢাকার পরিকল্পিত, সমন্বিত এবং আধুনিক ও টেকসই পরিবহন ব্যবস্থা গড়ে তোলা এবং পরিবহন ব্যবস্থার সুষ্ঠু সমন্বয়, পরিবহন পরিকল্পনা এবং জনস্বার্থী গণপরিবহন ব্যবস্থা প্রবর্তনের মাধ্যমে জনসাধারণের জন্য নিরাপদ, নির্ভরযোগ্য এবং সহজলভ্য পরিবহন সেবা প্রদান। এ সকল লক্ষ্য ও উদ্দেশ্যকে সামনে রেখে ডিটিসিএ তার প্রতিষ্ঠাকাল থেকে সর্বাত্মকভাবে কাজ করে চলেছে।

এ প্রেক্ষাপটে, সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহের সুচিহ্নিত পরামর্শ ও মতামত গ্রহণের নিমিত্ত অনলাইনে Zoom এর মাধ্যমে নিম্নবর্ণিত সময়ে গণশুনানীর আয়োজন করা হয়েছেঃ

তারিখঃ ২৮ জুন, ২০২০ (রবিবার)

সময়ঃ দুপুর ৩:০০ ঘটিকা

Zoom Meeting ID: 314 433 6567

এছাড়াও, গণশুনানীটি ঢাকা পরিবহন সময় কর্তৃপক্ষ (ডিটিসিএ)র ফেসবুক পেজে নিম্নবর্ণিত লিঙ্কের মাধ্যমে সরাসরি সংগঠিত করা হবে।

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উক্ত প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক গণশুনানীতে Zoom এর মাধ্যমে নির্ধারিত তারিখ ও সময়ে সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে অংশগ্রহণ করে মূল্যবান পরামর্শ প্রদানের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

নির্বাহী পরিচালক

ঢাকা পরিবহন সময় কর্তৃপক্ষ

SOCIAL BUSINESS DAY CONFCE

Global changemakers to discuss post-Covid world

Prof Yunus to join it thru' virtual platform; the 3-day confce in Munich to continue till tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, along with changemakers from across the globe, will hold discussions on post-coronavirus world during the three-day Social Business Day conference that will continue till tomorrow.

Yunus Centre and Grameen Creative Lab jointly organised the conference in Munich, Germany this year, read a press statement of Yunus Centre.

Titled "Summer of Purpose", the 10th installment of the conference will connect the globe through virtual platform, the press statement read.

Global change makers in the fields of politics, business, science, sports and culture are scheduled to gather to find out new business ideas, raise tough questions and make promises to build an even better, sustainable and developed post-coronavirus world.

This year, a large part of the conference will take place virtually,

read the release.

According to the release, Prof Yunus was scheduled to deliver a speech on the topic "No Going Back" on the first day of the conference.

Today, Prof Yunus would take part in a session titled "Stand, Speak, Rise Up!" along with Maria Teresa, Grand Duchess of Luxembourg.

He will feature alongside 2024 Summer Olympics host and Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo and UEFA Euro 2024 organiser and former captain of Germany football team Philipp Lahm in a session which will shed light on re-engaging global sports fans with different games.

Tomorrow, Prof Yunus will take part in a brief live session with International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach.

Later, Prof Yunus, his colleagues and nation builders from across the globe will be honoured during a session.

June 28 also marks Prof Yunus' birthday.

Trump admin asks US Supreme Court to end Obamacare

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump's administration asked the Supreme Court Thursday to strike down Obamacare, which has provided health insurance to tens of millions of Americans.

The third challenge to the landmark law, formally known as the Affordable Care Act, comes as the United States records some of its highest coronavirus infection rates since the contagion hit

the country.

Under Obamacare, millions of Americans are required to buy health insurance or face a tax penalty.

But in 2017 Congress eliminated the fine for people who failed to sign up -- known as the individual mandate -- removing a key part of former president Barack Obama's policy.

The Department of Justice (DoJ) argues "the individual mandate is not severable from the rest of the Act."

2 coronavirus cases detected

FROM PAGE 1

The infection rate among the tested samples was 20.91 percent.

Analysing the DGHS's daily data, it was found that the situation has not changed much in the last few weeks.

On June 10, 3,190 patients were detected with Covid-19 while the number of deaths was 37. The infection rate among the tested patients was 19.98 percent that day.

On June 15, there were 3,099 new cases and 38 dead. The infection rate among the tested patients was 20.61 percent that day.

Experts said while the numbers may appear to have stabilised, they could rocket upwards any time and if more tests are done, more cases will be identified.

They said more people should be tested to identify all possible cases to contain the spread.

"It seems the infection rate is static, but to me the concern is that the number of mild cases may be more than 10 times larger than the identified ones," Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) Consultant and

epidemiologist Mushtaq Husain told The Daily Star.

He said, "As the mild cases are not identified, it may cause a sudden spike in any part of the country, especially in crowded cities at any time. So, we have to remain cautious about it."

On June 20, a total of 3,240 people tested Covid-19 positive while 37 died. The infection rate among tested patients was 23.09 percent on that day.

ASM Alamgir, principal scientific officer at the IEDCR, said the data showed that the number of detected cases was on an upward trend, but in the last few days the rate is decreasing.

"It is not conclusive, but it will not rise suddenly or fall abruptly," he told The Daily Star.

The first cases were identified in the country on March 8 but testing facilities were limited initially. From May, the number of tests increased.

Bangladesh remains the 17th-worst affected country in the world in terms of the number of cases -- one place higher than South Africa and just below France, according to worldometer.info.

Four Rohingya robbers killed

FROM PAGE 1

Teknaf OC Pradip Kumar Das said they had been conducting drives in different hills of the upazila for several months to nab the members of "Hakim Bahini" as they created panic among the local people by carrying out kidnapping and killing.

Around 1:00pm yesterday, a police team conducted a drive in the hilly areas of Cheptakhali forest near Monkhalhi of Ukhiya upazila on information that Hakim Dakat and some of his associates were staying there.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the criminals opened fire at the police team. The cops fired retaliatory shots, triggering the "gunfight", said the OC.

After the gunfight was over, police recovered the bullet-hit bodies of Bashir, Hamid, Rafique and Royingya. They claimed to have recovered four

shotguns, 20 bullets and 40,000 yaba pills from the spot.

The bodies were sent to Cox's Bazar District Hospital morgue last night for autopsies.

According to police, members of "Hakim Bahini" have been staying in the hills around the Rohingya refugee camps in Teknaf and Ukhiya for the last few years. The gang often kidnap local people and collect ransom money from their relatives.

The gang kidnapped seven Bangladeshis in the last two months. Three of them were killed and the rest freed after ransoms were paid to the kidnappers, police added.

On August 25 last year, Abdul Hakim's wife Rubi Akhter, 25, and his two other younger brothers -- Kabir Ahmed and Nazir Ahmed -- were killed in another "gunfight" with police.

Drug admin rebuffs it

FROM PAGE 1

Asked for comment, GR Rapid Dot Blot Project Coordinator Mohib Ullah Khondoker said it was sad that the drug administration has not accepted the recommendations made by the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

The BSMMU, which trialled the kit for over a month and sent the report and recommendations to the DGDA on June 17, suggested that the kit be used for assessing what part of a community has been infected by the coronavirus.

The kit is effective in 11-40 percent of the cases when tested in the first or second week of the infection, says the BSMMU report and recommended against using it to detect an infection.

However, the BSMMU recommended that the kit be used in the cases where RT-PCR tests are not available.

Mohib Ullah said the FDA guidelines referenced by the DGDA were not considered by the BSMMU during its trial. The BSMMU is the highest medical academic institution in the country and its recommendations should not be ignored, he added.

"We will soon sit with the BSMMU over the issue," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

In late April, Gonoshasthaya sought DGDA approval for its rapid test kit. The DGDA asked Gonoshasthaya to go through a contract research organisation, but Gonoshasthaya said the drug administration itself should do it, considering the nature of the emergency.

On April 30, the drug administration allowed Gonoshasthaya to get the kit trialled by the BSMMU or icddr. Gonoshasthaya Kendra decided to get the trial done at the BSMMU.



Members of Quantum Foundation head towards Bhaban-2 of Dhaka Medical College Hospital to collect the body of a Covid-19 patient yesterday. The organisation has completed funerals of 828 such patients for free across the country in the last one and a half months.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ACC warnings go unheeded

FROM PAGE 1

He said if steps were taken in line with their recommendations, corruption at the sector could have been checked to some extent.

"The commission has adopted a zero tolerance policy against graft in the health sector. Our enquiry will be unbiased and complete," he said in the statement.

In early April when alleged anomalies in the procurement of masks came to the fore, the health directorate faced a barrage of criticism for providing substandard respirators, an essential safety gear to fight the deadly virus, to frontline doctors and other medical staff.

Later, a government probe was launched into an allegation that regular masks were supplied to different hospitals after labeling them as N-95 ones. The probe committee recommended action against the supplier, but no action has so far been taken.

On June 18, the ACC had formed a committee to probe the allegation.

It then issued a letter to the ministry on June 21, seeking detailed information about the projects undertaken to procure masks, PPEs, sanitisers, ICU equipment, ventilators, PCR machine and test kits to combat Covid-19.

The commission sought information from the health ministry, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and Central Medical Stores Depot (CMSD) about the purchase of N-95 masks and PPEs and told them to submit the information by June 30.

As a part of the enquiry, the anti-graft watchdog also sought information from the ministry about the doctors who have been transferred from their workplace on various grounds since late March.

The move came after several doctors were transferred after they raised questions over the standard of masks, gloves and PPE suits supplied to the hospitals.

On December 12 last year, the ACC hand a letter to the health ministry asking it to blacklist 14 medical equipment suppliers, who were found involved in misappropriation of public money worth about Tk 108 crore in several graft cases.

The organisations are: Rahman Trade International, Anik Traders, Ahmed Enterprise, Manila Medicine, SK Traders, MH Pharma, Ovi Drugs, Albira Pharmacy, SM Traders, Mercantile Trade International, Bengal Scientific and Surgical, Universal Trade Corporation, ASL and Blair Aviation.

Ironically, it took the DGHS over six months to blacklist them.

Only on Wednesday, the directorate issued a circular blacklisting the 14 contractors.

"To ensure proper utilisation of public money, bring transparency in procurement and prevent corruption and fraudulence, the Anti-Corruption Commission sent a letter with a list of cases against the 14 firms and their proprietors and opined that the 14 contractors be blacklisted," reads the circular, signed by DGHS Deputy Director Hasan Mahmud.

"In this circumstance, it is requested to take necessary steps against the proprietors of the contractors," it said.

ACC in its investigation carried out at different times found that a group of dishonest officials and staffers of the directorate of health and its other organisations procured unnecessary MSR, heavy machinery and services several times at prices higher than the market prices.

"There have also been instances of taking money without supplying the goods," according to the ACC's December 12 letter to the health ministry.

In such cases, the contractors create a syndicate that takes part in the tender process, the letter said.

"Because of these syndicates, goods are procured at prices several times higher than usual, which creates scope of misuse as well as misappropriation of public money," it added.

The letter said, "To ensure proper use of public money, to bring transparency in procurement and prevent ongoing corruption, forgery and conspiracy, ACC thinks the listed firms need to be blacklisted."

Asked about the ACC chairman's statement, Health Minister Zahid Maleque, in a text message last night, said, "Our ministry has been very busy handling the coronavirus and dengue situations for quite some time. We tried to follow advices from all important agencies to the best of our ability. Any misappropriation shall not go unchecked."

Knifeman kills two in Glasgow before being shot by police

REUTERS, Glasgow

An man stabbed two people to death in the Scottish city of Glasgow yesterday before being shot dead by police, British media reported, in an attack that left a police officer critically injured.

An eyewitness told Sky News she had seen several people covered in blood being treated by emergency services after the incident at a city centre hotel, and armed police on the scene, at around 1:15 p.m. (1215 GMT).

Police said six people, including the police officer, had been hospitalised. Authorities have yet to say what the motive for the attack was.

A government source told the BBC that a total of three people had died, including the attacker.

Police Scotland Assistant Chief Constable Steve Johnson said the incident had been contained and there was no wider risk to the public.

"The individual who was shot by armed police has died," Police Scotland said in a statement, adding that they were not looking for anyone else in relation to the incident.

"We would urge the public not to speculate about this incident or share unconfirmed information on social media."

One eyewitness in the hotel described the scene as "full of blood".

"I was in my room and I heard loud screams from downstairs," a man who gave his name as John told the BBC.

"I got worried and went to check what was going on. When I opened the lift it was all blood."

Police Scotland said its injured officer was in a critical but stable condition.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he was "deeply saddened by the terrible incident in Glasgow".

Last week, three people were killed in the southern English town of Reading when a man wielding a five-inch knife went on the rampage in a park. Police said they were treating that incident as terrorism.

World pledges \$1.8b for crisis-stricken Sudan

AFP, Berlin

The international community pledged \$1.8 billion at a conference to drum up support for Sudan on Thursday, in an effort to help the northeast African country battle economic woes after the ousting of long-time dictator Omar al-Bashir.

"This conference opened a new chapter in the cooperation between Sudan and the international community to rebuild the country," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said at the video conference co-organised by Germany with Sudan, the European Union and the United Nations.

Some 50 countries and international organisations pledged a total of more than \$1.8 billion, while the World Bank Group offered a grant of \$400 million.

"This conference marks the start of a process, which will be followed by subsequent engagement by the international community to take stock of the progress made by Sudan in implementing reforms and to allow its partners to adapt their support accordingly," the conference's concluding statement said.

Covid-19 vaccine

FROM PAGE 1

died from Covid-19 since it emerged in China late last year and cases are expected to reach 10 million across the globe within the next week.

His statement came as WHO yesterday said that a global initiative to speed up the development and production of Covid-19 tests, vaccines and treatments will require more than \$30 billion over the next year.

Providing details of the so-called ACT accelerator, launched in April and aimed at pooling international resources to conquer the pandemic, WHO said "the costed plans presented today call for \$31.3 billion in funding."

So far, \$3.4 billion of that had been pledged, it said, pointing out that an additional \$27.9 billion was needed over the next 12 months, including nearly \$14 billion to cover immediate needs.

The announcement came ahead of a major pledging event in Brussels in support of the ACT accelerator, set to take place today (Saturday).

"This is an investment worth making," Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a special envoy for the ACT accelerator, told a virtual briefing.

"If we don't rally now, the human costs and the economic pain will deepen," she said.

"Though these numbers sound big, they are not when we think of the alternative. If we spend billions now, we will be able to avoid spending trillions later."

"The time to act is now, and the way to act is together."

The funds requested should make it possible to deliver 500 million tests and 245 million courses of treatment to low and middle-income countries by mid-2021.

They also aim to deliver two billion vaccine doses by the end of next year, of which half will go to low and middle-income nations.

Workers abroad get little help

FROM PAGE 1

addressing the plight of migrant workers, who are the country's one of three major economic pillars, alongside the farmers and garment workers.

Contacted, Ahmed Munir Saleheen, secretary to the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry, said they were giving priority to support the migrant workers who were forced to return after losing jobs and now facing hardship due to the pandemic.

"Because, we hope, those who preferred to stay abroad will be able to pull through."

Talking to this newspaper on June 16, he said the ministry provided immediate support of about Tk 11 crore to overseas workers via different Bangladesh missions and will continue to do so.

Asked whether they have plans to support overseas workers for long-term survival amid the current economic crisis, Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) Director General Hamidur Rahman said they were considering such a step as a secondary option.

Foreign employers and the governments of the respective countries have their duties and responsibilities for the migrant workers. And no worker can be fired arbitrarily or left starving because of the pandemic, he told this newspaper over the phone.

The official stressed the need for stronger diplomatic effort to protect the migrant workers abroad.

According to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, more than 13 million Bangladeshis, including less-skilled, semi-skilled and skilled migrant workers and professionals went abroad, for overseas employment since 1976 till May this year.

After the pandemic began in the country, the government announced a bailout package of Tk 500 crore while the expatriates' welfare ministry announced a separate Tk 200 crore loan scheme for the migrant workers.

However, both the packages are likely to be disbursed as loans only for economic reintegration of the returnees. The workers struggling

abroad to survive the pandemic are not getting anything from it.

Officials said the Tk 200 crore loan will come from the WEWB fund, which is created with the money of migrant workers.

According to a BSS report, the Tk 500 crore package was announced by the prime minister on May 14 for the expatriates who became jobless during the coronavirus pandemic. The money will be given to Probashi Kalyan Bank so that the returnees "can do something here by taking loan from the bank."

Talking to this newspaper over phone, Prof Tasneem Siddiqui, chair of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), said migrant workers have contributed to the country's revenue generation through sending remittance.

However, there is little reflection for them in the proposed national budget of 2020-2021, she said.

"The state needs to show its commitment [towards migrant workers]."

IT'S THEIR OWN MONEY

Over the years, funds from the WEWB have been allocated for the welfare of migrant workers and their family members, said migrant rights activists and officials.

WEWB DG Hamidur Rahman said the fund did not see expected rise during the pandemic because of a stalemate in the labour recruitment process, since the money is collected from workers' registration.

For the past several years, Tk 3,500 has been collected from each worker during the registration.

WEWB spends nearly Tk 3.5 lakh from the fund against each regular migrant worker who dies abroad, he added.

According to an official there, WEWB has a fund of over Tk 1,000 crore at present.

Wishing anonymity, he said during the Covid-19 outbreak, about Tk 9.44 crore was approved from the welfare fund to support migrant workers abroad.

Besides, about Tk 2.96 crore was distributed among the returnees for their transportation cost (Tk 5,000 to each worker) during the shutdown till

May 30.

Also, about Tk 9.79 crore has been given from WEWB as part of premium for workers' mandatory insurance, he added.

This total amount was given alongside the announced Tk 200 crore loan.

RMMRU Chair Prof Tasneem, referring to the loan scheme, said this is from workers' money. "It should have come from the government's revenue budget."

Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration Programme, said using workers' money from their fund in such a way during the pandemic could jeopardise the regular welfare activities and put their future in uncertainty.

There is no separate allocation for overseas migrant workers from the government's coffers although there is an initiative to give fund for other sectors, he added.

Secretary Saleheen of the expatriates' welfare ministry affirmed that the wage earners' welfare fund is created with the money of migrant workers.

"And there is no doubt that this fund will be spent for their welfare and for no other means," he said.

Shamsul Alam, director general of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, said if required, they can facilitate training of returnees for their economic reintegration.

According to WEWB's annual report of 2017-18, Tk 359 crore was spent as "support, grants and expatriates welfare" in the fiscal year.

In 2016-17 and 2015-16, such expenditures were Tk 198 crore and Tk 181 crore respectively, said annual reports for those fiscal years.

The amounts were spent mainly as medical grants (for the physically disabled, ailing and injured), financial compensation, carrying dead bodies and funerals, scholarship, special allocation, and for smart cards, said the reports.

In 2017-18 and 2016-17, WEWB invested Tk 235 crore and Tk 50 crore to the Probashi Kalyan Bank. It also approved Tk 7,28,172 and Tk 11.38 lakh for missions abroad in those years.

These expenditures were included as that for "support, grant, and expatriates welfare".

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Getting good mileage in Old Dhaka, 1984.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Dhaka in the Eighties

For me, the eighties was a decade of rediscovery. Completing my studies in the United States in 1983, I started working as a software engineer in an emergent area in California that someone had nicknamed Silicon Valley. I came home to Bangladesh every time I had earned a vacation. While here, I spent most of my free time on the streets of Dhaka.

That's because I had a passion for photography and wanted to observe and photograph life in Dhaka's streets. I saw many *Tokais* in the streets. They were children who walked the streets slinging a large bag over their shoulder where they collected all manners of discards including paper, bottles, bits and pieces of metal, even discarded rubber sandals.

One day I followed two *Tokais* for several hours. Their work was not the drudgery I had imagined. While collecting they met all manners of people, ate snacks and goofed off with other kids. Once their bags were full, they headed to a neighbourhood at the heart of the recycling ecosystem in Old Dhaka. They sorted their collection into separate piles of paper, glass, plastic, sandals, metal etc. Their buyer weighed each pile separately (as the price varied between categories) and paid the *Tokais*.

What happened to these items? I followed the movement of the collected sandals, which were lumped with several hundred others. They were sent to a small factory, also in Old Dhaka, where they were cleaned, melted and poured into moulds to make new sandals.

Tokais are long gone from Dhaka's streets. Bangladeshi children of that age today spend their days in school.

There were things on the streets that are no longer seen today. For example, a variety of snacks sold from open containers, such as *achar* and *hawa mithai*, have been replaced by packaged snacks. Corner cigarette stalls hung a rope that smouldered slowly; the smoker lit his cigarette without wasting a matchstick. There were fountain pen vendors who displayed them neatly behind glass in an *attaché* case. Near every courthouse were rows and rows of typists who were ready to type your legal document for a small fee. Streets were shared by rickshaws, bullock carts, *thelagaris*, and various automobiles.

I also paid attention to street art. Rickshaw painting technique was perhaps less refined than it is today, but that did not stop the artists from imagining larger than life damsels, heroes and villains. Movie theatres had huge giant signboards. Advertisement billboards were simple, often containing a sentence or two extolling the product, accompanied by paintings of unknown models. A popular graffiti was "I Love You" usually inscribed with flourish on a wall. Whether this declaration was meant for the world in general or for a particular romantic target (perhaps residing in the house behind the wall) I could not tell.

The eighties were a difficult time for Bangladesh. But walking the streets of Dhaka, I learned about the energy and resilience of our people, which is timeless. I had left Bangladesh at a young age and these trips enabled me to rediscover my native land.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow "ihtishamkabir" on Instagram.

BARISHAL SHER-E-BANGLA MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Fire safety adds to Covid-19 worries

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Last Monday, there was a fire on the ground floor of coronavirus unit at Barishal's Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital. While there were thankfully no casualties, the incident exposed the hospital's unpreparedness in the case of fires.

On a visit to the hospital, this correspondent found multiple exposed wires at different wards in the old building. The hospital has undergone little to no renovation in recent years, and a meagre number of fire safety equipment was available.

"The wires are worn down. Those have not been changed in a while and the building needs renovation. Otherwise thousands of patients, attendants, doctors and staff are being put at risk every day," said Dr Sudip Halder of SBMCH Indoor Doctors' Association.

The hospital's coronavirus unit was established at a new, five-storied building which was inaugurated this year. On Monday, the fire broke

out from a short-circuit and was brought under control within thirty minutes, said the unit's in-charge Dr Maniruzzaman Shahin.

Md Ripon, an attendant to a patient admitted at the unit, said, "It was very sudden and we saw smoke spreading. It was very scary and my relative (the patient) started crying out of fear."

In June 2015, four people were injured after a fire broke out at the main building of SBMCH, said hospital sources.

Oliver Guda, executive director of Barishal's public works department told the Daily Star that the coronavirus unit was inaugurated recently despite there not being enough fire safety equipment. "This building needs a 240 kV generator but it only has a 60kV one which was borrowed from the nurses' unit on an emergency basis."

"Patients have to use heaters and air conditioners. The generator cannot support this and hence a fire broke out from a short-circuit," said

Oliver.

"The contractor will not be able to set up complete fire safety measures till August," he added.

Assistant Director of Fire Service and Civil Defense at Barishal, Faruque Hossain Sikder, said, "There are no fire safety measures at the old building or the coronavirus unit, save for a few fire extinguishers. We have visited these buildings and sent a letter to the authority to set up proper safety measures last year, but there has been no progress. They haven't received fire safety training either."

Faruque said they suggested the SBMCH administration to set up reservoir, high den, hose pipes and safe electric wires but these suggestions were not implemented.

"The coronavirus unit was opened in a hurry in March. There is a reservoir but hose pipe and other equipment are missing," he added.

The building where the Covid-19 patients are being treated, still has some finishing touches left to go.

Lift hasn't been set up there yet.

Meanwhile, SBMCH Director Bakir Hossain said they have sent a letter to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) for setting up complete fire safety measures and replacing the decades-old wiring at the old building. "But we did not receive any allocation," said Bakir.

"We opened the coronavirus unit earlier than planned because of the crisis. The unit only has a few extinguishers but there are sparks often as people are using heater," he said, "We have written to DGHS several times. We wrote to them just a couple of days ago but we haven't received any word. Now we have decided to stop the use of heaters."

On May 27, five patients died in a fire at the Covid-19 unit of United Hospital in Dhaka. Fire service later assessed that the unit was lacking in safety measures and violated the Bangladesh National Building Code.



NOT THE TIME TO HIT THE BEACH! With shutdown being eased, people in Chattogram city have started to flock Rani Rashmoni Ghat, popularly known as Kattali beach. Yesterday being the weekend, youths with horses, who remained out of work for the last couple of months, were also seen trying to lure customers for a ride along the beach. Inset, a spirited group of bikers on port city's Link Road, where many are not only ignoring physical distancing, masks or helmets but also common sense.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



Heritage sites left uncared for in Sylhet

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Most archaeological sites in Sylhet, even the protected ones, have been left uncared for as neither the Department of Archaeology nor the local administration are being able to take proper care of them due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In recent visits to such sites in the city and nearby upazilas, this correspondent found that many of the protected sites were being gradually grabbed and some were missing artifacts -- either misplaced, damaged or stolen.

A section of the Jaintiapur heritage site in Sylhet was being used as a parking lot for trucks while its megalithic remains were left unattended. Even the notice that says the site is protected has become worn out and almost impossible to read. There are total

seven heritage sites in Jaintiapur, which need immediate attention.

The condition of Laurer Garh at Sunamganj was not any better either.

As tourists are not flocking to the sites due to the recent shutdown, most archaeological sites lie neglected.

According to DoA, there are 17 protected sites in Sylhet division and around 700 archaeological monuments, which are not officially protected under the Antiquity Act.

Abdul Hye Al-Hadi, chief coordinator of Save the Heritage and Environment, said, "Archaeological monuments and sites are always neglected. During the pandemic when people are confined to home, some vested quarters are taking the advantage to destroy and grab those. As the archaeology

department doesn't have site or district offices, local administration should step forward to protect the heritage sites."

Archaeologist Dr Ataur Rahman, regional director of DoA, said, "It was quite difficult to protect all archaeological heritages in regular time as we don't have offices in many districts; this recent pandemic has made the situation even worse."

It is important to have district and site offices at every archaeologically enriched localities. "Our regional office for Chattogram and Sylhet is located in Cumilla and we are not able to look after the heritages, spread at every corner of the divisions," he mentioned.

He said they are urging the local administrations to take proper care of the sites, as they have responsibilities and allocation.

Contacted, Md Hannan Miah,

director general of DoA, said, "Some minor incidents of misplacing a few artifacts from archaeological sites are taking place during the pandemic, but nothing major will happen as we are alert in this regard. Maintenance of most sites is not being possible at this time due to a crisis of contractual workers. But we are trying to encourage them to work maintaining physical distance."

Local administrations are also helping them to keep the sites protected, he said.

Asked, Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Jaintiapur Nihada Parvin said, "Usually, the archaeology department assigns people, mostly locals, to look after the sites. We will get in touch with them to inquire about the present condition and make sure they are being looked after."

Three arrested in Rangpur for defrauding jobseekers

Forged documents recovered, case filed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police arrested three alleged frauds on Thursday afternoon on the charge of taking money from people in the name of giving them jobs at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur.

Osman Gani (27), Tanvir Hossain (23) and Jahidul Islam (24) were held in front of the university in the city's Parkmore area where they went to collect money from a jobseeker, said police.

Forged recruitment documents, four bank cheques and four national ID cards were seized from their possession, said the law enforcers.

The gang already took Tk 4 lakh from another jobseeker, said Muhibbul Islam, a sub-inspector and in-charge of BRUR

outpost police.

Abu Hena Mostofa Kamal, registrar of BRUR, filed a case accusing the arrestees on Thursday night, said the SI.

Yesterday, a Rangpur court sent the fraudsters to jail when they were produced before it, the police officer further told The Daily Star.

According to sources at Begum Rokeya University, a circular was published four months ago to recruit manpower at hird-grade and and fourth-grade, through outsourcing.

The fraud gang used the circular as an opportunity, although the recruitment process, has remained halted due to coronavirus pandemic, said university sources.



Officers and personnel of Kamrangir Char Model Police Station gather at the yard for their daily round of exercise. The police station has adopted the routine, from 7:30 to 8:30 every evening, to boost their fitness and immune system. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY

Job creation, inclusive growth must be the centerpiece: study

UNB, Dhaka

Amid the growing impact of Covid-19 on the country, a recent study says job creation and inclusive growth must be the centerpiece of the recovery strategy.

The study, carried out by the Centre for Research and Information (CRI) said the risk of broadening the inequality gap is more than ever before, and jobless recovery might put the progress of the past decade at risk.

In addition, the demographic dividend that Bangladesh has been enjoying might quickly turn into demographic liability, it added.

Imran Ahmed, Deputy Executive Director at Shakti Foundation and a former research fellow at the McKinsey Global Institute; and Syed Mafiz Kamal, a senior analyst at CRI, co-authored the paper.

Low income and or labour-intensive jobs, which represent most of the informal sector and a significant share of SMEs, have been most affected. Many of these jobs are temporary and will come back as the economy opens. However, some of the job losses will be more permanent, it said.

According to CRI estimates, the "permanent" impact job loss is estimated to be around 6 million, which would nearly double the unemployment rate. It would affect approximately 24 million people.

Countries like Vietnam and New Zealand have announced that they are not opting for an immediate "V" shaped recovery; their policymakers are prioritising on employment generation and inclusive growth. The authors of the report believe a similar approach should be taken for Bangladesh.

Gas supply restored to parts of Dhaka after 8hr disruption

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gas supply at seven areas of the capital was disrupted yesterday for nearly eight hours, after a distribution line caught fire.

The disruption occurred after Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) workers accidentally severed a pipe while working on a sewage line in West Shevrapara around 3am, said Shakhawat Hosen, deputy general manager of Titas Gas.

At 4:47am, a fire broke out at the severed gas line due to a spark from an electric transformer nearby, said Abdur Rahman, senior station officer of Mirpur Fire Station.

As the fire could not be doused immediately, the gas connection was switched off around 5am. The supply was restored around 1pm, after the pipeline was repaired.

"The fire was confined to the pipeline, so there was no major damage. But the valve at Amin Bazar had to be switched off," said Ali Mohammad Al Mamun, managing director of Titas Gas.

Gas supply in Dhanmondi, Shyamoli, Mohammadpur, Kallyanpur, Kazipara, Shevrapara and a part of Mirpur was unavailable during the period, he added.

Additional

FROM PAGE 12

Pakistani governments of neglecting such a serious issue. He promises that his government will take all necessary steps for controlling the damage of recurring floods.

The prime minister reiterates that Pakistan will have to free all Bangladeshis stranded in the country, and all the war criminals will be tried on the soil of Bangladesh.

BHUTTO'S TALK PROPOSAL

Pakistani President ZA Bhutto today says that the issue of Bangladesh is an internal matter of Pakistan and leaders of both wings can resolve the issue through discussion. He invites Bangabandhu to Pakistan for a talk. He adds that he is ready to discuss the Bangladesh issue in any place except India. The Pakistani president also praises the role of the Pakistan army during the 1971 War.

Bhutto makes these outrageous comments just a day before the beginning of the Simla Conference between India and Pakistan.

SOURCES: June 28, 1972 issue of *Purbodesh*.

4 more die

FROM PAGE 12

46; and Laksham upazila's Shahanara Begum, 60.

With the four, a total of 90 people have died with Covid-19 symptoms in the district.

Meanwhile, 87 more died of Covid-19 in Cumilla while 2,994 patients tested positive for the virus until yesterday in the district.

A total of 121 patients have been taking treatment at the isolation unit of CMCH. Thirty-four of them have tested positive for the virus and rest were awaiting their test results.

Swathes

FROM PAGE 12

water of Tangon and Kulik rivers have engulfed their villages.

According to the bulletin yesterday issued by the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), areas under Jamuna basin in the northern districts and areas under Meghna basin in Sylhet region will be inundated as water levels of all major rivers in these two basins, including the Jamuna, Teesta, Dharla, Sari and Gowain rivers are increasing.

"Water level of the Jamuna will continue to increase until the first week of July and it will take another week to recede the water," said Arifuzzaman Bhuiyan, executive engineer at FFWC.

The flood situation has been worsened due to the torrential rain in the northern districts and the areas across the border in the last 24 hours.

Assistant Engineer Aminur Rashid of hydrology department at the Water Development Board in Rangpur said, the Teesta was flowing 20 centimetres above the danger mark at Dalia point near Teesta barrage.

People in these areas have taken shelter in high and safe places with their cattle and furniture, he said.

Our correspondents from Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Thakurgaon contributed to this report.

Scientists

FROM PAGE 12

At the moment, Fugaku is doing experimental work on Covid-19, including simulating how the virus spreads. Many supercomputers around the world are being put to work on the coronavirus outbreak, allowing researchers to better understand the new virus and how to fight the pandemic.

Aside from that work, Japan hopes to use the computer for its "Society 5.0" technology programme. That could see it used for everything from simulating nuclear blasts to modelling climate change.

"I very much hope that Fugaku will show itself to be highly effective in real-world applications and will help to realise Society 5.0," said Naoki Shinjo, corporate executive officer of Fujitsu, in a statement.

Fugaku was created by research group Riken and technology company Fujitsu, using technology from Arm, which makes semiconductors and software.

Arm designs chips for many of the world's smartphones, including the iPhone, and is rumoured to be coming to Apple's Macs as well.



Locals evacuate Rohingya refugees from a boat at a coast of North Aceh, Indonesia, on Thursday. (Story on page 5)

PHOTO: REUTERS

Pandemic makes more people vulnerable to trafficking

Says annual US report

REUTERS, Washington

The novel coronavirus pandemic had made more people vulnerable to human trafficking, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Thursday as an annual US report added Afghanistan and Nicaragua to a list of worst offenders while Saudi Arabia was upgraded.

"Instability and lack of access to critical services caused by the pandemic mean that the number of people vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers is rapidly growing," Pompeo said in the annual US State Department Trafficking in Persons

report.

The report kept China, a persistent target for criticism by Pompeo, on the lowest rung and again highlighted widespread use of forced labor, including through what the United States and human rights groups say is the mass detention in camps of more than one million minority Muslims.

It said Beijing had expanded this campaign into other provinces and begun implementing it among other religious minorities. China denies mistreatment and says the camps provide vocational training and are needed to fight extremism.

Pompeo, in remarks on the report,

singled out China, "where the Chinese Communist Party and its state-owned enterprises often force citizens to work in horrendous conditions on Belt and Road projects," he said, referring to an infrastructure project to link China with other parts of Asia and Europe.

The report also took aim at Hong Kong, which US President Donald Trump has threatened to strip of economic privileges over China's tightened grip on the former British colony.

Hong Kong, alongside Pakistan, was downgraded to the report's "Tier 2 Watch List," a category denoting those meriting special scrutiny, on

the grounds that it had failed to enact legislation to fully criminalize trafficking.

Saudi Arabia, a major US ally and arms buyer that was last year placed on the list of countries that failed to meet minimum US anti-trafficking standards, was upgraded to the Tier 2 Watch List.

Afghanistan, a US ally in the fight against the Taliban, and Nicaragua were both demoted in this year's report to Tier 3, falling into the lowest category, which can bring restrictions on US non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance, a decision that would be made by the president.

10-bed ICU only hope

FROM PAGE 12

There are no ICU facilities at government hospitals in Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Feni, Noakhali, and Laxmipur. They depend on the 10-bed ICU of Cumilla Medical College Hospital, leading inevitably to people from all these districts being deprived of lifesaving treatment.

All the 10 beds of the unit have been dedicated for Covid-19 treatment.

The six districts have no private ICU facilities that admit coronavirus patients.

Dr Mojibur Rahman, director of the Cumilla Medical College Hospital, said five more beds will be set up at the hospital soon. The work is ongoing, he added.

"Besides, we are trying to collect some high-flow nasal cannulas for the ICU, in order to provide oxygen

directly into lungs. It will improve our treatment at the ICU."

High-flow nasal cannulas can give oxygen at a rate of 60 litres per minute to critical Covid-19 patients.

For Cumilla as a whole, there are 90 beds in isolation units at upazila health complexes and a 154-bed isolation unit at Cumilla Medical College Hospital, according to the civil surgeon office.

As of Thursday, a total of 2,994 people have tested positive for Covid-19 in Cumilla, with 87 deaths so far, according to data from the civil surgeon's office.

The rate of infection in Cumilla city is high, said Civil Surgeon Dr Neyatuzzaman, adding the administration will soon enforce lockdown in some areas to control the spread of the virus.

Another cop dies

FROM PAGE 12

His body was sent to his village home. He was buried at his family graveyard after a namaz-e-janaza in the presence of senior district police officials, reads the statement.

As of yesterday, 9,869 police personnel were infected with the virus. Of them, 2,193 are from DMP, according to the PHQ.

Besides, 9,004 officials are in quarantine, and 4,188 in isolation.

Meanwhile, 5,794 members of the force recovered until yesterday, and the recovery rate is around 55.92 percent, say PHQ officials.

The officials attributed the decent recovery rate to proper steps of the police administration.

In another development, 632 members of Bangladesh Ansar and

Village Defence Party got infected till yesterday, says a statement from the force.

Of them, 401 contracted Covid-19 while performing their duties in Dhaka and 231 others while discharging their duties in different districts, said Mehnaz Tabassum Rabin, deputy director of the force.

The first Ansar member tested Covid-19 positive on April 10. So far, three Ansar members have died from coronavirus infections. Apart from that, 358 members recovered.

DD Mehnaz said they already taken adequate measures to provide the infected officials with better treatment. That is why, the recovery rate in the force is good, she said.

Strong will shows way

FROM PAGE 1

tough for them to act on-screen, they can act professionally through voice-over."

But, the 31-year-old pointed out, most of the radio channels and other similar mediums in the country are not interested in working with them.

So he began thinking about directing and producing dramas using WhatsApp. At one point, he started to contact people like him over phone and many of them showed interests.

"It's true that a visually impaired person may not get the proper message of a film or a play as they cannot watch it. But it is also true that they are very attentive. They always try to get the inner meaning of everything. It makes them good performers as they easily understand the situation."

Their first work was Onuvutirao

Nirapode Thakuk, which roughly translates into "Let feelings stay safe too", released on Ganga Padma Shilpigushthi's YouTube channel in May amid the coronavirus pandemic.

He says it was the first WhatsApp-based production in Bangladesh. Taslima Mitu, Mahfuja Chameli and Rony himself from Bangladesh and Raju Majhi from India took part in it.

It is a love story woven in melancholy, depicting the impact of quarantine on a relationship. A misunderstanding takes place between the protagonists -- Sabbir and Keya -- over her isolation at a hospital after she tests Covid-19 positive.

Rony's latest work -- Jonmo Tarikh (Date of Birth) -- was uploaded on June 19 on the same YouTube channel, he said, adding that several other of previous production await to

be uploaded.

Asked how the work is done, Rony, a teacher at Government Teachers' Training College, explains: "WhatsApp is very user friendly as its voice notes feature and group options are fully accessible to us. As we communicate through voice notes anyway, we perform dialogue on the same WhatsApp group."

Rony then settles on his drama's plot and asks others to act accordingly and send the recordings to him online. "Everything, from scripting to characterisation, from acting to editing, is done through voice notes. Everyone works from home."

He says he looks forward to partnering with radio and TV channels and film studios. "From our audio production, anyone can produce dramas or movies in a

visual format. Our drama could be a dummy for them. If they collaborate with us, half their work will be done."

Talking to The Daily Star on the issue, Tanzina Aktari, a voiceover artist and presenter of Bangladesh Betar, said, "Rony's proposal has merit, especially at a time when everybody is expected to stay indoors so that coronavirus does not spread."

Rony completed his bachelors and masters' in English at Dhaka University and did his MPhil from University of Oslo, Norway. He then did a teacher's education foundation courses at Boston College, USA in 2018-19.

He says without his mother and three sisters he wouldn't have come this far. He hopes that with their love, he will be successful in this endeavour as well.

Govt plans

FROM PAGE 12

agricultural universities will be built in Natore. One of those will be named after eminent scientist and husband of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina late Dr MA Wazed Miah.

Besides, two agricultural universities will be established in Meherpur. One of them will be built at the constituency of lawmaker Farhad Hossain, also state minister for public administration, says the letter.

Earlier on June 21, the Secondary and Higher Education Division urged the UGC to formulate a draft law for setting up a university in Naogaon. The bill needs to be passed by parliament to build a university.

The government is trying to establish public universities in the districts, where there are no such universities.

In 2010, there were 33 public universities in the country, and now the number is 46.

Currently, 46 universities are in 23 districts. Of them, nine are in Dhaka, five each in Gazipur and Chattogram, three each in Sylhet, Rajshahi, and Khulna, two in Mymensingh, one is each in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Netrakona, Sirajganj, Jamalpur, Tangail, Pabna, Kushtia, Jashore, Gopalganj, Cumilla, Barishal, Patuakhali, Noakhali, and Rangamati, according to the UGC.

Establishment of permanent campus of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University in Lalmonirhat is going on.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12

full curtailment of non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance.

The report said Bangladesh resolved 25 cases related to human trafficking in 2019, up from only eight a year ago.

It also credited Bangladesh for identifying 585 potential victims during this period, which is 40 percent higher compared to the previous year.

Bangladesh set up seven anti-trafficking tribunals to handle the trafficking cases during this period, the report added.

"If we were ranked Tier 3, we would not have been able to get development assistance, soft loans from the World Bank or International Monetary Fund, exchange of officials for educational and cultural purposes and other problems," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen in a video message yesterday.

STILL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The TIP report said though Bangladesh has been upgraded, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas, including investigation of law enforcing agencies into trafficking cases and denial of the involvement of government officials even after credible reports.

"Despite widespread reports of child sex trafficking, including in licensed brothels, the government did not make efforts to identify victims or investigate the persistent reports," it said.

The TIP report said the Bureau of Manpower and Employment Training forced some migrant workers to arbitrate labour violations with their exploitative recruitment agencies. The government continued to allow employers to charge high recruitment fees from the migrant workers.

As several government officials and parliamentarians maintained close ties to overseas employment agencies, there were concerns such officials had conflicts of interest in approving migrant-friendly practices including prosecuting abusive recruitment agencies, it also said.

Pompeo to press for action in EU talks on China

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Thursday he would open a dialogue with the European Union on China and voiced hope it would lead to tougher action.

Pompeo said he had accepted a proposal for a dedicated channel on China policy with the 27-nation bloc as recommended by EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell during virtual talks with Pompeo on June 15.

"I'm very hopeful that I'll be able to travel to Europe here in just a handful of weeks to go kick that off," Pompeo, known for his hawkish views on China, told a forum of the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

LITB Ref. No.: LITB-2020-9159402

Invitation to Bid (LITB): Procurement of Medical Accessories and Equipment.

UNICEF-Bangladesh is inviting interested manufacturers/companies with a strong record and credibility of providing the above required goods with related services. To receive the detailed Invitation to Bid Document and procedure to submit the Bid, please email to "supplybangladesh@unicef.org"

The deadline to submit proposal is **Sunday, 5 July 2020; Time: 11:00 Hrs.**

Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.

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Charity ship rescues more than 110 migrants in Med

AFP, On Board The Ocean Viking

More than 110 migrants drifting in the Mediterranean on two makeshift boats were rescued on Thursday in separate operations by a ship chartered by a French charity, an AFP reporter onboard said.

"I love you all!" said one of the migrants when the Ocean Viking -- chartered by French aid group SOS-Mediterranee -- arrived at their boat in the waters around 100 kilometres (62 miles) from the Italian island of Lampedusa.

There were 67 people onboard their grey boat, mainly men and youths from Bangladesh and Morocco.

The boat had been spotted by the plane Moon Bird, of fellow migrant rescue charity Sea-Watch, SOS-Mediterranee said.

Earlier in the day, the ship rescued 51 migrants on a blue wooden boat including one woman and five children, mainly of Pakistani and Eritrean nationality.

They were found huddled together on a boat whose two engines had stopped working, 30 kilometres (19 miles) from Lampedusa, located between Malta and Tunisia.

That rescue operation took place at the crossroads between the Italian and Maltese search and rescue zones, SOS-Mediterranee said, adding: "We have asked the authorities of both countries for a safe place to disembark."

The Ocean Viking set sail again on Monday after three months of inactivity due to the coronavirus crisis.

After both sets of migrants boarded, the ship's crew took their temperatures and gave them a

mask.

One person on the blue boat was running a temperature and was quarantined as a precaution, the AFP reporter said.

The rescued migrants were visibly relieved to leave behind the precarious blue boat. In the midst of a pile of shoes, phone chargers, plastic bags, biscuits and vomit, there was only one lifejacket in sight, the correspondent said.

More than 100,000 migrants tried to cross the Mediterranean last year with more than 1,200 dying in the attempt, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration.

The arrival of summer and more favourable conditions at sea may lead to an increase of attempts to cross the Mediterranean with the hope of arriving in Europe.

US House passes Democratic police reform bill

The US House of Representatives approved a sweeping Democratic police reform bill on Thursday, sending the measure to the Senate despite opposition from President Donald Trump and his Republican allies in Congress.

2.4 million Yemeni children on the 'brink of starvation'

The number of malnourished children in Yemen could rise to 2.4 million by the end of the year due to a big shortfall in humanitarian funding, the United Nations children's agency UNICEF said yesterday.

Pak PM under fire for bin Laden 'martyrdom' remark



Pakistani opposition parties criticized Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday after he told parliament that al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden had been 'martyred' in 2011 by US forces.



A police officer heckles a supporter of India's main opposition Congress party as others pay tribute to the Indian army soldiers killed in a border clash with Chinese troops in Ladakh region, at India Gate, in New Delhi, yesterday.

India, China reinforce flashpoint amid tension

India has acknowledged for the first time that it has matched China in massing troops at their contested Himalayan border region after a deadly clash this month.

accords made to avoid skirmishes between their armies, who fought a border war in 1962 and have regularly clashed since.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the Chinese threat to India and Southeast Asia is one of the reasons the United States is reducing its troop presence in Europe.

Pompeo was asked why the US had reduced the number of troops it has based in Germany. Speaking about the Chinese threat, he cited the "bloody border confrontation with India."

LADAKH STAND-OFF

Pompeo says US shifting military to face Chinese threat to India and Southeast Asia

Pakistan condemns India's expulsion of diplomats at 'delicate' time after China clash

appropriately" time", he said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has accused India of trying to distract the attention of its people by expelling Pakistani diplomats after the border clashes.

"Things have deteriorated, things are very delicate," Qureshi told Reuters in an interview at his ministry in Islamabad late on Thursday.

Qureshi said he was concerned that India could try to get Pakistan involved in the regional tensions with a "false flag operation" - an incident staged to provide a pretext for action.

'Best of humanity' Indonesian fishermen rescue Rohingyas defying authorities

AGENCIES, AL JAZEERA

Nearly 100 Rohingya people who were stranded off the coast of Indonesia were pulled to shore on Thursday by local people furious at local authorities' refusal to give them shelter because of fears about the coronavirus.

Some 94 people from the persecuted Myanmar minority - including 30 children - were plucked from their boat by fishermen this week before being intercepted by maritime officials from Sumatra island who pulled them closer to shore.

But officials in Lhokseumawe in the Indonesian province of Aceh refused to allow the group to land, citing coronavirus concerns.

Angry locals took matters into their own hands on Thursday by taking to their own boats to pull the group to shore.

Residents who had gathered on a local beach cheered the move, according to an AFP reporter on the scene.

"It's purely for humanitarian reasons," said fisherman Aples Kuari.

"We were sad seeing kids and pregnant women stranded at sea," he added.

Earlier on Thursday, local police chief Eko Hartanto said they wanted to send the mainly Muslim Rohingya back to sea rather than give them temporary shelter.

But authorities appeared to soften that stance in the face of local protests, and the group has now been given temporary shelter in private residences.

The Rohingya would be checked by medical staff to ensure they were virus-free, according to Aceh's rescue agency. Aceh is on the northern tip of Sumatra.

Amnesty International praised the spirit of the rescue. The "disembarkation of Rohingya refugees is a moment of optimism and solidarity," the organisation's Indonesia Executive Director Usman Hamid said in a statement.

"It's a credit to the community in Aceh who pushed hard and took risks so that these children, women and men could be brought to shore. They have shown the best of humanity."

More than one million Rohingya live in refugee camps in Bangladesh, after fleeing their homes in Myanmar in 2017 to escape a brutal military crackdown that is now the subject of an international genocide investigation.

Indonesia and neighbouring Malaysia are the Rohingya's favoured destinations, with thousands paying people smugglers for the dangerous journey across the Indian Ocean every year.

But the Rohingya's plight has been compounded in recent months as officials have turned them away over concern about the coronavirus.



Locals evacuate Rohingya refugees from a boat at a coast of North Aceh, Indonesia, on Thursday.

ASEAN SUMMIT

Malaysia can't take any more Rohingyas: PM

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia can no longer take in Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said yesterday, citing a struggling economy and dwindling resources as a result of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Muslim-majority Malaysia has long been a favoured destination for Rohingya seeking a better life after fleeing a 2017 military-led crackdown in Myanmar and refugee camps in Bangladesh.

But Malaysia, which does not recognise refugee status, has recently turned away boats and detained hundreds of Rohingya, amid rising anger towards foreigners who have been accused of spreading the coronavirus and taking up scarce state funds.

"We can no longer take more as our resources and capacity are already stretched, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic," Muhyiddin said in a teleconference with other leaders of the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean), which includes Myanmar.

"Yet, Malaysia is unfairly expected to do more to accommodate incoming refugees."

Muhyiddin urged the UN refugee agency to speed up the resettlement of Rohingya in Malaysia to third countries. The agency says there are more than 100,000 Rohingya in Malaysia though rights groups say the number is higher.

He also called for more efforts to combat the trafficking of Rohingya, who he said were increasingly at risk for exploitation, slavery and recruitment by militants.

Malaysia has stepped up border enforcement patrols as part of its attempt to control the spread of the coronavirus. It has pushed back 22 boats since May 1, HRW said, describing the situation as an echo of the 2015 crisis when thousands of Rohingya were left stranded at sea.



A police officer from the Narcotics Control Board stands guard in front of boxes of confiscated drugs during the 50th Destruction of Confiscated Narcotics ceremony in Ayutthaya province, Thailand, yesterday. Thailand is Southeast Asia's meth 'superhighway', with drugs from remote Myanmar labs pouring through the border destined for the local market or overseas as far as Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

NEWSIN brief

Lightning kills 107 in India

AFP, Patna

At least 107 people died from lightning strikes in northern and eastern India Thursday, officials said, during the early stages of the annual monsoon season. Some 83 people were killed in the impoverished eastern state of Bihar after being struck by lightning, and another 24 died in northern Uttar Pradesh state. Dozens more were injured, officials said.

6-year-old boy dies in J&K crossfire

AFP, Srinagar

A six-year-old boy caught in crossfire was among five people killed in Indian Kashmir yesterday, officials said. New Delhi has bolstered counter-insurgency efforts in the restive territory, with at least 33 separatist militants killed this month. The child was in a car that drove into a gun battle between suspected rebels and paramilitaries near the town of Bijbehara, a police officer told AFP. Tension is running high in Kashmir since August last year when India revoked the region's semi-autonomous status.

First ninja graduate!

AFP, Tokyo

Japan has produced its first ninja studies graduate after Genichi Mitsuhashi spent two years honing his martial arts skills and absorbing the finer traditions of the feudal martial arts agents. The 45-year-old completed the master's course at Mie University in central Japan, the region considered the home of the ninja. The Mie University set up the world's first research centre devoted to the ninja in 2017 and opened a graduate course a year later.

Warnings as virus cases surge globally

US, Europe battle resurgence; India's tally mounts

AFP, Washington

The United States and Europe battled a resurgence of coronavirus cases yesterday, with Texas ordering bars to close and warnings mounting worldwide over lifting lockdowns too soon.

Britons were told to avoid packed beaches while a major Australian city faced a surge in infections that prompted a warning against the hoarding of toilet roll.

But Sweden lashed out at the World Health Organization for listing it among at-risk European countries, in a sign of the sensitivities at play as countries try to manage the pandemic.

More than 489,000 people worldwide have died from Covid-19 since it emerged in China late last year and cases are expected to reach 10 million across the globe within the next week.

Countries have been balancing the need to reopen economies shattered by coronavirus shutdowns with the need to maintain sufficient measures to prevent a feared second wave.

India registered its biggest single-day increase in Covid-19 cases, recording 17,296 infections in the last 24 hours, the health ministry said yesterday morning.

In the US, after hitting a two-month plateau, the rate of new cases is now soaring in southern and western states.

The United States recorded 37,667 cases and 692 deaths in 24 hours, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, with nearly 122,000 lives lost overall -- by far the highest confirmed toll in the world.

In Latin America, Brazil had close to 55,000 deaths and 1.2 million infections, while Mexico on Thursday surpassed 25,000 fatalities.

The World Health Organization warned Thursday that Europe is not yet in the clear, saying 11 nations faced a "very significant resurgence" that could push health systems "to the brink once again."

In Britain, people were urged to abide by social distancing rules after tens of thousands swarmed the seaside resort of Bournemouth during a heatwave.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
ঢাকা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স
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৩৬, শহীদ ক্যাপ্টেন মনসুর আলী সরণি, রমনা, ঢাকা-১০০০
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ঠিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তি/নবায়ন বিজ্ঞপ্তি
২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বছরে "পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন-২০০৬", "পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট (সংশোধন) আইন-২০০৯" এর বিধি-৫২ এবং পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট (সংশোধন) আইন, ২০১৬ মোতাবেক ঢাকা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের বিকল্প ভবন ও স্থাপনা মেসারামত এবং আবাসিক ও অনাবাসিক ভবন নির্মাণ প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নের লক্ষ্যে ঠিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তি/নবায়নের জন্য ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে :

“The world of theatre faces huge losses due to the pandemic” – Mamunur Rashid

SHAH ALAM SHAZI

Noted thespian, director and playwright Mamunur Rashid spearheads Aranyak Natyadal, one of the most prominent theatre troupes in Bangladesh. His plays have garnered both national and international acclaim. The Ekushey Padak-winning artiste is also the current chairman of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation. In a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, he talks about the issues in the theatre arena and more.

How are you spending time at home these days?

I have been watching different kinds of movies, from Italian and Russian films to films from the silent age. I am enjoying classic movies now more than ever. Recently, I watched the film based on Maxim Gorky's *Mother*. It was excellent. I also read Mrinal Sen's biography recently, and I have been writing columns for different national dailies regularly.

How do you think theatre artistes are coping with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic?

The world of theatre faces huge losses due to the pandemic. It will be difficult to bring audiences back to the halls and auditoriums. We have no idea when the performing spaces will reopen. Most actors work in theatre because of the passion and respect they have for the craft. For them, money is secondary. Unlike other countries, our actors and workers do not receive minimum wages to have proper careers in theatre. We have approached the government multiple times regarding this issue.

Where do you believe the theatre arena will be headed, once things get back on track?
The future of theatre artistes did not look promising, even before the pandemic hit Bangladesh. Most of our actors do not earn enough. There are many actors and crew

members who work for just ten days in a month to run their families. Now, they are all unemployed. The government helped them out in different ways initially, but those aren't sustainable solutions. It seems like no one cares about our artistes.

As a veteran of the industry, what do you think should be done to help out struggling cast and crew members in this time of crisis?
We have reached out to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and made collaborative efforts to support artistes and workers who are financially struggling, confidentially.

What do you think about the current projects and talent in television, theatre and the web platforms?

I try to keep myself updated on all kinds of projects, and I watch the ones that interest me. I do not have any specific favourites, but I am hopeful about the young generation of actors and creators. Some of the newcomers are doing exceptionally well. However, at times, I feel that some of them still have a lot to learn when it comes to the technicalities and the craft. A sad fact about our industry is that most people are more interested in the financial gains, than the work and the projects these days.

Shongshoptok, based on Shahidullah Kaiser's novel of the same name, began rerunning on BTB in May. You produced the theatrical adaptation of the novel. Tell us a little about how you came across the project. When Shahidullah Kaiser lived in Kayettuli, I worked on adapting his novel for the theatre stage. I used to go to Kaiser's house in the mornings to read out the script to him. He was a very busy person and yet, took out the time for me. I have great memories of those meetings. Furthermore, when Abdullah Al Mamun started working on the series, he wanted to work with me and I personally chose the role of SekondorMaster. *Shongshoptok* is a masterpiece of Bangladeshi television.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



Kamruzzaman Shadhin's 'Elephant in the Room'.



Abir Shome's 'Capital-Equal'.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHOBI MELA IX

“An insight into installation art”

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

Installation, a relatively new genre of contemporary art, is practiced by postmodernist artists. The difference between installation art and sculpting or other traditional art forms is that it is a unified experience. From the 1960s, the creation of installations became a major feature in modern art. *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present* mentions that the late 1980s was marked by a severe recession and a subsequent art market crash, which led to a reawakening in the field of conceptual art, where art was focused on ideas, rather than objects.

In Bangladesh, the precursors were visible in the works of eminent artists such as Kamruzzaman Khan and Kalidas Karmakar. Artist Mustafa Zaman suggests three forms of installation art form: image making, construction of sculptures with found objects or newly made objects and through conceptual and textual means. These are also mixed and matched to create a composite form of installations. He also mentions the sight specific form, crediting it to Mahbubur Rahman and Tayeba Begum Lipi – the artist duo who practiced and propelled the form in the public sphere in Bangladesh. Among the recent practitioners, Kamruzzaman Shadhin often creates his signature mammoth projects through public participation and exhibits them in public spaces. He is inspired by artists Ashok Karmakar and Mahbubur Rahman. Shadhin learned that any material can be turned into an art piece, from the works of Japanese artists at the Asian Art Biennale in the nineties. “I also feel that their form of art was never foreign to Bengal – is instilled in our culture. We just did not call it art,” adds the artist. He is also fascinated by the gigantic figure of Swami Vivekananda at Kanyakumari. “The story behind the structure is important. How you see it is crucial,” he says. His award-winning work, *Elephant in the Room* (2018) was created in collaboration with craftsmen from the Kutupalong-Balukhali camp. It shelters more than 600,000 people and lies along one of the main migratory routes of critically endangered Asian elephants. Shadhin further shares the lessons he has learned in



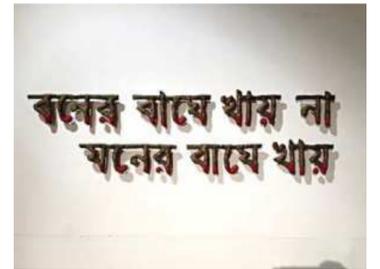
Eshita Mita Tonni's 'Hybridity'.

this time of crisis. “I have learnt to care less about the rat race. I'm not sure if the feeling will remain intact, but the prolonged time to think is something I'm enjoying,” he says. On the other hand, Najmun Nahar Keya draws her inspiration from the rapid social, economic and environmental changes happening in the area, as a result of urbanisation. Her practice revolves around the relationship between human behavior and society. She spent five years in Tokyo for her education. Keya amalgamates Japanese technique with strong Bengali concepts. She employs old photographs, gold gilding, drawing and printmaking in her works. In the last Dhaka Art Summit, her work, *The Spell Song*, was lauded by audiences. The work was comprised of a hand woven Tangail Sari molded into Bangla folk sayings to *KhonarBochon*. To Keya, installation art is sight specific. “It is important to blend the work with the environment it is placed in,” she says. During this pandemic, Keya

has turned to drawing as a meditative practice and she also plans to work on some animation projects.

Movements like the Happening Movement, Fluxus and Arte Povera inspired Abir Shome to take up installation art. He also works with drawings, texts, videos and digital art. “A friend of mine did some installation works while we were students of Charukola,” he says. “I wasn't initially drawn to it but as I became more familiar with the concept, I wanted to practice it.” Majority of his works question ideology and power, delivered in seemingly imprudent manners. Through his work, *Capital-Equal* in Chobi Mela IX, he highlighted how texts, objects, photographs and drawings together were made to conspire against the prescribed art revolution society. Installation art is a form of relief for Abir. These days, the artist spends most of his time playing his ukulele at home.

On the other hand, artist Eshita Mita Tonni's practice is comprised of different disciplines of printmaking, photography, videography and sculpting. The artist, who



Najmun Nahar Keya's 'The Spell Song'.

resides in Jamalpur, uses found objects and children's playing materials. She sets these objects into seemingly mythological characters for her striking art projects. “The fork I use in my sculpture work loses its cutlery feature and becomes something else,” she explains. She also enjoys teaching children about art.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

“We must learn to be tolerant in accepting novelty” — Redoan Rony

SHARMIN JOYA

Known for his modern approach in presenting stories, celebrated director Redoan Rony started out on television, before making a mark in the world of cinema with films like *Chorabali* (2016). He shared his views on the issues in the television industry and the prominence of web-based platforms in a candid chat with *The Daily Star*.

Bangladesh's television industry has been going through tough times for a while. As it turns out, more often than not, television productions do not serve a purpose, from an artistic standpoint. “Third party intervention in television channels is the main cause behind the quality detention,” asserts Rony. “When I started out in the industry, there was a preview committee that assessed the content, in terms of presentation and quality. However, this practice began to fizzle out as productions were made just for marketing purposes.”

On the other hand, releases on YouTube offer tough competition to the television channels. “YouTube earns profits from views. As a result, if a low-budget show earns millions of views on the platform, creators will not run after television channels to persuade them to air it,” adds Rony.

In addition, the lack of knowledge and technical skills is reflected on most contemporary projects these days. While the number of productions is increasing, the depth, originality and quality of the stories on television are deteriorating. “Like any other profession, direction also needs proper schooling and training. For instance, I assisted Mostofa Sarwar Farooki for four years, before starting out as a director on my own - those four years were my schooling,” shares Rony.

He further talked about the audience's growing interest in web-based platforms. “Streaming services are the 'new normal' for entertainment,” shares Rony. “International



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime are trending around the world. The content on these platforms is carefully assessed and curated.” The director also added that subscriptions to international platforms are on the rise because they provide high-quality content, and local platforms need to keep up their quality to compete with them.

Recently, there have been debates over the censorship of web-based content. Rony weighed in on the subject. “Restriction is not the solution,” he asserts. “For the growth of our community, we have to let go of such restraints. He also shared that the industry has to go through ups and downs, to flourish. “We are going through a transitional period and we will overcome every challenge, with time,” adds the director.

According to Rony, censorship will not serve streaming platforms in a positive way.

“Initially, the culture of band music was also not fully accepted in our country. But today, some of our leading musicians are from bands. We must learn to be tolerant in accepting novelty.”

Furthermore, several noted personalities have asserted that the mature content on web-based platforms to attract viewers is objectionable because it is hampering the traditional values of our country. Rony shared his opinions about the issue. “We all perceive things differently. What seems indecent to me may not be indecent to someone else,” he says. “I also believe that our culture and traditions have reformed over time. We don't dress, talk, behave or even think like our ancestors did. I am against impropriety, but I am not against imposing restrictions, as long as there are logical reasons behind it and freedom of expression persists.”

Dabur Bangladesh and The Daily Star organise online art competition for kids

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Dabur Bangladesh, in collaboration with The Daily Star, organised Ghorer Eide Ronger Chhite, an online art competition for children, for the occasion of Eid-Ul-Fitr. In this regard, The Daily Star contacted 25 schools across Bangladesh. In the span of four days, the organisers received over 750 submissions. Children aged between 4 and 13 participated in the competition, in three categories. The esteemed judges selected three winners in each category.

Mahdia Ansara Anuranon from Sir John Wilson School won the third prize, while Mahir Tazwar from Islami Bank International School & College won the second prize and Dwaipayan Kar from Drexel International School, Dhaka, won the first prize in Category A (4-6 years old).

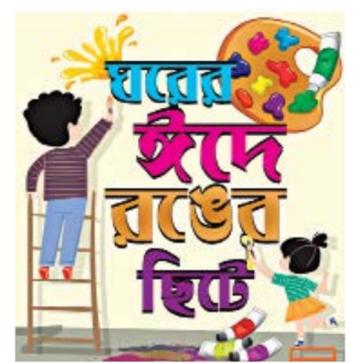
In Category B (7-10 years old), Samara Hoque and Prokriya Choudhury from Willes Little Flower School and College won the third and second prizes respectively, while Omera Fidan Tuana from Cantonment English School and College, Chattogram, won the first prize.

The third prize in Category C (11-13 years old) was won by Aayan Zahin

from Sunnydale. Nawba from Shaheed Bir Uttam Lt Anwar Girls College won the second prize and Preyonty Amin Pue from Narayanganj Govt Girls' High School won the first prize.

“The time at home over the past few months has been difficult, especially for the children. Our purpose was to ensure that they are engaged in activities which could make their Eid this year more colourful,” said Talat Rahim, Head of Marketing, Dabur Bangladesh. “The competition was successful. At Dabur, we promote an active lifestyle and this joint initiative played an important role to encourage kids to be creative.”

Md Tajdin Hassan, Head of Marketing, The Daily Star also shared his thoughts. “We have been organising events involving the youth for a number of years, and we are happy to be a part of this competition,” he said. The winning submissions from the contest were exhibited online on the official Facebook pages of The Daily Star and Dabur Bangladesh.





Cops to undergo basic training because they fall for the same 'gunfight' trick

OSAMA RAHMAN

Law enforcers in the country are getting ready to retrain themselves on the basics of being a cop after falling for the same trick which leads to a gunfight resulting in the death of the prime accused, and hence almost always a cold lead.

In the last five months, 170 deaths have occurred in what newspapers call "so-called" shootouts because they do not think the cops are being honest.

Of these 170, although they have taken place in different areas of the country, the versions of events are the same. They arrest the prime suspect. He leads them to others. They go to the others always after 2:00am. The people they want to arrest "sense their presence". They shoot first. Cops shoot back. Miraculously only the prime accused gets shot and dies. No one else is ever hurt. The custodial death also

never counts.

Because of so many of these events, the retraining programme is being started.

"I don't understand how they always follow the prime accused to where he takes them in the dead of night. I also don't know how these trained cops are always detected. And I don't know how they manage to only shoot the person who was in their custody, obviously unarmed, and no one else. It's as if they weren't trained at all," chief of police Chief Keef said.

Because of this, he added, the police needed some retraining. "I don't want accusations of police brutality flying around because of a few incompetent cops. This isn't the time," the chief said.

Part of the training will also be filing complaints properly. There have been numerous instances

where police have refused to register general diaries, especially during possible rape cases.

"We are not sure what rape is," a cop, under the condition of anonymity said. "Some are just prostitutes," he added although no one had asked him to incriminate himself further.

Police will also undergo training to solve cases, something they have found notoriously difficult to do unless of course it was political.

Furthermore, an awareness campaign will be conducted in conjunction with the training process. The campaign will be titled "There is no police brutality here", pretty straightforward stuff.

"We are going to promote only police officers with a clean image from now on," Chief Keef said, as if that was not something that should have always been done.



Brown gaze doesn't sell: Tourism centre declares after "Love True Dhaka" campaign

LUBNAN KHALEESI



Beiman Airlines, the country's flag bearer, teamed up with a local artist's Instagram page to promote the "real Dhaka" in order to attract the weirdest of the tourist bunch -- the ones who like *chai* tea.

Their first few promotions were instantly panned as pandering to an exoticised version of the country's capital, for which they quickly turned towards realism. And that is when it all fell apart.

The gritty depictions resulted in even some Dhaka residents opting to leave the city they had never loved to begin with.

"I always went by artistic impressions of our city on Instagram to understand what Dhaka really looks like. And now this campaign has shown me the truth," Simran Sultana, who has never left the tristate area nor seen any of Dhaka's rivers, said.

After the new artworks were posted, many

prospective tourists also cancelled their flight tickets to Dhaka. "This was supposed to be a city of rivers. All these images show are sand-filled rivers, encroachers everywhere, dead fish and boats stuck in areas which seem to suddenly have ran out of water. I am never visiting this country, where the servers of *chai* tea don't even wear masks," one commentator on Beiman Airlines' Facebook page said.

Following the grand failure of the campaign, the tourism centre decided to cancel it and issued a stern warning against pandering to the brown gaze.

"The brown gaze doesn't sell. The brown gaze only lands upon problems," Tourism Officer Hakimullah said.

"Can I also be real for a minute? This entire campaign is the result of listening to opposing voices who don't understand what marketing

is. It is the greatest tool of our time and those working for it are the real frontline workers," the officer said.

"Also, we have pretty much sold everything else to other countries, so why not?"

Activist Tahmina Rahman, who had been outraged with the previous campaign, expressed satisfaction with the new one.

"Yes, from a marketing point of view it may not have been great, but perhaps it's time to turn to more ethical ways of selling things. This is Dhaka. And oftentimes its current predicament is the direct result of the wrong gaze falling upon it. Perhaps, we would be wiser to not invite more of those," she said, always maintaining a steady, calm tone for some reason.

Lubnan Khaleesi is all about food for gains now. Snacks are old news and so is eating after 8pm.

How often do you eat?: VC asks students while announcing tuition cuts

AZMIN AZRAN

In a video message shared with students over TikTok, Vice Chancellor of Basindhara University, Professor Dr Md Fatiul Islam, PhD, MSc, BEd, MFeel, RTruth, announced that tuitions for the fall semester will be slashed by 20 percent. In the video, where the monocle and moustache effect was used (with the Wu-Tang Clan's C.R.E.A.M. playing in the background), Dr Md Fatiul showed off his grasp of fractions by saying that it was only fair that a fifth of the tuition be cut as the university has only been providing a 10th of what the students have been paying for.

In a press conference later held on Zoom, the VC expressed gratitude to medical workers who are actively combating the coronavirus. A BDT 527 stipend (per annum) was announced for the children of medical workers who have lost their lives in this crisis. According to a press release provided to the media, "Basindhara University is committed to helping families who have made the supreme sacrifice for us. Students will need to provide original copies of a birth certificate, a death certificate, an insurance report that proves the cause of death, along with a picture of the dead body to claim the stipend."

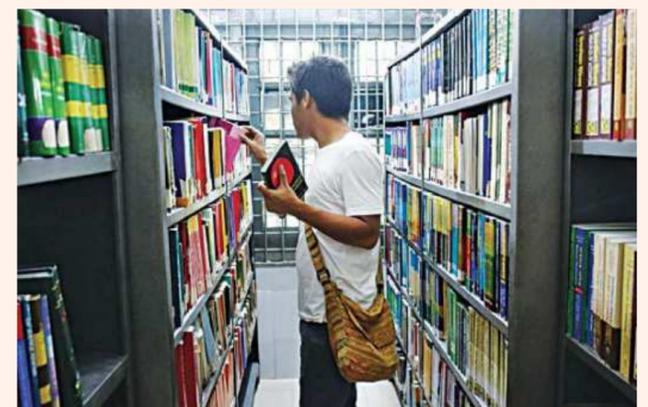
When reporters asked about the tuition fee reduction, Dr Md Fatiul said he was concerned about the financial future of the university. "This 20 percent cut is going to make it difficult for us to pay the faculty members and the staff, and to maintain the quality

of education. I will have to send my daughter to study here at Basindhara University instead of the Memorial University of Newfoundland like the rest of her rich friends; we are very concerned about her," the VC said, as his daughter mistakenly walked into the frame, made a rude hand gesture, and walked away.

On the matter of what he'd say to students dissatisfied with the tuition cut, Dr Md Fatiul said, "I'd be obliged to ask these students about how often they eat. I've been told that many students who say the tuition fee is too high end up having three entire meals a day, and a snack! Maybe if they had two meals a day and got rid of the snack, they wouldn't be so poor."

Ignoring the uncomfortable looks of the reporters, the VC continued, "I'm not sure if poor people should be getting higher education. A policy of 'trickle-down education' could be viable for Bangladesh, where so many poor people are scurrying around. If we provide education only to the rich, they can then impart that education to the people who work for them. Like my daughter, who taught the house help how to read and write. It's good that she isn't going to Newfoundland, she can keep teaching them."

The VC concluded the press conference with a stark warning to students. "Those who fail to pay the tuition fees on time will be handed over to the police, and tried under civil laws. We are running a business... a university here, not a charity."



A Satireday staffer pretending to be a university student so we can have a relevant picture for this report.

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

Slum dwellers stuck in a vicious cycle of debt

Roll out safety net programmes, waiver repayment of loans

A report published in this daily on June 26 paints a bleak picture of the plight of urban slum dwellers who, having lost their regular income since the onset of the pandemic, are now finding themselves deeper and deeper in debt. Some of them already had huge debts from before—Babu Hossain, for instance, had borrowed Tk 60,000 from a bank and another Tk 60,000 from an NGO, after a fire destroyed his mobile phone repair shop at Bou Bazar in the capital's Karail slum. After his shop closed as a result of the nationwide shutdown, he had to take out additional loans at high interest rates from two loan sharks in the slum to pay his family's medical bills. Now, everyone is asking him to pay back their dues—his landlord, bank, NGO and the sharks—and Hossain simply has no way to pay them back.

Slum-dwellers who remained in the capital since the lockdown began have essentially been left to fend for themselves. The amount of relief distributed by the government and NGOs have simply not been enough for the large number of people who live in the slums. Taking advantage of the helplessness of these people, unscrupulous money-lenders are charging exorbitant rates on loans and pushing slum dwellers into a vicious cycle of debt, from which they cannot recover in the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, NGOs and banks have also begun to pressurise their clients for repayment of loans since the lockdown has been lifted, which has forced many to reach out to loan sharks to make ends meet.

If the government continues to fail to provide comprehensive safety net programmes for the urban poor, it is inevitable that they would find themselves in such dire situations. NGOs and private initiatives, which are providing relief, are doing so on an ad hoc basis, and as such are leaving out a vast majority of the population in need.

Under the circumstances, we urge the government to roll out safety net measures for the urban poor, monitor the unscrupulous behaviour of exploitative moneylenders and increase the availability and accessibility of low-interest loans to low-income groups. We also call upon NGOs to waive the repayment of microcredit loans of those living below the poverty line till their economic situation improves and to provide flexible schedules for repayment of new ones.

Daktarkhana offers health services and hope

A source of affordable and efficient primary healthcare

WHEN statistics indicate that 3,000-plus daily cases are becoming the new normal, and our healthcare sector is in a race against time to tackle the waves of patients (Covid-19 positive and otherwise) pouring in from all walks of life, a recent report in this daily tells us of Daktarkhana, an exemplary initiative to set up general physician (GP) centres to treat patients with general ailments. Its purpose is to share the load of patients, and in turn, ease their flow to the already overburdened hospitals and clinics, many of which are in a dire state. We commend the initiative taken by Dr Ratindra Nath Mondal, a medicine specialist who founded Daktarkhana last year, to address this need of the hour. His idea is based on the model adopted in developed countries where residents of a particular area can seek primary medical consultation and treatment at their respective GP centres. If the GPs are unable to diagnose the patient or if the patient requires expert care, only then will the GPs refer them to the designated specialists.

As a result, general patients no longer need to wait in endless queues at hospitals which are now overburdened with critical patients—many of them Covid patients. Instead, they can get treatment, medicine and in-depth counselling from the GP centres at a bare minimum, or for free if they are unable to afford it. Enabling employment, Daktarkhana allows newly-graduated registered doctors to attend a four-day training so that they are prepared to treat all types of general diseases, whether it is related to newborns or adults. Upon completion, they are permitted to open a Daktarkhana branch. Given the acute shortage of trained hospital staff nationwide, such a passage will surely help facilitate basic healthcare for the people during this time of crisis. Furthermore, the GP centres also provide free telemedicine, letting patients use the service from far and wide.

To date, Daktarkhana established 70 branches across the country, trained around 3,250 doctors and aims to set up a branch in every one kilometre area. Based on the success of their initiative, we believe that there is an urgency for similar models to be replicated across all communities. The government can play a significant role here by contributing to Daktarkhana in its timely endeavour, by instructing the relevant bodies to help speed up the process and establishing such centres on its own, especially in remote parts of the country. Needless to say, the condition of our hospitals and clinics are in a precarious state and the way ahead is to immediately implement the expansion plans of these GP centres to provide some relief to patients who can be treated without hospitalisation.



BLOWN' IN THE WIND
SHAMSAID MORTUZA

THERE was a broken black chair by the window near the gate. On it there was a thin plastic bag containing some mixed up rice, daal, and probably vegetables or curry. These are the types of bags we normally use for bulk distributions in a charity event for the destitute. The bag lied there as a treat for a medical doctor. It was his meal after coming out of a public hospital in Bogra where he served for five straight days at a Corona unit. The safety protocol demanded that he stayed a minimum of five days in a government allotted hotel for a mandatory Covid test before returning to home or work. His wife, who happens to be my former student, posted it on Facebook sharing her pain and disgust at the way her husband's service was being reciprocated by society. Her post was picked up by an online newspaper, and the story had by now become viral.

The question is simple: how do we treat the most meritorious and committed segment of our society? This said doctor, we are told, studied for 14-years to finish his FCPS and MD. He sat for his public service examination BCS and served in remote areas as per his job requirements. All his efforts and contributions are repaid by negligence, indifference and disrespect. The hotelkeeper simply left the food outside treating the doctor as a pariah. The bag of meal is suggestive of our insolent attitudes towards not only an individual health worker but also for the entire profession who are deemed as the frontline warriors in this battle against the pandemic.

You may ask, "with so many doctors being dead due to Coronavirus outbreak why bother focusing on a trivial bag of meal at a time of dire emergency?" You may even add, "what about those inhuman doctors who treat their patients as nothing but money making machines?" Between these two polar extremes, there are some dedicated souls who are trying their best to serve the nation against all odds. They are not in the news because a news becomes a news only when a man bites a dog. You don't get to hear when a doctor heals a patient (unless she or he is a celebrity). You only get to hear about doctors when they are involved in malpractice or die. In recent times, we have been reading about the alarming rate at which doctors have been dying—in most cases they are senior doctors with years of experience. Their loved ones would post on social media about their sacrifices, where you get to see the human faces behind the number that you come across in the news. The contributions of doctors fail to match the sensation of a celebrity who is perhaps dating someone new or reportedly spending too much time on phones with a colleague.

Often we take the service of a doctor

for granted. Doctors become news for the wrong reasons. Take the heinous murder of Dr Rakib in Khulna on June 15 for instance. In a civilised society, you cannot lynch a doctor over the death of a patient. Doctors are not miracle workers or voodoo magicians from the cave paintings or scrolls of a primitive society. If there is any negligence on the part of a doctor, of course the legal system should be involved to probe into any alleged malpractice. To kill a doctor or beat him

batch of sub-standard masks was supplied to the hospitals claiming them to be N95. The products were over-priced. Many doctors were forced to buy their own personal protective gear. One thing is clear: the government is willing to spend, but the money is being channelled to middle men. And doctors who relied on these counterfeit products not only became vulnerable to infections but also became potential super spreaders. One particular contractor is now being

system. According to a recent report, the country has only 6 doctors, nurses, and midwives for every 10,000 people. All our neighbours fare better in terms of doctor patient ratio: in India the figure stands at 7.77, in Pakistan 9.75, in Sri Lanka 9.5, in Nepal 6.5, in Myanmar 8.6, and in Maldives 22.3. These figures do not reflect our development discourse. And the minimum threshold set by the World Health Organization is 23 per 10,000



A physician, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), collecting sample at the Fever Clinic in the capital's Shahbagh for coronavirus testing.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

or her up just because you can, thanks to your party muscle, is cancerous. Unless there is strong signal from the top, this will not stop. Stern actions must be taken to nab the killers of Dr Rakib and to uplift the dented morale of doctors.

Yes, our doctors are falling ill because of the exposure to the novel coronavirus, but they are also sick of being treated as non-humans. A brief scanning of the news available in both mainstream and social media will clarify this. Everyone is afraid to speak up because they do not know if they are stepping onto the tentacle of a hydra headed monster that is devouring our health system. Apparently there is a "doctor strange" who has become so powerful that he runs a syndicate; some doctor's association has compared this Doctor Who to a mafia don. Yet there is no action against him. Doctors have been thrown in jail for protesting against low standard PPEs. Doctors have been arrested for predicting the severity of the crisis. Imbued with a similar fear, partly because of the "Dr" before my name, I shall simply point out certain published news, facts and figures available in the public domain or issues being investigated by the anti-corruption bureau.

The first scam was reported when a

investigated for siphoning out hundreds of crores of taka through dodgy purchases. The panel of doctors formed to advise the health ministry during this crisis has gone on record saying that their opinions are disregarded or ignored. It seems a group of middle men in cahoots with some powerful government officials are more interested in buying equipment, building structures rather than implementing them. You see news of a convention centre being developed into a field hospital, but you do not see them going into operation. The urgency to spend money is not matched by the sincerity to make those facilities operational. You read about one DG being removed from his duty, and the minister underperforming or refraining from going to his office. There is a complete lack of supervision and coordination. The bureaucracy looms large. You can't get treatment for non-Covid illness without a test report. And it takes two weeks to get such a certificate. As a result, you see patients running from hospital to hospital, dying on the way, lying in front of the hospital looking for a bed. There are not enough beds to accommodate the patients that we have. And when you see daal-bhat wrapped in a plastic bag for a doctor, you know that there is something rotten in our health

population. At present there are total 110 recognised medical colleges in Bangladesh, 36 of which are public, 68 are private, and 6 are army. These colleges could admit about 11,000 students every year. When you look at the total number of registered doctors, you will understand how difficult it is to become a doctor. There are some 86,800 MBBS doctors, and dentists registered with the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council. Only 20,000 doctors are employed by the government. The ratio of doctors for every 10,000 people in public hospitals is 1.29. The facts also suggest that many of our doctors are not in our health system. One intelligent guess is that they have migrated abroad.

These facts will tell you under what stress and duress our doctors perform. I think they deserve both our material and mental support. Without a proper support base and incentives, our next generation of doctors will be discouraged from entering the system. I know many doctor cousins and friends who do not want their children or relatives to come to the medical profession. This is symptomatic of a system that itself needs healing.

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Public universities need ICT infrastructure, not more buildings

MAHMUDUL H SUMON

OUR public universities are mostly engaged in building buildings. I mean concrete buildings! Even when a simple structure such as a bus stop is built in our universities, we see structures and designs with an abundance of rod and cement. If you try to remember some of the gates built in recent years in many of our public universities (run by taxpayer's money and yes that includes everyone!) you will get a sense of what I mean. More rod and cement means big-budget, happy contractors, happy everyone!

Lately, I've been saying this to many of my colleagues that our universities are all about how many student halls you have built in a year or in your tenure. And quite bizarrely, every year the diary/calendar published by our universities is always adorned with images of new structures of buildings or newly built memorials. I can't recall any humans in these diary/calendar publications. No images of teachers and students engaging in classroom activities or any other intellectual work, indoors or outdoors.

This is even true for the university websites where there is hardly any representation of students and their voices. If they feature at all, they usually feature in university's official programmes or events (there are the exceptions of course). But generally it's all about a few selected people involved in the ribbon cutting events and various celebrations on other days. Here too in the "dynamic" realms of our websites, monuments, and memorials rule. In the case of my alma mater (which is also my workplace for the last 18-plus years), the images of our campus's natural beauty (although I am not sure if this is the best way to be known to the world) sometimes make some inroads

into the pages of our official diary. But generally, new buildings are always a priority. Who decides on these images? Surely the committees responsible for diary/calendar/website publication. But perhaps the more salient question is how did this tradition come into being? In whose imagination did it occur that new buildings could be a thing that

from their computers. We see this in many universities of the world. These are generally encrypted systems that provide online access points to many things starting from the library and its various online repositories to virtual classrooms to relevant course based portals to software supports frequently required by students, staff and teachers.

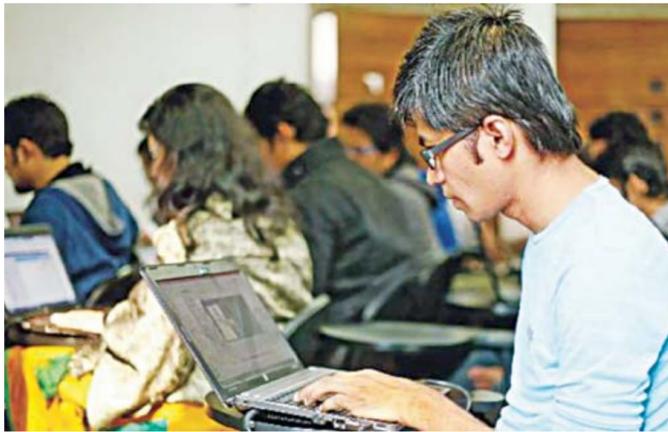


PHOTO COURTESY: MULTIMEDIA CONTENT AND COMMUNICATION

we need to show every time there is an opportunity with a new year?

For years together now, I've been vouching for a different kind of infrastructure. That is a university wide ICT infrastructure that may work as a backbone for many if not all the activities that we may want to do at our universities. These were simple things and nothing new. Our universities need to have a strong university-wide infrastructure, a customised Operating System if you will, which will allow students, teachers and staff to operate

Such systems are often designed in a way so that students and faculties can store and retrieve digital content of different topics useful for classroom teaching and students' learning activities. Such systems often can help teachers and staff to do away with a lot of paper work and work from home. The exam office that operates in some of our universities are simply outdated and requires new technological innovations.

This list of what could have been done with such online infrastructure can be long and I will not belabour on

that here. What is lacking is any will within the university administration to bring in changes. Had we prioritised such infrastructure, a temporary recourse to online teaching would have been a possibility (the choice of online teaching by our education bosses, however, begs serious pedagogical question but that can be the topic for another discussion). In the absence of such infrastructure, and more importantly given the fact that our students do not have easy and equal access to the internet, now that they are all forced to stay put at their homes, this sudden talk of online-class (as if this is a magical solution to all our problems) sounds very hollow and meaningless. I am sure education bosses are worried. Like them, many of us are no less worried about our students. But you cannot suddenly change when our universities haven't done the homework.

To force something from the top will only produce some superficial effects and give the impression that everything is fine, much like the government's Covid response! But things are not fine in our universities and there are ample signs of that. Our universities are suffering due to an undesirable practice of teacher recruitment. This must go. We need to sort out the issue of student recruitment as well. How can we introduce an admission system that is less hassle for students and parents? We need to introduce a student-welfare centric union. These are some of the issues that we need to tackle immediately. It is high time some form of democratic mechanism is retained in the universities so that we hear a cross-section of students and teachers.

But the question remains, is there any political will for this?

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THE WORLD AFTER COVID-19

'We have to strongly assert our rights now'

In this instalment of The Daily Star's interview series that aims to give readers an idea of what changes to expect in a post-Covid-19 world, Dr Shahdeen Malik, advocate at the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, talks to Eresh Omar Jamal about the right to freedom of speech and expression and the limiting of human rights by governments.

David Kaye, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, warned in his report to the UN Human Rights Council on April 23 that there has been several incidents of journalists and human rights defenders around the world being intimidated, detained, harassed and questioned for their work during the lockdown. Free speech, it seems, has taken a backseat during the outbreak. What are your thoughts on that?

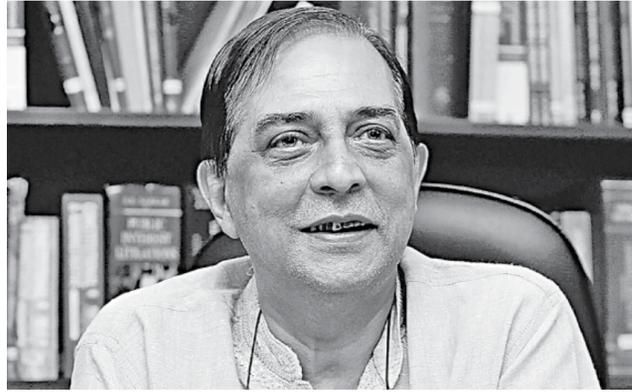
The fact that freedom of speech has taken a backseat in this corona time is not surprising. Historically, in times of national emergencies of any kind, states have assumed more power. And this assumption of power have been justified under the excuse that states need greater power to rescue the nation—to take drastic measures, etc. Exercise of freedom of speech or other freedoms in such times, have been viewed as obstacles to the state's necessity, and hence, these freedoms have been sacrificed or become less important.

Generally, popular governments in times of crisis enjoy the support of their populace. And people generally also tend to think that the exercise of these freedoms may jeopardise or hinder the national process. The best example is of course in war time, when the government usually manages to excite the people against the enemy and take emergency measures.

Now we don't have war, we have pandemic. But still war like language is often being used. There have been mentions of us fighting an invisible war—meaning the coronavirus. And hence freedom of speech is once again the usual casualty.

Some human rights defenders believe that the right to free speech is the most important right, as it allows people to negotiate and determine other rights and even express when rights are violated. What is your opinion on that?

Generally I am against any hierarchy



Dr Shahdeen Malik

of rights. I think all rights are equally important. Yes freedom of speech is more important in terms of holding the government accountable. But I mean, rights against say unjustified incarceration, the taking away of one's liberty arbitrarily without due process, is no less fundamental—neither is the right to not be tortured. So I think all rights are essential, for different purposes and in different situations.

During the lockdown, we have seen different quarters globally, such as governments, big social media platforms and even journalists in some cases, call for restricting the speech of others. Who do you think should determine what restrictions should be placed on the right to free speech? And what dangers might arise from granting someone the right to do so?

Certainly I don't agree with such calls. If anything, during this particular time of crisis, greater exercise of freedom of speech or expression will better help facilitate the taking of right decisions. In the absence of freedom of speech, the government may end up taking whimsical, unwise decisions—decisions without the participation of the populace that often tend to be wrong. I am appalled by this practice that

we have become used to, of watching our TV at 2 30 in the afternoon, where we have the health bulletin of how many people were tested positive and passed away in the last 24 hours. These so called briefings without any opportunity to question or challenge almost reminds me of our practice during martial law regimes.

We are not allowed to ask any questions when there are so many questions to ask about the government's efficiency and success—to hold the government accountable in terms of its efforts to control the virus. And now we know that the government has miserably failed. If the government had allowed the relevant journalists, particularly those covering the health sector, to ask challenging questions, the government would have had to justify its decisions. And I am sure that would have helped the government come up with much better responses than it is managing now. So to my mind, the poor response from the government so far, to a large part, is down to the fact that it has decided to remain silent and silence those who ask questions. And so, in a way, it has refused to face up to the people. By taking questions, it could have

involved the entire population in this struggle. But now it is clearly only a government effort. And every afternoon the people are just made to listen to some sermon on what we should do and what we should not, without being a party to those decisions.

Historically, people have always been more prone to accept restrictions on their rights and even support restrictions on the rights of others, during times of crisis as you yourself alluded to. Why do you think that is and how does that usually pan out in the long run?

No I didn't mean to say that people have been more willing to accept restrictions on their rights. In these periods, so-called national interests have been prioritised over individual interests.

Unlike America, we have a very state-centric view of our well-being. And this state-centric view of our well-being has been generated by the state. The state has been able to put out the view that the state is always taking measures for the good of the people, which is not necessarily true, and is the least true in the present time.

Most of the measures of the state have been dictated by those at the helm of power, in an effort to perpetuate their power and perpetuate the benefits of their power. And their self-centred, self-promoting effort are facilitated by restricting our rights. So it is very normal that to ensure the perpetuity of their power and the benefits of that power, they are limiting our rights. If this trend of limiting rights continue, then not only will we lose our rights, but this corona crisis will go on for a longer period with enormous cost to all sectors—health, education and the economy in general.

I must add here that I am really baffled by the judiciary. To me it seems that it has totally abdicated its role of holding the government accountable. Virtually right now we don't have a judiciary. Our judiciary has essentially been in hibernation mode since the end of March. The function of the judiciary and

the parliament and to an extent the press, is to hold the government accountable. The parliament is not in session, even the budget is being pushed through after having very few discussion sessions. And the judiciary is in complete lockdown. I mean nobody else is in that kind of lockdown anymore. Why is the judiciary still in complete lockdown? It is letting the government do what it wants to, basically with no accountability. The limitation of rights, coupled with the abdication of its role by the judiciary, will always foster a more abusive government—which will lead to a more prolonged health disaster, among other disastrous consequences.

Based on that, and the regression of rights we have seen recently, what are your thoughts on the right to free speech in a post-Covid-19 world?

We have to strongly assert our rights now, and not wait for a post-Covid world. I am encouraged by some recent comments and news reports that I have seen in our media, which is increasingly becoming more critical, but also realistic about the government's almost utter failure in dealing with this crisis. The government can for the time being ignore the criticism. But I think more trenchant use of freedom of speech, particularly by those who care for the nation, will have a tremendous positive role in pursuing the government to take better measures.

It is incumbent upon those who are supposed to hold the government responsible to now openly exercise their right to free speech more sharply and with greater force, to compel the government to change course when it is doing wrong. And to encourage it to do what is right and to take more efficient measures. I think people should be more vocal about the corruption, lack of coordination and the self-pursuit of people in power, and the establishment of special medical facilities for the so-called important persons, while the rest of the population is ignored—and it is essential that people start doing that now.

Outlook on our economic recovery after Covid-19

MD ABDUL WASI

THE Covid-19 pandemic has affected our lives in several ways. Likewise, it is evident that the pandemic's effect on our country's economy is likely to be detrimental. However, in contrast to many of our neighbouring economies, the revised figures published by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in June suggest that Bangladesh can still maintain a positive GDP growth over the next couple of years. Therefore, given the current pandemic condition, does this forecast reflect our economic strength in general, or is it an over-optimistic prediction of our country's economic development?

In my view, the current GDP forecasts by the ADB are reasonable and indicate our country's strong economic fundamentals (albeit there is scope for development, just as there is for all other economies). As an example, we can consider the experiences of one of our economy's main sources of foreign income, i.e. the ready-made garment (RMG) sector. Over time, this sector has gained significant value as well as reputation globally, and one can say that its development and our economic growth are positively correlated. However, in 2013, this RMG industry suffered a considerable shock due to the catastrophic collapse of a local garment factory establishment. This incident led to a worldwide negative reaction towards our RMG establishments and

prompted a need to make substantial improvements to their work and safety standards.

Subsequently, in the aftermath of this incident, our RMG establishments made large investments in their facilities, at a rapid pace, to ensure that they are on par with international working conditions. In addition to social concerns, these investment outlays were also deemed necessary from an economic perspective as they would allow our garment industry to remain competitive in the global markets. Eventually, having borne significant costs, our RMG sector survived the impact and regained its reputation as well as its market share globally. In fact, today alongside establishing plants that meet international standards, our RMG sector and their exports rank highly among the largest garment exports in the world.

Similar to these events in our RMG industry, I believe our economy can also survive the effects of a financial shock caused by the current pandemic. This is mainly because, like the RMG sector, our economy's major revenue sources are diversified in many different countries and we have gained a favourable reputation regarding the quality of our service output. These factors may indicate sustainable ex-ante benefits (or income) for our country and thereby can rationalise the latest GDP growth outlook suggested by the ADB. To further elaborate, first we can consider our economy's main sources

of income. Among others, our economy relies heavily on foreign revenue earned from RMG exports and the remittance inflow from expat workers. At the same time, while our country, like many other neighbouring countries, is still facing a major challenge to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic, the rest of the world is showing significant improvements in curbing this pandemic condition.

This prospect of a positive development in other parts of the world, including the west and the middle east regions, can lead to their own as well as our economic recovery, in tandem. Particularly, in order to stimulate the domestic economy, these regions are likely to take steps that raise the demand for goods and services, at-large. Given that our country has gained a unique position as one of the most reliable suppliers of some of these goods (such as garment for the west) and services (by the expat workers in the middle east), it is expected that the benefits will start to flow to our economy, either directly or indirectly, soon. Therefore, while our economy can face difficulty in the short run due to the current Covid-19 crisis, it is likely to experience a faster recovery when the rest of the world markets start to stabilise and this may be the signal that we can pick up from the latest GDP forecasts by the ADB.

Second, a positive GDP growth outlook also indicates that the total value of the goods and services that we produce within our country is likely to

increase. At the same time, this signifies a considerable strength in our domestic economy which is expected to sustain in the foreseeable future. Taken together, this indicator encapsulates the ongoing development of the different sectors of our domestic economy, which may also be apparent in some recent anecdotal evidence.

For instance, nowadays the use of online food ordering and delivery services has grown considerably in our country. As a result, we have seen the development of multiple domestic companies (mainly start-ups) in this line of business, while many established foreign participants have also entered our domestic market. However, surprisingly, in recent times, one of these large foreign entities (i.e. Uber Eats) have had to exit our domestic market, most likely due to profitability concerns, while our local firms remain active. This implies how our domestic firms can sustain the competition from foreign firms and are also able to increase their own market share over time. Therefore, this anecdote can indicate an overall rise in the quality of our local firms and also their significant contribution to our domestic economy, which is reflected in the current positive GDP forecasts.

In summary, considering the current Covid-19 conditions, the positive economic outlook in terms of GDP growth can hint an economic recovery in the near future and can instil a confidence in the economy which,

otherwise, investors may lose at the moment. Furthermore, this also suggests that, while a decline under the current pandemic is inevitable, our domestic economy's strong fundamentals can possibly sustain the impact and also help achieve an economic growth especially when the global markets start to recover. In my opinion, this outcome is plausible because historically our economy has experienced several



financial shocks which we have been able to withstand. Similarly, it is probable that our economy can recover from the current economic crisis as well, just as our RMG sector did after 2013 along with many other sectors at different time periods.

Md Abdul Wasi is a lecturer of finance at North South University (currently on study leave) and is presently in the final year of his doctoral studies at the University of Adelaide, Australia. Email: itswasi@gmail.com

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

YEN MADE OFFICIAL MONETARY UNIT OF JAPAN
June 27, 1871

First minted in 1869, the yen was adopted as Japan's official monetary unit this day in 1871, when the government suspended the exchange of clan notes, money issued by feudal lords that had circulated since the 16th century.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Los Angeles team
- 5 By the side of
- 10 Some woodwinds
- 12 San -, California
- 13 Apportioned
- 15 Greek vowel
- 16 - Vegas
- 17 Hosp. parts
- 18 Depends
- 20 Lotion additive
- 21 Judi of "Chocolat"
- 22 Car scar
- 23 Carell of movies
- 25 Walk nervously
- 28 Secluded valleys
- 31 Leave out
- 32 Outdoors
- 34 Young one
- 35 Place
- 36 Luau dish
- 37 Uncovered
- 40 German sub
- 41 Tightly packed
- 42 Jessica of "Tootsie"
- 43 Hive group

DOWN

- 1 Lasso expert
- 2 Subsided
- 3 Esprit de corps
- 4 Min. part
- 5 Iowa city
- 6 Boy
- 7 Peter of "Troy"
- 8 Impulse relay
- 9 Prepared
- 11 Choose
- 14 Made verbal attacks
- 19 Miniature map
- 20 "Skyfall" singer
- 24 Blew off steam
- 25 Tea amount
- 26 One-celled organism
- 27 Lemon's cousin
- 29 Tony winner
- 30 Husband or wife
- 33 Places
- 35 Singer Seeger
- 38 Joplin piece
- 39 Comingout girl

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

ASST SMASH
DOTH POPTOP
ALEE AURORA
POPCORN OMS
TSHAPED DOT
IRS DINE
EBONY GENES
SALE SOC
TRY SCOOPED
OHM POPDIVA
POPART EXAM
SPINET RIDE
SATES SEES

BABY BLUES

BABY BLUES

BY MORT WALKER

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

A Pandemic Novel for Now and Forever: José Saramago's *Blindness*

REVIEWED BY FAKRUL ALAM

Translated by Giovanni Pontiero. ISBN: 9780099573586. Vintage Publishers, 1997 (translation), originally published in 1995

Looking for exceptional reading a month after the coronavirus pandemic set in, I took up the Portuguese writer José Saramago's 1995 novel *Blindness*, reckoning that a Nobel Prize winner's work would be well worth spending time on in these quarantine days. Giovanni Pontiero's superb translation of this brilliantly plotted and paced narrative about a pandemic blinding people rapidly in a modern city gripped me instantly.

The opening paragraphs of *Blindness* are innocuous enough. We are at an intersection where as a traffic light switches from amber to green, a car driver finds himself unable to move. He (all characters in the novel are unnamed) explains frantically to the irate drivers who berate him, "I am blind!" Soon he is weeping and crying out loud, "I see everything white." A man, apparently a good Samaritan, volunteers to drive him home. They reach his flat, where his wife takes charge and decides to consult an eye specialist. But the good Samaritan turns out to be a car thief; the car keys are nowhere to be found; the car is not where it is supposed to be. The blind husband and his caring wife thus must go to their ophthalmologist in her car. As soon as the eye specialist examines the man, he concludes that this kind of blindness "defies explanation." He tells his patient to go home, assuring him that he will be contacted as soon as he finds a remedy as well as an explanation for the disease. By the next chapter, the car thief, the other patients in the surgery, and the ophthalmologist have all been infected by the white blindness!

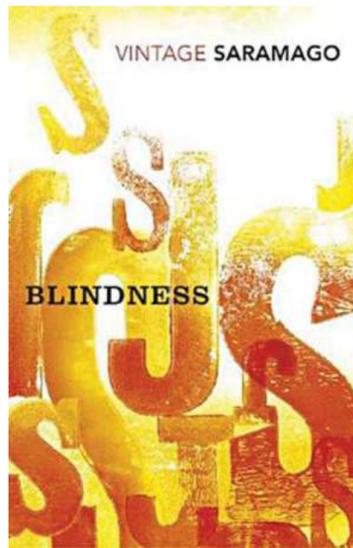
In succeeding chapters, readers find out that the blindness is viral. Totally uncontrollable, it disrupts everyone's life. But because there never has been an epidemic of the kind anywhere, there is no treatment for it. By the next chapter (the chapters are not numbered in a narrative that is strangely familiar and yet like no other novel I have come across), we realize that the contagion is archetypal, the novel allegorical, and Saramago a writer with an uncanny ability to evoke a world that is timeless in its dimensions. Reading *Blindness* in these

pandemic days, I kept marveling continually—how could Saramago come up with a book so unreal and yet so capable of evoking feelings and depicting situations that are not unlike the ones we are experiencing now?

The white blindness pandemic, for instance, is "highly contagious" and threatens to become a "national catastrophe." Patients infected, including the doctor himself, find out that people in charge of public health treat them and other patients initially with "half indifference and half malice," suspecting them of exaggerating and even feigning symptoms. Eventually, the Minister of Health himself addresses them and assures them of "prompt action"; of course, nothing of that sort will be the case.

Indeed, only tentative and not well thought out steps are taken to deal with the emergency. People exhibiting symptoms of white blindness are "rounded up" and "isolated"; they are then put in "quarantine" for the time being. The narrator explains that the procedure being followed is from "an ancient practice...inherited from the time of cholera and yellow fever." A part of what is a mental hospital is hurriedly set aside for the purpose. The doctor and his wife (who declares that she too is blind though she isn't), the first man stricken, the blind thief and the patients in the surgery are all taken in. Quickly, all the spaces set aside are occupied by others. Rules are promulgated for the patients in bureaucratized form and diction. The government keeps issuing such rules and rethinking its strategies, urging social distancing and voluntary confinement while increasing the number of places and spaces where the infected could be contained.

But despite the Minister's assurance and the show of efficiency, the conditions of the inmates continue to be totally miserable. Not only is there a crook amidst them in the car thief, there are thugs and even rapists at loose among the new blind arrivals who start abusing the first group of blind internees. Food supplies prove to be a major problem as well as defecating, cleaning up excreta and dealing with obnoxious smells. The inmates,



all products of a culture nurtured by the enlightenment, initially believe the blindness as "so abnormal, so alien to scientific knowledge that it cannot last forever." Unfortunately, science fails to come up with solutions to the collective predicament and things get from bad to worse.

The inmates eventually realize they face an existential threat—at the rate things are going and in unending quarantine, they are bound to lose their grip on reality. They realize too that they are being policed brutally and seem destined to be miserable as well as hungry. The medical assistance promised does not materialize; cries of agony fill the complex's spaces. The blind thief becomes a fatality; the other inmates manage to bury him with great difficulty. There are more and more deaths. Burial is a problem because of lack of volunteers to deal with the infected bodies. Fear, terror and anxiety grip all minds. Was "the white blindness...some spiritual

malaise"? But no explanations suffice and theology is soon cast aside. The doctor's wife explains what theology stereotypes: "we are all guilty and innocent!"

Inexplicably, the doctor's wife is the only one in quarantine not infected. That doesn't prevent her from being gang raped. Nevertheless, because of her eyesight she manages to shepherd the rest of her group and helps everyone to cope somehow with fast deteriorating conditions. She is, indeed, exemplary in the way she works selflessly and leads from the front. Compassion propels her even though she also proves capable of murdering her abusive blind rapist to break free of him forever. She is joined by a few others in getting rid of the thugs after some time. She realizes that "the blind are always at war." However, she also knows people of "good faith...are always to be found." Her husband has his moments of weakness, but he also utters an essential dictum for survival, "we must be logical." A few others in their group display love and help each other cope.

Eventually, the doctor's wife leads her group out of confinement, discovering that the soldiers guarding them have disappeared. By this time, "everyone is blind, the whole city, the entire country." A little later, we realize that "the epidemic of blindness has spared no one." In streets, things are utterly chaotic; fires rage and dead bodies are strewn everywhere. What she sees makes the doctor's wife wonder at "how fragile life is when it is abandoned." At one point, she weeps for all humanity. Heroically, she finds food for her group in the basement of a supermarket. She then leads the others to their apartment complex, their savior in every sense. The ragtag group members now have the opportunity to bathe and cleanse themselves—bodily and no doubt spiritually as well. And in the end, as mysteriously as it came, the blindness pandemic disappears from their world.

What makes the doctor's wife so special in the novel and why is she spared from blindness? In this parable of a novel, she evidently exists to lead the others to survival

but also to make us understand what true saviors are like. They emerge at moments of crises, Saramago suggests, because they have eyes their contemporaries "no longer possess." Or as she explains her role elsewhere as well, "I am simply the one who was born to see this horror, you can feel it, I both feel and see it."

José Saramago's superb novel impressed me infinitely also because of its insights, humane elements and relevance. The name of his next novel, I gather, is *Seeing* (2004). But *Blindness* alone tells me what a great writer he is. I am reminded by it of Frantz Kafka's allegorical fiction and of William Golding's novels. The novelist also reminds me of what Joseph Conrad identified as the task(s) of the truly great novelist: "by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, above all, to make you see.... If I succeed, you shall find there... encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand; and perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask."

I must get hold of a copy of *Seeing* as soon as I can, but let me end this piece by making two other points. First, the translator, Giovanni Pontiero is marvelous—how did he succeed in making Saramago's labyrinthine sentences so readable? Second, Saramago's book bristles with ideas about the human condition. Don't get the impression from the following quotations that Saramago is anywhere didactic and intent on writing wise-seeming sentences merely to dazzle us, but here are a few examples of how we can think of our current predicament and ways out of all such crises in the light of his novel: "blindness is... to live in a world where all hope is gone"; "if we stay together we might manage to survive, if we separate we shall be swallowed up"; "If I ever regain my sight, I shall look carefully at the eyes of others, as if I were looking into their souls." Finally, from the penultimate paragraph: "I think we are blind, Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see."

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Long books to lose oneself in during lockdown: Margaret Forster's *Daphne du Maurier*

REVIEWED BY RAANA HAIDER

ISBN: 9780385420686 Chatto & Windus, London, 1994

On offer is a remarkably candid biography of Daphne du Maurier (1907-1989), the powerful story-teller of the twentieth century; highlighted by her singly recognised classic novel, *Rebecca* (1938). At the time, Daphne herself had her doubts about the book's success and wrote to her publisher Gollancz: "I've tried to get an atmosphere of suspense...the ending is a bit brief and a bit grim...It was certainly too grim to be a winner." Forster declares: "Daphne had been wrong; she, and Gollancz, had their winner." Alfred Hitchcock directed both film adaptations of *Jamaica Inn* in 1939 and *Rebecca* in 1940. *The Scapegoat* was

Memorably, Mary Willson replied: "that on the first day at 10 Downing Street she had felt like the second Mrs. de Winter in *Rebecca*." The epic masterpiece continues to resonate.

A Cornwall resident to the core, her long-rented home "Menabilly" was the inspiration for the house "Manderley" in her "Gothic romance" genre novel *Rebecca*. Decades of efforts to purchase Menabilly from the family owners, the Rashleigh never materialised. Rosalind Ashe in her delightfully imaginative book *Literary Houses: Ten Famous Houses in Fiction* (1982) elaborates: "The houses in these novels are more than mere stage sets: they are almost 'characters.' They linger in your mind long after the book is closed. They have become real." Manderley remains one formidable character in the history of literature. Forster writes: "Menabilly" was always more than a house to Daphne du Maurier. Its chief attraction for her was its secrecy, not its size or beauty or history." At Menabilly, Daphne redefined her sense of belonging. This is where her creativity peaked; in a self-created imaginary world of her own choosing. The swashbuckling star of the Hollywood silent screen, Douglas Fairbanks (1883-1939) raised a vital question: "When someone is writing, where do they live: in the real world or in a self-created elsewhere? Not bound by walls." Menabilly, her retreat and refuge, provided Daphne du Maurier her required sanctuary and succour for multiple "mid-life crises" that impacted her throughout her life.

Meticulously researched with ample access to private letters, papers and interviews, Forster discovers heretofore unknown layers of the dark-edged depths of her subject's personality. Open cooperation with immediate family members - particularly Daphne's two daughters, Tessa and Flavia and her son Kits; her extended family, close friends, her publishers Victor Gollancz Ltd, housekeeping staff and their respective descendants reveal insights into storms brewing under the popular writer's calm surface. Sensitively reading between the lines of information gleaned, Forster has successfully worked the state of inner conflict and intimate negotiations which Daphne tackled all her life - a complex inner labyrinth of sexual identity crisis. Her deft amalgam of a broad blend of sources makes for an immersive literary experience.

Her father, Gerald du Maurier a successful theatre producer in London, regarded Daphne as the son

he never had. He wrote a poem to her:

....
My tender one -
Who seems to live in Kingdoms all her own
In realms of joy
Where heroes young and old
In climates hot and cold
Do deeds of daring and much fame
And she knows she could do the same
If only she'd been born a boy.
And sometimes in the silence of the night
I wake and think perhaps my darling's right
And that she should have been,
And, if I'd had my way
She would have been, a boy.

....
And sometimes in the turmoil of the day
I pause, and think my darling may
Be one of those who will
For good or ill
Remain a girl for ever and be still
A Girl.

Surely "It was a confused message for a girl to interpret" notes Forster. However, "In her own mind Daphne had no doubts: everything about being a boy appealed to her more...nobody realized quite how much Daphne genuinely hated being a girl." The middle sibling of three daughters, Daphne always wished she had been born a boy. She had a "Venetian" (du Maurier family code for lesbian) friendship with Ferdy, her teacher at her boarding school outside Paris. "The boy was out of the box and in love and, though she kept this hidden from all but Ferdy herself, she felt the greatest sense of relief imaginable" is the assessment of Forster. An adulthood friendship with Ellen Doubleday, the wife of her American publisher remained constant as two close friends. Only because of no reciprocity by Ellen - it remained a fantasy. A deep friendship evolved into a satisfying relationship with Gertrude Lawrence, the London stage actress who had been one of the young members of her late father's actress "stable" of lovers. Daphne maintained long commitments to all her friends; even when the "out of the box" aspect was over. Yet, there was never any "coming out of the closet."

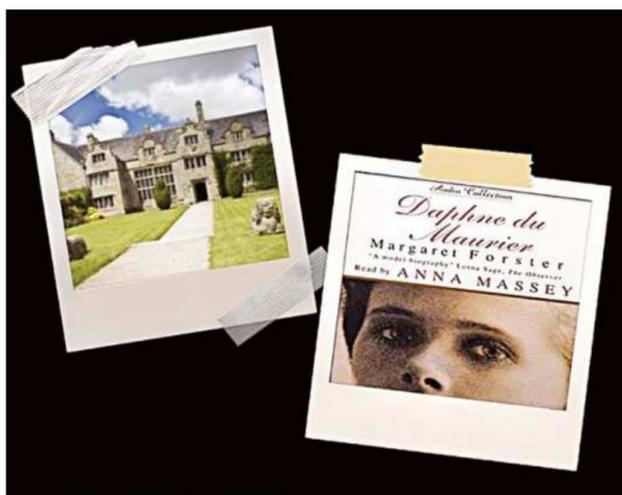
In a fresh perspective, Forster weaves together a familial context whereby Daphne in her childhood exhibits little appreciation of her mother's obstacles yet admires her charming and flawed father.

Her relationship with her mother turns more harmonious following her marriage to Frederick "Boy" Browning in 1932. A World War II hero with a long-distinguished career in the British Army, he was in later years appointed Treasurer to the Duke of Edinburgh. They received the Duke of Edinburgh and the Queen at "Menabilly." Browning and Daphne had a troubled marriage; yet each in his and her own manner remained devoted to one another. She disliked living in Egypt on his army posting. She ventured eastwards only up to Greece on holiday. Westwards, USA was more acceptable; it was also related to her literary career. She loved her house and home but was not into domesticity.

Her two daughters were brought up to be "little seen and not much heard." Again, relationships eased with their growing up. The birth of her son Kits exulted Daphne to proclaim: "I have done it at last...a son!...For seven years I've waited to see "Mrs. Browning, a son" in *The Times*." Poignant and revealing are the following lines in the "Afterword" by Forster: "To her children she was a mother who seemed happy and content. The revelation that she was so tortured for much of her life has been a shock...Daphne du Maurier's children warned me, when I began this biography, that I would find their mother 'a chameleon... It may have tortured her to feel she was two distinct people but it also fuelled her creative powers: without 'No. 2', that boy in the box, there would have been nothing." Sometimes the dividing line between fantasy and reality remains dangerously thin. For Daphne du Maurier, "fear of reality" led her to retreat to "Menabilly," her venue for imaginative escape. Forster in her probing panoramic study of her celebrated subject, peels layers of personality traits and thus successfully releases Daphne du Maurier's emotional burden - "that boy in the box."

Significantly, Daphne du Maurier herself expressed her thoughts on biographies in a letter to her American friend Ellen Doubleday as early as in 1949. Daphne passed away forty years later in 1989. Daphne wrote: "What she detested were biographies that were 'stereo-typed, dull-as-ditchwater, over very fulsome praising.'" She realized the truth was often "hard for the family to take," but saw no point in biography otherwise. This sensitive and sympathetic biography by Margaret Forster would have been found acceptable if not welcomed by Daphne du Maurier.

Raana Haider is a bibliophile.



filmed in 1959 with Alec Guinness in the lead and Bette Davis in a supporting role. She had a long illustrious and prolific literary career resulting in 37 books; fiction, non-fiction, biographies and autobiographical writings, e.g. *Growing Pains: The Shaping of a Writer* (1977) and *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories* (1981). In 1969, she was bestowed the honour of Dame of the British Empire. Daphne du Maurier had great admiration for Harold Wilson. He was her "pin-up boy." Upon assuming the post of Prime Minister, she congratulated him and wrote to Mary Willson.

DJOKOVIC AND THE CAT & MOUSE

Manchester United's Nemanja Matic on Thursday backed his fellow countryman Novak Djokovic, who was widely slammed for hosting a tennis exhibition where he was one of four players to test positive for the coronavirus, and said the world number one was the "cat" who will chase away the "mice". "Mice came out of the hole and gave themselves the right to criticise the world number one, in tennis but also how he relates to all other people in the world," Matic wrote in an open letter of support to Djokovic published by local media. "But I don't care. Very soon the cat (Djokovic) will be on the court, and the mice in the hole." -- AFP



'ON KLOPP OF THE WORLD'

REUTERS

The end of Liverpool's long wait for a league championship was celebrated across the English media on Friday with most going for the headline "Champions" while the Daily Star, in a nod to their manager, declared they were "On Klopp of the World."

Juergen Klopp's side sealed a first league title in three decades on Thursday when Manchester City were beaten 2-1 by Chelsea, sparking wild celebrations on Merseyside despite the pandemic. "Smashing Crystal Palace 4-0 on Wednesday, showing all the class of champions more than 20 points clear of a brilliant City, ... felt like the sort of emphatic declaration of excellence these strange times needed," Matt Dickinson wrote in The Times.

"No need for asterisks -- this success is deserved, and momentous. Liverpool have enjoyed great European triumphs but there is something about domestic dominance that brings a deeper, richer sense of pride." Martin Samuel in the Daily Mail said Liverpool's campaign came close to topping the achievement of Leicester City in winning the 2015-16 title. "It is the most incredible title

triumph in Liverpool's history, and arguably the best delivered by an elite club in the Premier League era. As irritating as it may sound to their bitter rivals, this one really does mean more. It is a rewriting of the record books few can have expected a year ago ... "It is the season of all seasons, the campaign of all campaigns." Former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher said he was happy to be proved wrong after

writing in a 2017 column that he was not convinced Klopp had the ability to win the title. "Klopp arrived at Anfield saying he wanted to turn doubters into believers. I was one of those who had given up hope," Carragher wrote in The Telegraph. "It gives me the greatest pleasure to admit these words now look misjudged. In my defence ... no one took me to task for the remarks at the time."



WHAT THEY SAID

I have no words. It is unbelievable, much more than I thought was possible. Becoming champions with this club is absolutely incredible. This is for Kenny (Dalglish), for Stevie (Gerrard) - everyone!
-- Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp

This was a season for the ages and for the faithful of Liverpool Football Club. It has been an incredible year of magnificent achievement culminating tonight in capturing the Premier League title.
-- Liverpool owner John Henry

The last two years and since Juergen (Klopp)'s come in has been very positive. He's been fantastic and epitomises everything Liverpool Football Club stands for. Whatever they got, they have deserved it.
-- Kenny Dalglish, who led the Reds to the title in 1990



There was little regard for the coronavirus pandemic as Liverpool fans swarmed Anfield and watched 30 years of anguish go up in the flames of their bright red flares. The club's players, many of whom watched the Manchester City-Chelsea game, broke out in song and dance at the final whistle before taking their party to social media and celebrating with their hordes of supporters.

PHOTO: REUTERS/TWITTER

The year of Liverpool's last victory

REUTERS, London

Britain underwent some fairly tumultuous change from the early 1970s to the end of the 1980s but one thing remained constant - come the end of each season, Liverpool would be top, or almost top of the Football League. When they hoisted the old First Division trophy in April 1990 it marked Liverpool's 11th title in 18 seasons, and only twice in that remarkable run did they finish outside the top two. Anyone predicting it would 30 years before the next one might have been considered a victim of Mad Cow disease, which burst on to the scene the same year. Yet dynasties fall - as Margaret Thatcher and Mike Tyson also discovered in 1990. Thatcher had ruled unchallenged as Britain's longest serving Prime Minister of the 20th century and also probably thought she would go on forever, until she was forced out by her own Conservative party and replaced by John Major. Tyson was arguably the most dominant force in heavyweight boxing history but, after 37 usually crushing wins, he was knocked

down and beaten for the first time in his career by Buster Douglas in one of sport's biggest all-time shocks. In 1990 Aston Villa finished second in a top-flight that included Wimbledon, Coventry City and Luton Town. Leeds United won the second division to return after an eight-year absence and would win the league two years later. After four barren years at Manchester United, manager Alex Ferguson finally collected his first piece of silverware as they beat Crystal Palace in a replay to win

the FA Cup, though they came 13th in the league, five points above the relegation zone. It would be another three years until the Scot won the title -- the first edition of the fancy new Premier League -- to end a 26-year drought that used to delight Liverpool fans. The world's highest transfer fee was the 8 million pounds (\$10 million) Juventus paid Fiorentina for Roberto Baggio. England's most expensive player was Chris Waddle, sold to Tottenham Hotspur to Olympique

Marseille for 4.2 million the previous year. Hooliganism was rife. In May, 34 Bolton Wanderers fans, who were convicted of attacking police and rival supporters, were banned from travelling to the World Cup in Italy. England lost to eventual champions West Germany on penalties in the semi-finals and, although Luciano Pavarotti's Nessun Dorma and New Order's World in Motion were the soundtrack of Italia '90, the year's biggest selling single in the UK was a re-release of the Righteous Brothers' Unchained Melody. Paul Gascoigne and England gained legions of fans from that adventure but less uplifting was the country's final rebel cricket tour of South Africa, which came to look even more ill-advised as Nelson Mandela was released from captivity three weeks after they arrived. Back in the UK, recognition of National Health Service staff as "front line heroes" was still a distant dream as the country's ambulance workers eventually returned to work after a crippling six-month strike over low pay.



A transcendent TRIUMPH

AL-AMIN

I have never considered myself a passionate Liverpool fan, although my colleagues and friends think otherwise. The vintage English football club won the Premier League title last night, ending a 30-year wait. The Reds' first title in the Premier League era was confirmed with a staggering seven games in hand after their nearest challengers and defending champions Manchester City lost to Chelsea 2-1 at Stamford Bridge. It is a momentous occasion for Liverpool fans across the world, including Bangladesh, to cherish something that they had to wait for such a long time. Although celebrations were mostly confined indoors due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, many Liverpool faithful thronged to Anfield to celebrate the historic success. The title was irrevocably coming home for Liverpool fans this year under the stewardship of German manager Juergen Klopp, after a near-miss under Brendan Rodgers in the 2013-14 season, when the Reds were leading eventual winners Manchester City by three points going into their crucial home game against Chelsea. A win would have almost certainly sealed the title, but a famous tumble by Steven Gerrard in that game, which they lost 2-0, dashed their title hopes. I had the privilege of visiting Liverpool at the time, thanks to a brief tour to Anfield for a select group from across the world by the club's lead sponsor, Standard Chartered Bank, as part of its promotional campaign. That tour reaffirmed by belief as to why the Merseyside club is considered one of most followed teams in the world. A barefoot walk on the hallowed Anfield turf, a symbol of many successes before the game's commercialisation, is a once in a lifetime experience for any football fan. A visit to the century-old wooden locker room revealed that it was not just about sticking to tradition, but taking inspiration from legendary coaches such as Bill Shankly, Bob Paisley and Kenny Dalglish. And the

enormous Kop end, which was once a grass bank where you never stopped moving and singing, still represents pure adulation for the beautiful game and stands as a symbol of togetherness for a common cause. The Kop end is probably the most hated enclosure for any visiting team. This generation of football fans probably liked to consider Liverpool as a force to be reckoned with only in the past. But the Premier League title that has followed the UEFA Champions League and FIFA Club World Cup glory under Klopp, who combined resilience with flair, has firmly put Liverpool on course to reviving its lost glory. And for its loyal fans, who year after year turned up to every game or tuned in on TV with their kids, telling them how successful their beloved team once was is no longer a thing of the past. Sadly, there are many who are not alive to be part of this success with the younger ones. Al Mussabbir Sadi is one of those Liverpool faithful. It is



an understatement to bracket him just a Reds follower. He is probably one of most devout Liverpool fans I have ever come across. A career journalist and a prolific writer, Sadi was an encyclopaedia of Liverpool. He was one of those who used to sport the famous Liverpool scruff when his team was struggling. He loved to enjoy every Liverpool game with his two beautiful kids. He lost the battle against cancer and died in 2011 at the very young age of 44 while working as the general secretary Bangladesh Football Federation. He is no longer with us but is probably celebrating his beloved team's success from his heavenly abode. And this Liverpool success is more for those who never resigned. After all, it is all about the ageless message of Liverpool's team song: "You'll Never Walk Alone."

WHAT TO WATCH

- LA LIGA**
Facebook
Athletic Club v Mallorca
Live from 6:00pm
Celta Vigo v Barcelona
Live from 9:00pm
Osasuna v Leganes
Live from 11:30pm
Atletico Madrid v Alaves
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)
- PREMIER LEAGUE**
Star Sports Select 1
Aston Villa v Wolves
Live from 5:30pm
- BUNDESLIGA**
Star Sports Select 1
Augsburg v Leipzig
Live from 7:30pm
- FA CUP**
Ten 2
Norwich City v Man United
Live from 10:30pm
- SERIE A**
Ten 2
Lazio v Fiorentina
Live from 1.45am (Sunday)

BFF proposals ready for presentation

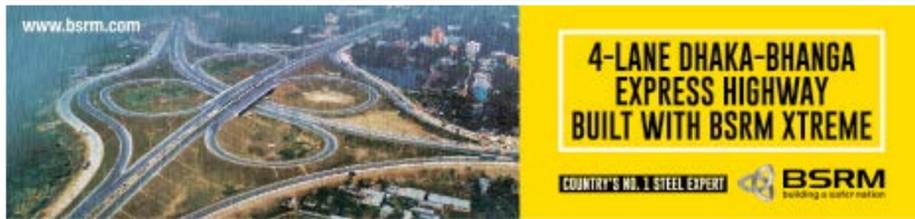
Players to sit with BFF president on Monday to discuss contracts

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation has prepared proposals to resolve outstanding contract issues after local players expressed concerns over their payments for the 2019-20 Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) season, which was voided on May 17 due to the coronavirus pandemic. The 13 BPL clubs settled wages with foreign players in line with the FIFA-prescribed process of reaching mutual understandings, but are yet to settle with 356 registered local players. A group of five players met BFF president Kazi Salahuddin on June 16 to express their concerns about wages and informed that a number of players wanted to sit with him in a formal meeting and discuss their issues. They also urged him to start the next season as soon as possible as the players have been suffering financially. BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag told The Daily Star yesterday that although they could not take any initiatives immediately following the

shutdown, they had prepared some proposals to resolve the matter. He also said that they would ensure representation from all 13 clubs in the meeting with the BFF president to get a clear overview of the situation. "Some national players have already sought an appointment with the BFF president, who is ready to sit with players. The meeting is likely to take place on Monday," Shohag said, adding that then they will also sit with the club officials to hear their opinions. "After hearing the opinions of all parties, we will present our proposal to curtail players' wages as the season was not completed. But it is almost certain that will not proportionally cut wages because there is huge difference in the wages of established players and upcoming players," Shohag said. It has been learnt that the BFF has prepared five slabs of wages from Tk one lakh to above Tk 25 lakh. The players in the first slab will be exempted from any slash in wages. In a meeting on May 17, most clubs proposed playing with the same squad

next season as only 25 per cent of league matches could be completed. As per FIFA's players' statutes and COVID-19 regulations, there is no option to play same players in the new season under the old contracts, which is a one-season agreement. Since the last meeting of the professional league committee, clubs did not take any initiative to resolve the local players' issue. Instead, they were also looking to the BFF's initiatives for a solution. A few clubs provided monthly salaries for one or two months during the pandemic, while clubs like Bashundhara Kings have refrained from paying further salaries as they paid up to 90 per cent of the contracts and are now supposed to get money back from players. A few days ago, national team coach Jamie Day emphasised on the need to resolve the issue before the restart of the World Cup Qualifying campaign, saying: "I am sure it will be on their mind if they have no salary for their families."



COVID IN CUMILLA 10-bed ICU only hope for 6 dists

KHALID BIN NAZRUL, Cumilla

Sixty-five-year-old Monirul Sarker was admitted to Cumilla Medical College Hospital's isolation unit with breathing problems around 9:00pm on Monday. His physical condition continued to deteriorate as his blood oxygen saturation level kept falling. Monirul needed to be shifted to the intensive care unit -- but no ICU bed was vacant at the hospital.

Monirul's relatives tried to arrange for an ICU bed at several private hospitals in the city but ultimately failed.

An ICU bed at the medical college hospital finally fell vacant around 3:30am on Tuesday and Monirul was being prepared to be shifted there.

Before he could, however, he breathed his last. It was a long way and quite some time since leaving his home in Debidwer upazila.

This is an all too common story these days, even in the cities, but especially in district towns and rural areas.

Like Monirul, other Covid-19 patients in critical condition face this situation as they are rushed from hospital to hospital or are left without help as their condition deteriorates while their families desperately try to find available ICU facilities in the city.

The situation is worsened as some private hospitals are refusing to admit patients with respiratory problems, leading to most critical patients ending up at ill-equipped public facilities.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Two women wading through waist-high water at Shashanpara village in Thakurgaon's Ranisankail upazila yesterday. At least 500 families of the district's Sadar and Ranisankail upazilas have seen their homes inundated with flooding from the nearby Tangon and Kulik rivers.

PHOTO: QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

Swathes of cropland flooded in 4 districts

Teesta flowing above danger level

STAR REPORT

The water levels of the Jamuna, Teesta and Dharla rivers have risen due to the heavy rainfall in the last few days, inundating many areas in Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, and Kurigram.

Needless to say, the crisis is taking a heavy toll on the people living in the districts amid the Covid-19 outbreak.

Water level of the Teesta once again crossed the danger mark yesterday, submerging four upazilas -- Dimla and Jaldhaka, Aditmari and Hatibandha -- in Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat.

The river first crossed the danger mark this year June 20.

At least five hundred families in Thakurgaon's Sadar and Ranisankail upazilas have been marooned as the increased

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Bangladesh avoids US sanctions

Secures one-step upgrade in the US Trafficking in Persons Report 2020

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has narrowly escaped US sanctions over humanitarian and non-trade related assistance as the country has been upgraded to an upper-tier in the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report 2020 launched by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo early yesterday.

"The [Bangladesh] government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore Bangladesh was upgraded to Tier 2," said the report.

The TIP Report is an annual report issued by the US State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. It ranks governments based on their perceived efforts to acknowledge and combat human trafficking.

Bangladesh had been on Tier 2 Watch List from 2017 to 2019 in the report and was on the verge of being ranked Tier 3 this year. The TIP has four ranks -- Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 2 Watch List and Tier 3.

A country that is put on the Tier 2 Watch List for three consecutive years automatically downgrades to Tier 3 if it does not make significant efforts to combat trafficking.

As per the US law, countries on tier 3 could trigger severe restrictions and even

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Additional Tk 30 lakh for flood-affected people



Bangabandhu visits flood-affected areas in Sylhet on June 27, 1972

June 27, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU VISITS SYLHET

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today visits several flood-affected areas in Sylhet. The prime minister declares allocation of additional Tk 30 lakh for the flood-affected people. Earlier, the government allocated Tk 10 lakh for flood victims. Bangabandhu assures of further assistance if necessary. So far, 22 thanas of Sylhet district are inundated and 50 persons killed due to the flood.

Later, the prime minister attends several public meetings organised at Sunamganj, Habiganj and Moulvibazar. He expresses deep condolences for the loss of lives due to flood. Bangabandhu urges people to work hard to increase agricultural production. He also calls upon them to help the government to eradicate corrupt elements.

Bangabandhu further says that floods remain a big problem for a low-lying country like Bangladesh. He accuses the previous

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Another cop dies from Covid-19

Infections near 10,000-mark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A frontline fighter, Bangladesh Police has been the worst hit by Covid-19 as the number of its members found coronavirus positive is set to cross the 10,000-mark.

No other force has seen so many infections in the country.

The number of police personnel dying from Covid-19 is also increasing.

Yesterday, another police member, who earlier tested Covid-19 positive, died while undergoing treatment at Central Police Hospital in the capital.

With his death, 37 police personnel have so far died from the virus infections.

Constable Touhidul Islam, 43, contracted Covid-19 while discharging his duties as a member of Airport zone of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Uttara Traffic Division, says a statement of Police Headquarters (PHQ).

Hailing from Rangpur, Touhidul left behind his wife, a son, and a daughter.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Scientists create the fastest computer ever



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have created the fastest computer ever. The Japanese supercomputer named "Fugaku" now sits at the top of official rankings of how quickly they can do certain real-world tasks.

Fugaku was awarded the top spot on the Top500 list, which ranks the world's fastest supercomputers, its creators said.

It is also now at the top of other rankings that test how quickly it would perform in real-world applications, how well it can conduct certain artificial intelligence tasks, and how well it can perform with data-intensive processes.

No supercomputer has ever scored at the top of the three rankings -- known as Top500, HPCG, and Graph500 -- before, the creators said.

In the Top500 ranking, it achieved a score of 415.53 petaflops. That is compared with the 148.6 petaflop score achieved by its nearest competitor, Summit, which is based in the US and is based on IBM hardware.

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Govt plans to set up six more universities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is planning to establish six more public universities in four districts, which have no such universities.

In a letter on Thursday, the education ministry's Secondary and Higher Education Division sought the University Grants Commission's opinions on setting up five universities in Narayanganj, Natore, and Meherpur.

One of them will be a general university named after Father of The Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Narayanganj. Two

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



PRAYER TIMING JUNE 27

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:05 12:45 5:00 6:54 8:17
JAMAAT 4:40 1:15 5:15 6:57 8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Commuters, mostly garment workers, cramming into a human haulier on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar yesterday. Transport services have been openly flouting the government rule to carry fewer people to combat the spread of coronavirus.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

4 more die with Covid symptoms in Cumilla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Four people died with Covid-19 symptoms in the last 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday at the isolation unit of Cumilla Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

All four of them were aged between 46 and 65 years. They were admitted to the hospital with cold, cough, fever and breathing shortness, said CMCH officials.

Dr Mukta Rani, assistant surgeon at the hospital, said samples were collected from all four of the patients for Covid-19 tests but they died before their test results arrived.

The dead are Chandina upazila's Idrish Mia, 60, Abdul Mannan, 65; Sadar upazila's Hanufa Begum,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

সতর্কীকরণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, ইদানিং লক্ষ্য করা যাচ্ছে বাংলাদেশ পরিসংখ্যান ব্যুরোর জনগণের ও গৃহগণনা ২০২১ প্রকল্পের আওতায় আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে জনবল নিয়োগের ত্রুটি প্রতিরোধিত হয়েছে এবং অনেক ক্ষেত্রে ত্রুটি নিয়োগপত্র প্রদানপূর্বক দেশের বেকার যুব/যুবা মহিলাদেরকে প্রদোষন দেখিয়ে কতিপয় কুচক্রী মহল বিশুল পরিমাণ টাকা হাতিয়ে নিচ্ছে। এ কাজে কুচক্রী মহল বাংলাদেশ পরিসংখ্যান ব্যুরোর এবং জনগণের ও গৃহগণনা ২০২১ এর নাম এবং গোপনো কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমতি ব্যতিরেকে ব্যবহার করছে মর্মে প্রকল্প কর্তৃপক্ষ অবগত হয়েছে। আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে নিয়োগের নামে এ ধরনের আর্থিক লেনদেন অবৈধ এবং আইনভিত্তিক নয়। এ বিষয়ে আরো জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, প্রকল্প কর্তৃপক্ষের সাথে আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে জনবল সরবরাহের বিষয়ে এ পর্যন্ত কোন আউটসোর্সিং প্রতিষ্ঠানের সাথে এখন পর্যন্ত চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরিত হয়নি, কোন প্রতিষ্ঠানের সাথে এ বিষয়ে চুক্তি সম্পাদিত হলে তা বিবিএস এর ওয়েবসাইটে বিজ্ঞপ্তি আকারে প্রকাশ করা হবে। চাকরির প্রদোষনে পড়ে কুচক্রীমহলে কোন ধরনের টাকা/বিনিময় প্রদান না করার জন্য সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে অনুরোধ করা হলো। এছাড়া, এ ধরনের কুচক্রীমহলের অপরাধের বিষয়ে নিবন্ধিত থানা/আইন প্রয়োগকারী সংস্থাকে অবহিত করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

বর্ষিতাবস্থায়, সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে সতর্ক করা যাচ্ছে যে, বাংলাদেশ পরিসংখ্যান ব্যুরোর জনগণের ও গৃহগণনা ২০২১ প্রকল্পে আউটসোর্সিং/কোন ধরনের নিয়োগের প্রদোষনে পড়ে আর্থিক লেনদেন করলে তার দায়ভার সংশ্লিষ্ট ব্যক্তিকে বহন করতে হবে। বাংলাদেশ পরিসংখ্যান ব্যুরো এবং জনগণের ও গৃহগণনা ২০২১ প্রকল্প কর্তৃপক্ষ কোনভাবেই এ ধরনের কেলেঙ্কারির দায়দায়িত্ব বহন করবে না।

প্রকল্প কর্তৃপক্ষ
জনগণের ও গৃহগণনা ২০২১ প্রকল্প
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ই-২৭/এ, আশাশুনি, ঢাকা-১২০৭