

400M JOBS LOST
UN report shows deepening employment crisis as coronavirus pandemic accelerates
SEE PAGE 6

The Daily Star

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BANGLADESH UPDATE 3,775 New cases in 24hrs | 1,49,258 Total cases | 1,888 Deaths | 62,108 Recoveries

AUS, AMAN PRODUCTION

Thrust renewed to boost yield

Amid pandemic worries, govt aims to expand rice cultivation areas, replace old varieties with new ones

SOHEL PARVEZ

With the Covid-19 pandemic wrecking lives and livelihoods, the government has renewed its focus and stepped up thrust on boosting production of Aus and Aman rice to ensure adequate availability of staple food in the country and slash dependence on the global market. The agriculture ministry targets increasing rice planting area to 13.29 lakh hectares during the current Aus season, 17 percent more than that a year ago. And the coverage of Aus crop, which is harvested in July-August, has already exceeded 13 lakh hectares, the highest in two decades, officials said. The ministry also targets 36 lakh tonnes of Aus output this season, 20 percent higher than the output in the previous season.

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43.27pc of dead aged over 60

3,775 more infected; 41 die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-one people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, said the Directorate General of Health Services.

The death toll from the deadly and highly transmissible virus now stands at 1,888 -- 1.26 percent of all confirmed cases.

Besides, 3,775 more people tested positive for the coronavirus, taking the number of confirmed cases to 1,49,258, said Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general of DGHS, during yesterday's briefing.

Over the same period, 2,484 more Covid-19 patients recovered and tested negative.

The total number of recovered patients has now reached 62,108 -- 41.61 percent of all confirmed cases in the country.

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“Employers have a huge responsibility (for employees), beyond just being an employer.”

LATIFUR RAHMAN
1945-2020

LIGHT of ethical business goes out

WASIM BIN HABIB

He was a paragon of business ethics. His business acumen, his leadership and integrity, his advocacy for high standards, and his vision to serve the people made him a role model for the new generation of entrepreneurs and encouraged them to make meaningful contributions to the society.

A respected figure in
SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

TRIBUTE TO LATIFUR RAHMAN Two independent newspapers were his gifts to Bangladesh

MAHFUZ ANAM

He was an editor's dream of an investor. But he turned out to be so much more. Yes, Matiur Rahman and I run the two papers -- Prothom Alo and The Daily Star respectively -- but it was he who made them happen, with his principles, integrity, courage, steadfastness, strength of character, and unswerving faith in independent media without which, he intuitively knew, that democracy could not flourish.

The Daily Star started when Ershad fell and like the rest of the nation, he also dreamt of a democratic Bangladesh and decided to team up with some other visionary investors and two journalists (SM Ali and myself) to help start an

independent newspaper, of which he later became a driving force. Through his unstinting belief and support for freedom of the press, unrelenting focus on management and fanatical emphasis on strict financial discipline, he helped the creation of two independent newspapers which I consider to be his gifts to Bangladesh.

The cornerstone of the ethos that he -- and the rest of the board of directors who appreciated his stance -- represented was total editorial independence for the newspapers. In the nearly 29 years of The Daily Star and almost 21 years of Prothom Alo, for whose first 10 years I was its publisher, never did we receive any advice, suggestion or even a remote

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A woman paying the coronavirus test fee from outside the gate of Mugda General Hospital in the capital yesterday. The government started charging people for the tests since Sunday despite the risks of deterring poor people from getting tested.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

4YRS OF CAFE ATTACK Lost friends remembered

DMP chief says militants no longer capable of big attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country yesterday observed the fourth anniversary of militant attack on Holey Artisan Bakery in the capital's Gulshan, paying tribute to the victims in the gruesome attack.

Unlike previous years, only officials of law enforcement agencies and some foreign diplomats went to the place between

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Laid to rest next to his daughter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Latifur Rahman was laid to rest at the capital's Banani Graveyard last night.

Earlier in the day, his body was brought from Cumilla and taken to his Gulshan residence in the capital around 8:30pm.

The namaz-e-janaza was held at Azad Masjid in Gulshan around 9:30pm after Esha prayers. Later, he was laid to eternal rest beside his daughter Shazneen Rahman, who was buried next to his grandson Faraz Ayaaz Hossain. Faraz was brutally killed by terrorists during the July 1 terror attack at the Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan in 2016.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers went to the

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Condolences keep pouring in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the death of founding chairman and CEO of Transcom Group Latifur Rahman, the country has lost a business leader who lived by the highest standards of integrity and was a protector of professional and independent media.

Eminent citizens said Latifur was a remarkable gentleman who believed that the country's future was bright.

Latifur, 75, breathed his last, in his sleep around 11:00am yesterday at his ancestral home in Cumilla.

Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh in a condolence message said Latifur set a unique example by running business with honesty and ethics. With his investment, he made immense contributions to the creation of employment opportunities.

Besides, Latifur assisted many social movements. His contribution to ensuring freedom of speech and media will remain everlasting, said the platform.

"With the death of Latifur, we lost a well wisher of Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh. He also patronised many associate organisations of the citizen platform," said a letter signed by its convenor economist Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya and coordinator Anisatul Fatema Yousuf.

Other members of the platform, including rights

MORE ON STAR BUSINESS

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'We've not spent any money'

DMCH chief clarifies about probe into spending

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Medical College authorities yesterday sought to clear confusion about their request for Tk 20 crore from the government for food and accommodation of their healthcare workers, just a couple of days after the prime minister expressed doubt in this regard.

DMCH Director Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin held a press conference in the hospital to share the expenditure details and clarify any confusion.

On June 29, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in parliament said Tk 20 crore for hotel rent and food for

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7



The scorching midday sun is not enough to keep the young men from playing football on Kuakata beach that reopened yesterday after over three months. More tourists will gradually through the beach, local business people hope.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

LATIFUR RAHMAN

August 28, 1945 - July 1, 2020

THE LIGHT LEFT US FOREVER LEAVING A TRAIL TO FOLLOW.

We mourn, and we are at a loss for words. We don't know how to come to terms with this. Yet, we very well know it is his aura of wisdom that he left us with to embrace and emulate.

In memory of our beloved Chairman Sir

ESKAYEF family
SK+F



TREATING SALINITY IN GROUNDWATER

DPHE now trying out nanofiltration in Bagerhat

75 devices to be installed in the district; each device costs a whopping Tk 20.5 lakh

PARTHA CHAKRABORTY, Bagerhat

Thousands of people in five upazilas of Bagerhat -- a coastal district where fresh drinking water is scarce due to high salinity in groundwater -- are once again getting their hopes up on a probable solution to their longstanding water crisis.

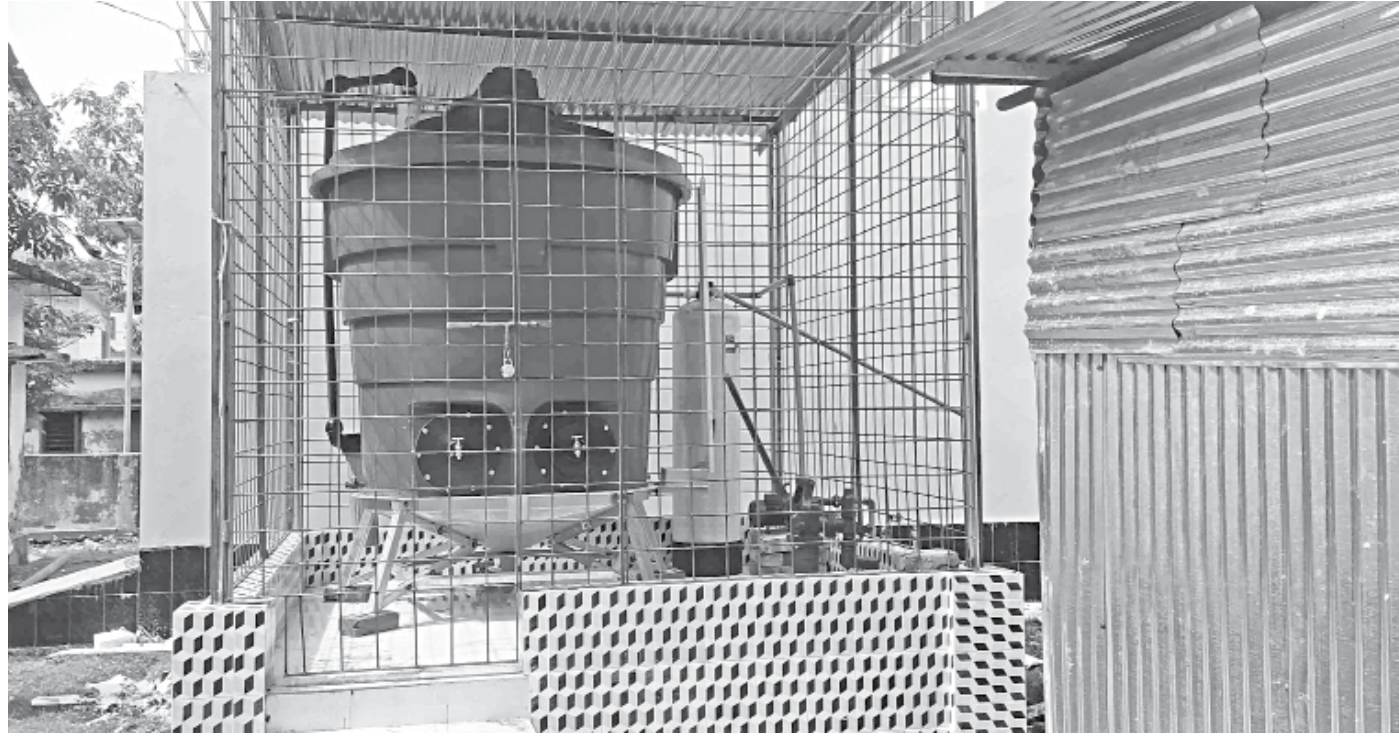
After failures in ensuring safe drinking water for the residents through the application of various methods -- including preserving surface water in conventional water ponds, incorporating sand filtration devices with the ponds and most recently, installation of rainwater harvesting equipment -- the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) this time has come up with nanofiltration technology to treat saline water in the area.

In Morrelganj upazila, Balbhadrapur village resident Shekhar Das said, "The ponds and the sand filters here and in surrounding areas have been out of order for a while. We have been buying a 20-litre water jar for Tk 35 to 40."

Seeing a sign of hope in the new devices, he said excitedly, "We have an acute shortage of drinking water. Installation of these nanofilters will solve our longstanding pure water crisis here."

Under an ambitious pilot project undertaken for Rangamati, Bagerhat and Faridpur, the DPHE, in Bagerhat alone, is installing 75 nanofiltration devices in Sharankhola, Mongla, Chitalmari, Kachua and Morrelganj upazilas where installation of deep tube well is not a viable option.

With an estimated cost of Tk 20.5 lakh, each nanofiltration device is supposed to treat 960 litres of fresh groundwater per hour in four steps, pumped in from a nearby water pond with an electric water pump.



A nanofiltration device awaiting formal inauguration in Morrelganj upazila of Bagerhat.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

According to DPHE, out of the total 75 nanofiltration devices currently being installed in Bagerhat, 18 are being installed in Sharankhola, 14 in Mongla, 9 in Chitalmari, 9 in Kachua and 25 in Morrelganj.

DPHE officials hope that all the devices will be open for public by August 30 this year.

Ripon Das, chairman of Banagram Union Parishad in Morrelganj upazila, said, "Work is underway to install two

nanofilters in Jaipur and Balabhadrapur villages in my union."

He hoped that the new devices will solve the longstanding freshwater crisis for residents in the area.

"Finding fresh drinking water is a severe problem in my area. With the nanofilter being installed here, the water problem in this area will be solved," hoped Selim Sikder, a member of Ward-2 in Badhal Union Parishad under Kachua Upazila.

FM Ismail Hossain, executive engineer of DPHE in Bagerhat, said the pilot project is being carried out in five out of nine upazilas in Bagerhat, some areas in Faridpur and Rangamati to treat groundwater with high salinity and arsenic contamination.

No chemical is used in the filtration process of nanofiltration technology and impure water is turned into safe drinking water through the use of different types of filters, he added.

Elderly couple dies from electrocution

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A man and his wife died from electrocution in Kawkhali upazila of the district yesterday.

The deceased are Azahar Ali Khan, 75, and his wife Renu Begum, 60, of Kathaliya village in the upazila.

The elderly couple's two-year-old grandson Yeasin, who also sustained injury during the incident, is now undergoing treatment at hospital.

Yeasin's father Rezaul Karim said his mother first came in contact with a snapped live electric wire at their courtyard around 11:00am.

Seeing her, Azahar rushed there and tried to save his wife but he too got injured.

At that time, Yasin, who was playing there, also came in contact with his grandparents and sustain injuries.

Hearing screams, neighbors rescued them and took them to Kawkhali Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared Azahar and Renu dead.

Yeasin was later sent to Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital for better treatment, Kawkhali Upazila Nirbahi Officer Khaleda Khatun Rekha said.

Missing youth found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Police recovered the body of a youth from Naobhangachar area in Jamalpur municipality yesterday, six days after he went missing on Thursday.

The deceased, Apu Miah, 22, a tractor driver, was son of Suruj Ali of the area.

Officer in Charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station Salemuazzaman quoted victim's family members as saying that Apu went out of his house on Thursday evening and remained missing since then.

The following day, Apu's father Suruj Ali filed a General Diary (GD) with the police station, he added.

Police detained victim's neighbor Al Amin, 24, son of Kalu Miah, from Tangail's Madhupur upazila on Tuesday, for his alleged involvement in connection with the incident, he said.

During primary interrogation, Al Amin confessed that he stabbed Apu to death and dumped the body near his house on Thursday night.



Doctors and health workers provide services for outdoor patients from inside a four-booth safety chamber at Kalihati Upazila Health Complex in Tangail, maintaining safety measures for all concerned against coronavirus infection.

'Risk-free' medical service from safety chamber

Kalihati UZ hospital makes the arrangement as safeguard against Covid-19

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

A specially designed 'safety chamber' in Tangail's Kalihati Upazila Health Complex, set up for ensuring protection from coronavirus infection during treatment of general patients at the outdoor, has received appreciation from all concerned.

On May 5, following detection of the first Covid-19 patient in the upazila, who had received treatment for a common illness at the health complex a day earlier, the doctors and health workers associated with the patient were sent to quarantine and one of the health workers was later tested Covid-19 positive.

Consequently, the upazila administration decided to ensure highest safety of the doctors and health workers at the hospital so that health services for the general patients are not hampered.

Then the upazila health complex set up the four-booth air-conditioned safety chamber with Tk 5 lakh financial support from the upazila parishad and the new chamber started functioning on May 23.

Ticket providers, doctors and pharmacists involved in the services work from inside the chamber, Dr Saidur Rahman, upazila health and family planning officer in Kalihati, told The Daily Star.

"Here the ticket issued with the patient's information from the first chamber is given to the doctor at the chamber next to him. The doctor, wearing gloves, examines

the patient with stethoscope from inside the chamber, measures the temperature with digital thermal scanner, measures the level of oxygen in the patient's body and pulse through digital pulse oximeter.

The doctor then puts the prescription for the patient to the computer, which is printed in the pharmacy section. The pharmacist provides the printed prescription and medicine to the patient after confirmation of the token number of the patient, he said.

The whole process has been designed to ensure safety for doctors, health workers and service recipients from the risk of coronavirus infection, he added.

During a recent visit to the health complex, it was seen that the doctors were providing health care services to the patients, maintaining safety inside the chamber made of glass.

Expressing satisfaction with the arrangement, Saiful Islam, a patient at the outdoor, said, "The doctors, other staff, as well as patients earlier faced the risk of coronavirus infection here. After setting up of the safety chamber, they feel safe now."

Contacted, Kalihati Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shamim Ara Nipa, said, "The safer healthcare delivery process has been arranged to ensure protection for all concerned. Earlier the upazila administration arranged a special vehicle for the health complex, which moves to the people's doorsteps for collecting samples."

Patients Suffer: Ambulance drivers sued for murder on the run

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Patients face untold sufferings as all the three ambulance drivers of Pirojpur District Hospital and Pirojpur Mother and Child Welfare Centre (MCWC) in the town have gone into hiding after two of them were sued in separate murder cases.

They are Motaleb Sheikh and Kabir Hossain, drivers of Pirojpur District Hospital and Sumon Sheikh, the only ambulance driver of Pirojpur MCWC. Sumon is the son of Motaleb.

Police said on Sunday, Motaleb along with some men allegedly hacked his neighbour Enayet Mollah, 60, of Khanakuniary village in Pirojpur Sadar following an altercation over a piece of disputed land.

Critically injured Enayet was then rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH). He died there early Tuesday.

Later, the deceased's son Al Amin filed a case with Sadar Police Station, accusing 11 named and three to four unnamed people. Motaleb is the main accused in the murder case.

After filing of the case, Motaleb and his son Sumon went into hiding. However, Sumon's name was not mentioned in the case.

They were raiding different areas to arrest the accused, said Nurul Islam Badal, officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station.

On the other hand, another ambulance driver Kabir Hossain of Pirojpur District Hospital has gone into hiding since a murder case was filed with Sadar Police Station against him on June 25. The deceased was Tushar Sheikh, 14, a student of Class IX of Pirojpur Town High School.

On June 24, relatives took Tushar to Pirojpur District Hospital after breaking his right leg. After giving primary treatment, the on duty doctor at the hospital referred him to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH).

But on the way to KMCH, ambulance driver Kabir took the victim to a house in Pirojpur town where a group of fake doctors, led by Sachin Roy, a pharmacist of Pirojpur District Hospital,



Patients at Pirojpur District Hospital suffer as the ambulance drivers sued for murder of two persons are on the run. Two ambulances are parked in the garage of the hospital. PHOTO: STAR

treated the patient. Later, the boy died there.

The following day, the deceased's father Shohag Sheikh filed a murder case with the police station, accusing five named and two to three unnamed people. Ambulance driver Kabir is the prime accused in the case.

Police later arrested two accused-- Ali Imam Antu and Ali Hasan Leon--in the murder case. The arrestees are the sons of late Abdus Salam Modhur, former councillor of Ward no 6 of Pirojpur municipality.

Patients coming to the hospitals in Pirojpur for receiving treatment have been facing untold sufferings since the ambulance drivers have gone

into hiding.

Pankaj Kumar Mistry from Nazirpur upazila said "I came to Pirojpur District Hospital to treat my pregnant wife on Tuesday morning but fell in trouble in the afternoon when we had to leave the hospital for home as there was no ambulance driver at the hospital."

Contacted, Dr Md Hasnat Yousuf Zaki, civil surgeon in Pirojpur, said he has informed the higher authorities about the matter.

However, an ambulance driver from an upazila health complex in Barguna district joined Pirojpur District Hospital yesterday, said the civil surgeon.



Road communication between Fultola and the upazila headquarter remains suspended since Friday morning after an under construction Bailey bridge on a diversion road collapsed at Kapnapahar in Moulvibazar's Juri upazila.

Govt medicines seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Police in a drive seized huge quantity of government medicines from the house of a medicine shop owner in Wireless Colony area of the town on Tuesday.

Earlier on June 25, police detained Sarafat Ali, owner of Town Pharmacy in Puranbazar area, and recovered huge smuggled government medicines from his shop.

According to his confession, police raided his house on Tuesday and recovered more government medicines from there, Officer in Charge of Sadar Police Station Mahfuz Alam said.

Mentionable, on June 23, police arrested Abdur Razzak and his wife Nilufar Yesmin from Driverpara area of the town and recovered smuggled government medicines and medical equipment worth Tk 6 lakh from their possession.

THE BOOK REPORT

Masud Rana, the faulty hero

RASHA JAMEEL

He's mysterious. He's charming. He's strong, skilled and agile. He makes you think of James Bond, or perhaps Jason Bourne.

Except that he's *deshi*. He's Masud Rana. Conceived in the 1960s and tweaked after the Liberation War, Masud Rana featured as a spy of the Bangladesh Counter Intelligence division, formerly a former major of the Bangladeshi army. The books gained a cult following in Bangladesh, so much so that Walther PPK pistols, known to be both Bond's and Rana's preferred weapons, became popular as kids' toys all around Dhaka city.

"I used to live in a small town. A huge part of my childhood was Sheba Prokashoni books—borrowing them or buying them with lunch money from the neighbourhood stationary shops," shares Moneesha Kalamder, 24, Editor-in-Chief at Rantages. "It was hard to get hold of English books, so for most Bangladeshis living outside of big cities—especially during the internet's dial-up days—Sheba opened up a window to the spy/thriller genre and the outside world." That was in the early 2000s.

From 30 years earlier, Masud Rana books were captivating the minds of adolescent readers.

"Three kinds of books were available to us in the late '70s to the early '80s—stories translated from the Russian, literary classics by the likes of Saratchandra, and popular fiction like Feluda," recalls S A Bari, 55, telecommunications businessman who grew up reading Masud Rana in classes 7-10.

"All had the barrier of either difficult language or a foreign setting/characters, even if they were set in the neighbouring Kolkata," Bari explains. "Masud Rana books filled this vacuum with its fluid, easy language and vivid descriptions of European cities."

"Bangladeshi men came to idolise Rana as a symbol of masculinity and escape. Sometimes, it could be 'toxic' masculinity—feelings were best left unexpressed and beautiful women were only accessories, while Rana himself was a two-dimensional figure with little room for moral ambiguity."

"One of the biggest allures lay in its depiction of explicit content," another reader says, "so the adolescent crowd often ventured into this 'forbidden territory.'"

Bangladeshi men came to idolise Rana as a symbol of masculinity and escape. Sometimes, it could be "toxic" masculinity—feelings were best left unexpressed and beautiful women were only regarded as accessories, while Rana himself was a two-dimensional figure with little room for moral ambiguity.

He was no pacifist either. The books' war-favouring sentiments popularised and falsely justified Rana's amoral life as a mercenary-for-hire. In the first chapter of *Durgom Durgom* (1967), for instance, Rana and his sidekicks violently threaten a harmless army captain to gain command at a bungalow in Karachi. They kill Indian soldiers with assault weapons and explosive devices. A soldier, Mahub, challenges the immorality of Rana's plans, only to be called "dudh er baccha" and have his patriotism questioned. Rana insists that Mahub not use his mind and conscience during battle. A weak

monologue then attempts to justify Rana's vigilantism, describing it as a one-man war against the injustices of the world.

By the 2000s, these tropes were starting to lose their grasp on readers as the Western thriller slowly became replaced by the bildungsroman.

Nonetheless, since 2000, 150 books have been published in the Masud Rana series, meaning on average Sheba Prokashoni was churning out books once every two months. This sheer volume would not have been possible without ghostwriters. It was in mid-June this year when this was thrown into debate, when

wealthy businessmen in each respective novel. Both spies meet the antagonist at a beach hotel. Both antagonists share similar pseudonyms, 'Goldfinger' and 'Gold Deer', and the same appearance complete with the distinguishable red hair.

Even some of the dialogues are translated directly from Fleming's text. During a poker game, Bond asks Goldfinger, "Don't you cut for seats? I often find a change of seat helps the luck." In *Shornomrigo*, while playing poker, Rana advises Gold Deer, "Ami dekhechi jayega bodlale onek shomoye bhagyo fireh jaye. Apnara jayega bodle nilei paren."



PHOTO COLLAGE: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

the Bangladesh Copyright Office granted the copyright of 260 Masud Rana books to its ghostwriter Sheikh Abdul Hakim, initiating a much-needed conversation about who should own the actual copyright of a literary work: the "official" writer—in this case Qazi Anwar Hossain, or the ghostwriter?

The Office's decision hinged on a rather loaded legal technicality—for their 39 years of working together, Qazi Anwar Hossain never gave Hakim a contract clearly stating that only the creator would retain the copyright. Nor was Hakim a salaried employee. He would just come over with the manuscript and receive the money in return.

Copyright Registrar Jafor Raja Chowdhury told *The Daily Star* that in the absence of such a contract, the relationship between the two became that of publisher and author, granting Hakim not just the copyright of the books he wrote, but also claim over the royalties. Initially, Hakim had apparently received only a lump sum of Tk 800 for writing each 'khondo' of the book, which rose up to Tk 4,000 per part towards the end of his work with Sheba.

Most Masud Rana books have had six editions, but a lump sum payment means Hakim only received payment for the first edition. He filed his first complaint in 2010, two years after leaving Sheba. The copyright office never investigated until last year.

Yet one wonders whether the issue of copyright is even valid here, given that most of the books are—infamously—plagiarised foreign novels.

Shornomrigo (1967), for example, is more or less a copy of the Ian Fleming classic *Goldfinger* (1959) in everything from the title and premise, to plot holes. Both spies pose as

"Unfortunately, Mr Bond, that is not possible or I could not play. I suffer from an obscure complaint—agoraphobia—the fear of open spaces. I must sit and face the hotel." Goldfinger responds to Bond. In *Shornomrigo*, Gold Deer tells Rana, "Agoraphobia rog acche amar. Chokher shamme khola bistruti shojjho korto pari na. Tai hotel er dike mukh kore boshi shobshomoye. Ulto dike boshle khelte parbo na ami."

Such instances of plagiarism are common in *Shagor Shongom part 2* (1967), inspired Fleming's *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1962), *Gupto Shongket parts 1-2* (2006) copied from Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), *Boro Khuda parts 1-2* (1995) mostly plagiarised from Peter Benchley's *The Beast* (1991), and many others. Ironically enough, the fact that only Hakim could name the books he had borrowed from was the winning argument that granted a verdict in his favour, the Copyright Registrar told *The Daily Star*.

Like its plots which once thrilled three generations of Bangladeshi readers—and in contrast to the nuances they often lacked—this journey of Masud Rana in the real world tells an intriguing story. It reflects the porousness of boundaries, and how stories can, on one hand, travel between cultures, defying codes of ownership and accountability, latching itself only to readers' thirst for imagination and escape. Yet they can also fail to age well, and decades after their time, expose the flaws both in their creation and their consumption.

Rasha Jameel is a writer majoring in microbiology. Email: rasha.jameel@outlook.com. Zyma Islam and Shamsuddoza Sajen contributed to this article.

WORTH A RE-READ

Reading Sontag in the pandemic

What happens to a body when the world around it is wrecked by a disease that has no history?

ISHRAT JAHAN



PHOTO COLLAGE: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

At the time of writing this article, the number of coronavirus cases in Bangladesh crept towards 140,000. This crisis has brought forth an old conundrum: we rarely think of diseases as a part of ourselves, until it becomes personal. Until it creeps into our lives and uncovers cracks in our normalcy which we never knew existed.

Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors*, first written in the late 1970s, provides the words for our current collective struggle. As an American philosopher and political activist, Sontag is best known for her essays that brought in a philosophical approach to modern Western culture in the 1960s-90s. Her essays in this book analyse the myths and metaphors surrounding tuberculosis, cancer, and AIDS,

drawing references from Nietzsche, Camus, and Kant, literary works like *Iliad*, *The Black Swan*, and *Doctor Faustus*, and the life histories of Keats, Katherine Mansfield, Kafka, and Chopin, among others who suffered from tuberculosis (TB) when it was incurable.

She writes with emotion and force, and her arguments come from a personal place of struggle with breast cancer. The first essay in the collection began as a piece for the *New York Times*. Eventually it became a book of two detailed essays written a decade apart, both articulating the core argument that "diseases themselves are, at times, less dangerous than the cultural discourse which creates our responses and behaviours around them."

As the world tries to navigate

the implications of a novel coronavirus, this idea still rings true. Our discourses of the disease do not focus so much on the dangers it has for a body with underlying health conditions or the preventive/curative measures it requires, as it does on accounts of sudden death and dying in wait to access care. It centres on systematic failure particularly in a developing country, where social distancing is hard and vulnerable populations have no social safety nets or sufficient access to quality healthcare.

The relationship that Sontag teases out between our emotions, our lived experiences, and social and political biases with a disease barely understood, resonates. When reflecting on the romanticization of TB in the 19th century, Sontag

quotes painter Marie Bashkirtsev's journal in which consumption gives one "an air of languor which is very becoming". Sontag unpacks how this popular fashion and etiquette of the time viewed looking sickly as glamorous, thus offering a roadmap of how myths and metaphors spread in social and cultural spaces.

It's worth remembering, though, that these essays are personal reflections and are significantly distanced from South Asian realities of illness. They create more questions than they answer, which has a benefit to itself—they challenge us to reflect on the effect of our fears and biases. When Sontag traces the romanticization of TB or the belief that cancer "resulted from feelings of guilt or longing for punishment", it echoes

how the coronavirus is viewed in similar ways—the notion that this is nature's revenge on humankind for their greed and destruction or that one's religion can make them immune or susceptible to the disease.

Diseases take on the form of metaphors perhaps because they are hard to articulate; they are fluid and this characteristic evokes fear, and fear needs something to settle into. Those sick are viewed as taboo and contact with them is feared. Sontag's essays illuminate how myths become powerful in the absence of certainty, and in some cases, construct the edges of our realities.

Ishrat Jahan is a researcher who writes in her spare time. Email: ishrat.jahan1620@gmail.com

THE INTERNATIONAL BOOKER PRIZE 2020: SHORTLIST

Humanity invites its degeneration in 'The Memory Police'

ALIFA MONJUR

On an unnamed island, the townspeople awaken to an unsettling feeling. Something has disappeared from their memories and dropped into a bottomless pit, joining perfume, hats, and birds, to name a few. From today, the townspeople are incapable of remembering anything about this 'something'.

Disappearing objects aren't what makes Yoko Ogawa's *The Memory Police* so dismal, though. Its true tragedy is about people giving up and giving in. Forged about roses? Just gather all proof of them ever existing—photographs, poetry, petals pressed into a journal—and burn them to ashes or hurl them into the raging river. Pain does not exist in oblivion.

To maintain this ignorant fantasy—to 'help' the society—the island's authoritarian controllers, the Memory Police, enforce disappearances. They raid homes for illegally hidden objects, and arrest those immune to the erasing force.

Our unnamed protagonist's mother, who was murdered by the Memory Police, was one such disturbance. After realising that her editor, R, can also remember, our protagonist-

the Rain, has already won every major literary award in Japan. Floating through her gentle storytelling makes it easy to understand the acclaim.

Unlike fiction's traditional nature but like the world it describes, things escalate ever so slightly in Ogawa's novel. You sit at the final page dumbstruck at how things ended this way. This pace fits her narration of social detriment. By not questioning authority, by not staying alert, the townspeople have invited their own destruction, ignoring the chipping until everything was chipped away.

"By detaching meaning from people and objects, Ogawa shows just how one-dimensional people can become without creativity, thought, and knowledge. By not questioning authority, by not staying alert, the townspeople in the novel have invited their own destruction."

It would be easy to class this as political commentary, but Ogawa goes kilometres deeper. Even when R is locked away, he is more alive than our free-living novelist ever was. She goes to work, speaks with neighbours, but her functionality by no means proves her humanity. Her writing does. Towards the beginning of the novel, she and R share this exchange:

"It seems strange that you can still create something totally new like this – just from words – on an island where everything else is disappearing."
"And what will happen if words disappear?"

You see, things can fuse into one's identity and become boundless vehicles of expression over time. What if the pianist forgets how to play? What if the artist forgets about paint brushes? People are what they are in this book. So who would our novelist be without novels?

By detaching meaning from people and objects, Ogawa shows just how one-dimensional people can become without creativity, thought, and knowledge. To her, humanity is the boundless universe inside one's head—the birthplace of art, music, poetry, and human connection. This is where people thrive, and it is what Ogawa urges us to never loosen our grip on. Even if the world forces us to. Even if it means we must go underground.

Alifa Monjur is studying commerce and law in Sydney.



PHOTO COLLAGE: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

THE WORLD AFTER COVID-19

'A home-school approach with feature phones can benefit most vulnerable children'

Dr Safiqul Islam, Director, BRAC Education Programme, shares his thoughts with The Daily Star's Naznin Tithi about the challenges associated with school reopening, ways to recover children's learning loss over the extended break from school, and BRAC's education model for this crisis situation. This interview is part of an interview series by The Daily Star that aims to give readers an idea of what changes to expect in a post-Covid-19 world.

Once the educational institutions reopen, what will be the major challenges for schools? How to recover the learning loss caused by the long study break?

There are a number of challenges associated with school reopening. The supply, quality and use of masks—particularly for children, and especially for those who are poor or in early grades—will be an issue. This will require concrete policy. Design issues need to be sorted out by the educationalists and health experts. If a special design is needed, it would mean production of at least 30 million new masks.

Maintaining safe distance inside the classroom and doing so for a prolonged time is another important matter. In that case, how many children can be accommodated in a classroom? The number will likely vary from one school to another, one classroom to another, and from one grade to another.

For classes conducted in shifts, teachers may need to work for a longer period. The other issue is having proper toilet facilities for both boys and girls as well as for the teaching staff. So all this will require a standard guideline from the ministries and relevant departments which should be properly communicated to the teachers and parents.

Preparing the teachers for classroom teaching after an extended break will no doubt be challenging, but it is essential. Many teachers don't know what percentage of their students have had the opportunity to follow the TV-based lessons. There will be a learning gap between children who are following lessons and children who are not,

particularly those in the rural areas. In other words, the learning gap among children will be considerably higher compared to the pre-Covid-19 period.

The challenges would be much more difficult at the early grade level. With barely any class experience in the pre-pandemic period, these children would have a six months' learning loss to make up for (if classes resume from September/October, that is). How will they be able to complete this academic year and move onto the next grade? Even if some kind of remedial classes are conducted to address the learning loss, will it really work for the students of early grades, or will it only work for those in the higher grades?

Ideally, every school should make a quick assessment of the learning loss and develop a grade-specific response plan. However, a good way to go will be a combination of short, medium and long term planning.

How would you evaluate the government's response so far to ensure education to the 40 million students now stuck at home?

School closure was essential and the government acted pretty quickly to start its TV-based lesson initiative. A number of private TV channels stepped up to extend similar services to the children. We know that some of the channels are also conducting remote classes through internet and online platforms like Zoom, Hangout and so on. These are very appreciable initiatives. However, questions remain about the reach and effectiveness of such methods.

Available information suggests that almost 62 percent of the children have access to TV. However, only 25 percent of them watch it for learning purposes. A study by BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) also shows that children's self-study time per day declined from 185 minutes in the pre-pandemic period to 115 minutes during the pandemic, and is positively associated with parental education.



Dr Safiqul Islam

The education budget maintains Bangladesh's record for having one of the lowest allocations in South Asia and among developing countries in terms of share of GDP and of the national budget. Why is our budget for education so low even after the damage done by Covid-19?

Some argue that it is the education sector's failure to convince the government to prioritise it, while others point at capacity issues related to utilising a larger budget. Some point out that if the private/family expenditure on education is added, then the total allocation would be higher. One can also say that lack of proper research on education and dialogue and advocacy with the policymakers is responsible for constraining our efforts to realise the need for increased allocation. This year, people expected a higher allocation for education inclusive of additional amounts that would be required to reopen schools, to accelerate technological integration across all important areas in the sector, and finally to give incentives so as to keep children in schools in the post-pandemic

period. The surcharge that the government added on phone/internet bills in this budget can be counterproductive to technological advancement in education, and by extension to the dreams for a Digital Bangladesh.

You have been leading Brac's education programme for many years now. Tell us about your experience of working with the children of most vulnerable sections of society during this crisis.

During the crisis, in order to address the students' inaccessibility of the government's televised lessons, we came up with a Home School approach through the use of feature phones. Curriculum supplementation has been made by adding content such as psychosocial elements and preventive measures against coronavirus. Teachers have been trained virtually to deliver lessons in a group of 3-4 children, preferably from the same neighbourhood. Classes are held 1-2 times a week for 15-20 minutes. This is far from adequate, but it at least helps children to be connected to the world of learning. Teachers who come from the same community can be accessed if a child needs additional support. Special attention is given to disabled children. Most parents are relieved to see that children are connected with the teachers. Children are also happy, because it is almost fun for them to learn through a phone. It is a new experience for them. However, there are challenges such as the call time cost that is equivalent to almost Tk 50 for a 20-minute class for 3-4 children in a group. There is evidence that many parents forget to leave the phone for schooling. Quite often, teachers need to give them a heads-up.

Attention is given to virtual monitoring. Progress and problems are shared with the headquarters staff through virtual meetings twice a week.

Is online education the ultimate solution? Is it practically feasible for Bangladesh?

Technology is important but not a panacea. It will only be helpful and rewarding if it is

properly aligned and blended with the inside-classroom and outside-classroom learning assignments. Children and teachers need to be prepared to use technology. A tablet, or a smart phone, or a projector can facilitate and add value to lesson plan development, data management, learning outcome related analysis, and performance of each child in their interest areas. Technology can immensely benefit teachers' development. However, it is equally important to consider the need for technological penetration across the country, stable services and costs.

How do you see the future of our education sector post-Covid-19? Should there be a rethinking in how we teach children, what we teach them, and what education should entail to create well-balanced, productive, innovative human beings?

A curriculum that would be based on the lessons learned from the pre-pandemic period to the mid-pandemic new normal. Things that didn't work well in the pre-pandemic situation include poor learning outcome of a large number of children, inadequate provision for children engagement in the learning process, low level of analysis of teacher learning, overemphasis on textbook materials, under-emphasis on creativity and art and craft, insufficient library facilities, etc. The quality divide we had in the pre-pandemic situation is also not something desirable for Bangladesh going forward. The BIGD study showed that our children have problems with using waking hours during Covid-19. They have to be prepared for the unforeseen challenges that may come our way once again after this pandemic is over. We are living in a vulnerable and uncertain world, so it is important that, through education, we help our children to grow and develop as responsible human beings, leaning on empathy, collective work, collective response, courage and ability to cope with challenges. We need a better world and we need to do our part to contribute to that world.

Reimagining an inclusive society



On March 12, 2020, the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine organised a discussion titled "Discrimination and Racism During Coronavirus Outbreak". There, Jabez Lam (Manager, Hackney Community Services) mentioned that the centre had received reports from the Chinese and East Asians in London about abuse and harassment since the Chinese government announced the lockdown of Wuhan city from January 23. Since then, there have been many shocking incidents of physical and verbal abuse that people from the Chinese background faced in the United Kingdom, the USA and many other countries across the world. They suffered discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in educational institutions, public transports, workplaces, etc. Many people wrongly associated the Chinese with Covid-19, blaming them for the disease outbreak.

Discrimination and stigmatisation have often been common during epidemics. For example, gay communities were stigmatised as a source of HIV infection for a long time. It took decades of campaign to address the misperceptions. People with HIV/AIDS suffered from rights violations in terms of employment, travel, insurance, immigration, etc. In 2000, when I went to South Africa for the first time to engage in a research project on HIV/AIDS, some people back home were concerned that I might get infected. Their fear was due to the rumours about deliberate attempts by some to infect others with HIV for which there was no evidence.

The Chinese were also considered a source of infection during the SARS outbreak, while Africans faced discrimination during the Ebola crisis. In each epidemic, people try to find an "other" group to blame for "causing" the disease while the focus should be on the disease or virus itself.

In Bangladesh, there have been a number of incidents of stigmatisation and discrimination during the present pandemic. People in some neighbourhoods resisted establishing medical facilities for treatment of Covid-19 in their areas. Healthcare professionals and Covid-19 patients faced eviction threats. Some were forced to self-isolate by flatmates while they had common cold. Many do not feel comfortable in disclosing their condition when they test positive for Covid-19 due to fear of discrimination. These are just a few examples.

Why should we be concerned about discrimination during a public health crisis? Firstly, it is a serious violation of human rights. Moreover, it affects the prevention and control efforts. For example, many people felt hesitant to go for voluntary counselling and testing due to the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, and that happens in case of other infectious disease outbreaks also. Jonathan Mann led the WHO's Global Program on AIDS at the early stage of the epidemic and was the first director of the Francois Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University. He explained that the groups that suffered marginalisation, discrimination, and stigma (e.g. gay people, injecting drug users, sex workers) were at increased risk of HIV infection and they face further marginalisation after getting infected. Marginalisation is at the root of many epidemics, including Covid-19. In several countries including the United Kingdom and the USA, people from Black and ethnic minority groups have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19, which can be tied to the structural inequalities,

racism and discrimination they have endured for many years.

While faced with a deadly disease, people try to cope by blaming someone outside their own social circle. Mass media plays an important role in disseminating information during a public health emergency. The way the media frames a narrative as well as the images it uses influence public perceptions. Today, social media gives a platform to almost everyone to share what they want to and thus,

prejudice against certain groups, which gets amplified during a crisis, and this leads to racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

I think our policymakers should recognise the discrimination during any epidemic and confront it. They need to debunk myths and dispel rumours circulated through various channels, design effective public health communication strategies, and implement rigorous awareness campaigns. The responsibility of the media in terms of



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Having the right legal and policy frameworks in place is vital to a society where all men, women and children can realise their potential.

in many cases, misinformation spreads very quickly. Covid-19 is a new virus. Various ideas about its origin and other aspects have been circulated through different channels—each person picked up the story that they wanted to believe in. Many people have inherent

presenting the issue is very important. Each citizen also needs to be conscious and make sure they don't believe in or help spread fake news. They have to be media-literate and identify reliable sources of scientific information to avoid unnecessary fear and

panic.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed many issues related to every society ranging from inequality to what happens within households. But let us not forget about the discriminatory attitudes towards various groups of people in our societies in everyday life. Due to my work in Bangladesh, I have met families who have for years hidden their child with disability inside their home, as they did not want to face criticism from their neighbours. Haven't we all heard insensitive jokes and comments about people with mental health issues, ethnic minority groups, refugees, etc.? The list goes on.

Having the right legal and policy frameworks in place is vital to a society where all men, women and children can realise their potential. But we need attitudinal changes and should learn to respect everyone despite their identity including health status. Only then shall we be able to create an inclusive society that believes in the inherent dignity of each human being.

Covid-19 has given each of us an opportunity to reflect on various aspects of our lives and the world. At a personal level, we felt very vulnerable, and we have also witnessed genuine compassion and a renewed sense of community in many places. To what extent our politics, economy, society and environment will change as a result of this collective experience is yet to be seen. Whether we are going to have a fairer, greener and more just world will depend on the macro-level socioeconomic policies and decisions on investment priorities. Will we remember our shared humanity, be more empathetic to fellow human beings, and become better prepared to protect their rights in any situation including future pandemics?

Laila Khondkar is an international development worker.

QUOTABLE Quote section featuring a quote by Elie Wiesel (1928-2016), American author. 'Wherever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must - at that moment - become the center of the universe.'

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH section containing crossword clues for 'ACROSS' and 'DOWN' and a list of 'YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS' including words like OPERA, STAIN, UGH, ROE, SORTA, ADDON, TEST, ONTO, SYRIA.

BEETLE BAILEY section featuring a cartoon strip by Mort Walker where a man asks a woman for a birthday card and she replies 'I'll write you a list'.

BABY BLUES section featuring a cartoon strip by Kirkman & Scott where a man says 'I can't believe you took mom's phone while she's in the shower!' and another character says 'It's like something I would do!'.

GRAPE VINE



GOLPO NOI

Based on the pandemic, a drama, *Golpo Noi*, is being directed by Chayanika Chowdhury. The leads for the drama are Zakia Bari Mamo and Anisur Rahman Milon. The cast also includes Irfan Sajjad, Mili Bashar, Masum Bashar and Abul Hayat. The entire cast for this project completed the shooting from home. Mamo said, "The drama is based on few stories from the current crisis which will surely leave a mark on the hearts of the audience. I have not worked on this type of project before. Everyone worked for this project from their residence." According to the director, the drama will be aired on July 3rd on NTV.

Apurba's hope to be back on screen

It has been four months since popular actor Apurba last stood in front of a camera. Since the announcement of the shut-down, the actor hasn't been doing any shooting. Many actors are returning to work maintaining all safety protocols. However, Apurba decided not to return to work immediately. He said, "As of yet, I have not scheduled any shooting. I am still deciding on when to return to work as I feel safe staying home during this time. However, I hope to take on projects from next month." Apurba and his son, Aayash, share their birthdays on the same day: June 29. The father-son duo celebrated and wished each other using social media.



TANJIN TISHA on youtube

Talented television actor Tanjin Tisha has been indoors since March 18. The actor said, "I am spending time doing different activities at home. I help with household chores and even try cooking. I opened a *YouTube* channel where I have been uploading short video clips for my fans and followers. I received good responses for those videos. I plan to upload new contents for the channel."



Talented actors Siam Ahmed, Bonna Mirza and dancer Ridy Sheikh have been staying indoors and doing different activities to remain healthy and fit. In this interview with *Star Showbiz*, the artists shared what they miss the most during quarantine and what they have been doing for their physical and mental health.

CENTRE STAGE



Did you make any indoor dance covers during this lockdown?
Yes, I have actually done a lot of indoor dancing recently. I also made quite a few dance covers as well.

How are you maintaining your dance activities while at home?
I have converted a room in my house into a dance studio by installing mirrors which helps me practise. I also love dancing on my rooftop sometimes. I am currently trying to be more fitness-oriented. So, besides my regular online dance lessons, I am also planning on introducing, for instance, a cardio-dance lesson to help people stay fit during this lockdown. Many people are looking for alternative options to be more active, and I believe it will be beneficial as it boosts your immunity system, which is especially essential during this time.

Do you regularly practise dancing?
Yes, I regularly practise dancing. Since I am on social media, I often get requests from my fans to do dance routines or teach one online. I will even conduct an *Instagram* dance class today. Besides that, I have launched online dance classes on my website where people can choose their preferred lessons and apply for them. So, I am always in touch with people and can simultaneously keep

up with my dancing.
Did you do any live performance or do you plan to do a live performance for your audience?

I did a live performance on Pohela Boishakh from my home. The *Instagram* dance lesson will also be live. Besides dancing, is there any other activity or hobby that you have taken up recently?
I have actually started making videos on *TikTok* during this lockdown. Initially, I underestimated the types of content available as I was only exposed to the typical South Asian videos. But, I later decided to explore myself as a content creator to come up with new and unique video ideas.

Do you have a message for the readers?
I would advise the readers to focus on their mental health as this pandemic has taken a toll on everyone. It is important to be active and optimistic rather than spending the day unproductively. I, myself, try to spend my free time efficiently by reading books, learning something new or coming up with new ideas, so that I don't regret it later. It is always important to try and make use of what you have.

.....
Shreya Shomoyeeta

Bonna Mirza

How are you staying positive during the pandemic?
It is hard to stay positive during this pandemic, but since I have a comfortable life, I can stay home and spend time with my family. Those of us in the middle to upper class can still maintain their lives during this pandemic. The people who are most affected are the lower-class people who have to work daily to earn money for food. They are the ones who are in the worst state now. With their daily struggles to earn money for food, they probably don't even get the time to think about how to stay positive. So, I will say that in these current times, their struggles are much different and more difficult than our ones.

Nowadays, all we hear about is how things are getting worse. How do you keep yourself positive?

I don't have any way to keep myself positive. I have accepted that if I happen to die, I will die and if I can live then I will live. What I find ironic is that even though I don't check about COVID-19 updates, I have to provide news about the virus to people as my work asks for me to do so.

Do you have any message for the readers about how they can take care of their mental health during this pandemic?

I think that everyone should take a look at other people around them. There are people who are suffering a lot now. If those people can go on with their lives, so can we.

.....
Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub

PHOTO: RIDY SHEIKH OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGE



Siam Ahmed



How have you been spending quarantine?
I spend my time mainly just reading books, watching movies and writing stories. I also have been working on my next films.

Have you learnt any new skills while in quarantine?
I have learnt to control my anger.

What are you missing the most during quarantine?
I miss acting the most.

What is the first thing that you will do once this ends?

I would like to start working on my projects as soon as the quarantine ends. Many people are not being able to earn a living due to this, so I would like to start my projects so that they can get paid.

Do you have any message for the readers?
We all have to face this huge crisis together, so it is better for us all that we stay at home. To keep our families safe, we must all remain at home.

.....
Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub

AARYA

Aarya is a Hindi crime-drama series, aired on June 19, 2020 on *Hotstar*. It was created and directed by Ram Madhvani, Sandeep Modi and Vinod Rawat, produced under the banners of *Ram Madhavani Films* and *Endemol Shine Group*, distributed by *Star India*, and stars Sushmita Sen, Chandrachur Singh and Sikandar Kher, among others. The show, which is based on Pieter Bart Korthuis' *Penoza*, follows the life of Aarya, as her life becomes a mess.



ALEX RIDER



Alex Rider is a spy thriller web television series on *Amazon Prime Video*, and has been based on the eponymous novel series by Anthony Horowitz. It has been created by Guy Burt, directed by Andreas Prochaska and Christopher Smith, produced by Mat Chaplin and Angie Daniell, with Otto Farrant in the lead. It tells the story of a teenager who is recruited by the MI6 and follows his adventures. It was originally released on 4 June 2020.

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Shreya Shomoyeeta & Amina Hossain

POPCORN HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some binge worthy movie and series you can spend your time watching while you stay at home social distancing, keeping yourself, as well as others, safe.



The Sinner

The Sinner is a crime-drama anthology series, following the life of a detective as he investigates mysterious crimes and uncovers many secrets. It was developed by Derek Simonds, produced by Donna E. Bloom, distributed by *NBCUniversal Television Distribution*, and stars Bill Pullman, Jessica Biel and Matt Bomer, among others. The series, which is based on *The Sinner* by Petra Hammesfahr, was first released on August 2, 2017, with its third season released on February 6, 2020.

GUESS THE CELEBRITY

Guess who the celebrity is?
HINT: SHE PUT A BEAUTY TO SLEEP



ANSWER FROM THE PREVIOUS ISSUE:
"BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH"



4-LANE DHAKA-BHANGA EXPRESS HIGHWAY BUILT WITH BSRM XTREME

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT BSRM



GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES

World's Largest VRM

SHAH CEMENT

Giving it all to others in pandemic

Mymensingh's poet distributes food, donates blood, arranges burial or cremation of the dead

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Ali Yusuf is always there to lend a helping hand. The 49-year-old poet from Mymensingh has been tirelessly performing humanitarian activities since the coronavirus pandemic hit the country. Ali is the coordinator of one of the three teams of 25 volunteers who bury or cremate deceased Covid-19 patients in Mymensingh city, said Md Anwar Hossain, chief executive officer of Mymensingh City Corporation, who supervises the work.



Hafez Mohammad Emdadul Haque and freedom fighter Bimol Pal lead the other two teams, and volunteers work in groups of five by rotation, Anwar said, terming them as "frontline soldiers".

Till date, the groups have performed the burial of eight Muslim and cremation of one Hindu coronavirus patients, and Ali was present in all nine instances, said Mohammad Rajon, who volunteered at one burial.

"Volunteers led by Ali distributed relief materials to 600 families and powder milk to 400 poor children in the city. They also provided 100 families with special food during Eid-ul-Fitr," said Rajon.

Rajon has also been working with Ali in distributing relief among the poor since April.

During one relief work, the volunteers once came across a seven-year-old boy, Abdul Ahad, who was suffering from heart disease. His van-puller

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



The swelling Jamuna devouring a flood protection embankment at Shubhogachha village in Sirajganj's Kazipur upazila yesterday. People who live near the embankment have started dismantling their homes and moving elsewhere fearing that they would be marooned or their homes destroyed.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

FIRE SERVICE

Divers stretched to their limits

Get very brief rest during rescue operations due to manpower shortage

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

A diver has to take a break for about three hours after working under water for an hour.

But the members of the fire service diving unit, which rescues accident victims, get a break for only 20 to 30 minutes.

Abul Khayer, team leader of divers of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said they endure the workload as they cannot just sit back and watch people crying for help to find out their missing relatives. "We are suffering from a shortage of manpower. That's why we have to shoulder the extra burden to continue rescue operations," Khayer told The Daily Star. He has won several awards, including the prime minister's award for showing courage during rescue operations.

According to officials, the fire service diving unit had started its journey in 1990 with only 25 divers. It has sent many letters to the home ministry over the years, requesting an increase in the number of divers.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Trials shall be held



Bangabandhu addressing a mammoth public meeting in Kushtia on July 2, 1972.

July 2, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

INDO-PAK ACCORD SIGNED

Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed an agreement for peace today. The agreement is described as a decisive breakthrough towards the objective of a durable peace. The agreement has to be ratified by both countries.

It is reported that Indira Gandhi talked to Bangladesh Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman over the telephone yesterday night. Indira Gandhi is understood to have informed Bangabandhu of the trend of Indo-Pak talks and also Pakistan's view on recognition of Bangladesh and normalisation of relationships between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

BANGABANDHU VISITS KUSHTIA

Bangabandhu today reiterates his firm resolve to try the war criminals on the soil of Bangladesh. Addressing a big meeting in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



A deadly mistake

Girl dies after being mistakenly given acid instead of water

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A 5-year-old girl died after drinking water mixed with acid when she asked for some water at a jewellery shop in Dinajpur's Nawabganj upazila.

Police arrested the jeweller Md Saiful Islam, 34. Saiful mistakenly poured from a bottle of water mixed with Nitric acid, which jewellers use to purify gold, when the girl, Meftaul Zannat, 5, from the upazila, asked for some water.

Morsheda Begum, 34, took her youngest daughter Meftaul to Soma Jewellers in Nawabganj bazaar yesterday noon to buy some gold ornaments.

Meftaul's grandmother Razia Khatun was also there.

At the shop, the girl was playing around and, at one point, asked her mother for some water.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Japan city bans smartphone while walking



AFP, Yamato

A Tokyo suburb yesterday imposed Japan's first ban on a habit seen around the world: pedestrians glued to their phone screens while walking, sometimes dangerously oblivious to their surroundings.

Visitors arriving at the railway station in Yamato City were greeted with banners announcing the new prohibition, which applies to all foot journeys around the neighbourhood's public roads, squares and parks.

"Using smartphones while walking is banned. Please operate your smartphones after you stop walking," a recorded female voice cautioned travellers.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Miseries pile up for flood-hit people

Many yet to get relief in Kurigram, Lalmonirhat

STAR REPORT

Flood situation has worsened in several districts and caused sufferings to people as their houses, croplands, ponds and livestock have been damaged.

Fish farmers in the districts are in fear of incurring huge losses this season as their fishes have been washed away after the ponds were inundated.

Many flood-hit people are yet to get any relief or food assistance from the government and passing days with starvation.

In Sunamganj, some 2,846 ponds -- covering around 529 hectares lands -- were washed away by the flash flood, causing damage worth around Tk 21.45 crore to the fish farmers, according to local fisheries officers.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

10 more die with Covid-19 symptoms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Ten people have died with Covid-19 symptoms since Monday in Cumilla.

Dr Mukta Rani, assistant surgeon at Cumilla Medical College Hospital, said of the dead seven were males, two females and one child.

All of them, aged between eight and 80, were admitted to the hospital with cold, cough, fever, chest pain and breathing issues, she added.

She also said that samples were collected from the patients' bodies for Covid-19 tests.

A total of 105 patients were admitted to the isolation unit of the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PRAYER TIMING JULY 2

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-10 12-45 5-00 6-55 7-17
JAMAAT 4-45 1-15 5-15 7-00 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Riot police use pepper spray toward journalists as protesters gathered for a rally against a new national security law in Hong Kong yesterday, on the 23rd anniversary of the city's handover from Britain to China.

PHOTO: AFP

HONG KONG'S NEW SECURITY LAW

Hundreds of protesters arrested

Pro-Beijing politicians welcome city's 'second return' to China amid condemnations from West

AGENCIES

Hong Kong police fired water cannon and tear gas and arrested more than 370 people yesterday as protesters took to the streets in defiance of sweeping security legislation introduced by China to snuff out dissent.

Beijing unveiled the details of the much-anticipated law late on Tuesday after weeks of uncertainty, pushing China's freest city and one of the world's most glittering financial hubs on to a more authoritarian path.

As thousands of protesters gathered for an annual rally marking the anniversary of the former British colony's handover to China in 1997, riot police used pepper spray and fired pellets as they made arrests after crowds spilled into the streets chanting "resist till the end" and "Hong Kong independence".

"I'm scared of going to jail but for justice I have to come out today. I have to stand up," said one 35-year-old man who gave his name as Seth.

Police said they had made more than 300 arrests for illegal assembly and other offences, with nine involving violations of the new law.

The law punishes crimes of secession, subversion,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5