

'BOOK OF FALSEHOODS'

White House cries foul as US president's niece in her book describes him as a lying narcissist
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BANGLADESH UPDATE

3,489
New cases in 24hrs

1,72,134
Total cases

2,197
Deaths

80,838
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

548,497
Deaths

12,038,222
Total cases

Borrowing from banks doubles

109pc rise in FY20 mainly due to sluggish revenue collection; experts say huge govt borrowing to shrink pvt sector credit

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The government borrowed a staggering amount from banks last fiscal year mainly due to the ongoing economic crisis brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, a development that is poised for a macroeconomic imbalance in the country.

The government's borrowing increased 109 percent year-on-year to Tk 72,246 crore in FY 2019-20, which is all-time high given a single year.

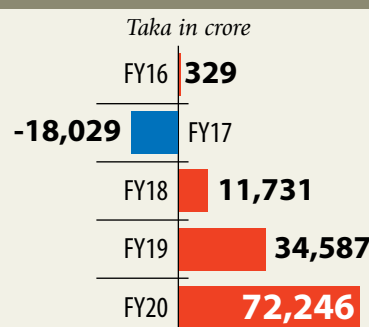
Revenue collection had faced sluggishness since the inception of last fiscal year, which also compelled the government to borrow heavily from banks.

The situation got much worse since April after the government enforced a nationwide shutdown to tackle the spread of the coronavirus.

Against the backdrop, the government borrowed Tk 29,020 crore from banks and non-banks in the last quarter of FY20 to meet its expenditure, according to data from the central bank.

The massive government borrowing from banks has already dealt a big blow to the private sector as lenders consistently

GOVT'S BANK BORROWING IN LAST 5 YEARS



showed a reluctant attitude towards disbursing loans to the arena, experts said.

The private sector credit growth stood at 8.86 percent in May, down from 12.16 percent a year ago, show BB data.

The government had initially set a borrowing target of 47,364 crore in its budget for fiscal 2019-20, but the poor

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A lush vegetation appears to be reclaiming the stabling area at Kamalapur rail station in the capital. With a fraction of the fleet of trains operating after over two months of shutdown, the pre-pandemic hustle and bustle has yet to return to the terminal. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



JS seat will be vacant if he is a Kuwait citizen

PM on MP Shahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If Laxmipur-2 MP Mohammad Shahid Islam Papul is found to be a Kuwaiti citizen, his seat will be declared vacant, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said in the parliament.

"We are talking with the Kuwait government whether he [Papul] is a citizen of Kuwait or not...we'll look into it. If he's a citizen of Kuwait, then we will have to vacant his seat because law will take its own course," Hasina said.

She said this while taking part in an unscheduled debate initiated by BNP lawmaker Hanunur Rashid. He raised question of citizenship of Papul, who was

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REGENT: A HOSPITAL GONE ROGUE

They allowed it, now out to disown it

WASIM BIN HABIB, TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

The health services division of the health ministry knew that Regent Hospital's licence had expired years ago but it still went ahead and signed a deal in early March for treating Covid-19 patients there.

The division in its Tuesday's circular to close the hospital's Uttara and Mirpur branches for issuing fake test reports said that the hospital did not renew its licence despite several reminders.

Sources said the health minister and government high-ups was present during the ceremony for signing the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Regent Hospital to turn it into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital.

But now the ministry is asking the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) to explain as to why the contract was signed when the hospital's licence had expired in 2014.

Abdul Mannan, secretary of health service division, told The Daily Star last night, "We have sent a letter to the DGHS asking for their explanation about signing the deal with the hospital when the

licence had expired ... and who signed the contract? Let's see what explanation they give us. We will decide after that."

Prof Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the DGHS, declined to comment.

"I have stopped talking to journalists directly. We have assigned two of our officials to talk to journalists," he told this newspaper yesterday evening.

Aminul Hasan, director of hospitals and clinics at the DGHS, said, "We did it after the high ups from the ministry asked me to allow Regent Hospital. We just executed the order."

He claimed that they had no option but to sign the contract with the hospital as initially they struggled to arrange treatment facilities for Covid-19 patients.

"Only Sazeda Foundation and Regent Hospital authorities came forward at that time," he said.

He said they had signed the agreement on the condition that "Regent Hospital will renew its licence as soon as possible".

Asked about actions they had taken, he said, "We issued two letters asking them to renew their licence. The first letter was sent on April 1 and the second one in May. We

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FAKE COVID CERTIFICATES

Public health, country's image abroad at stake

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The fake Covid-19 tests have not only posed a risk to public health but also put the Bangladeshi expatriates in trouble.

The risks of transmission multiplies when the tests are faked because an infected person may mingle with their family members and others in the country and beyond, experts say.

Many expatriates might face problems returning abroad if other countries have a poor impression of Bangladesh's testing and overall handling of the pandemic.

Japan, Italy and South Korea have already restricted the entry of Bangladeshis after some of them, with documents certifying that they didn't have the coronavirus, tested positive after they arrived in those countries.

The fraudulence came to fore more prominently after a mobile court on July 7 sealed off Regent Hospital on charges of issuing fake Covid-19 test reports and taking money illegally from Covid-19 patients.

Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam, who led the mobile court, told The Daily Star that the hospital authorities issued more than 10,000 Covid-19 test results.

Around 4,200 samples were tested at different government labs, but they threw away the rest of the samples, forged the reports and handed those to people.

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Infection rate still hovers around 20pc

It was 21-23pc last month; 46 die, 3,489 infected in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While the entire month of June saw the infection rate hover between 21 and 23 percent, July sees no improvement.

The current infection rate is 22.26 percent, said Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), during the daily coronavirus briefing yesterday.

Alongside amped-up testing from mid-May, the month of June had seen the infection rate jump. A whole week into July, the only difference lies in decimal points.

A total of 15,672 samples were tested across the country in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday, Dr Nasima said. Of them, 3,489 tested positive for Covid-19.

The total number of infections in the country is 172,134 and the overall infection rate so far stands at 19.36 percent, she said.

In addition, 46 people died from coronavirus infection in those 24 hours, Dr

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N95 MASK PROBE ACC quizzes officials of two firms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission is now cross-checking procurement-related documents and statements made by JMI Hospital Requisite Manufacturing Ltd Chairman Abdur Razzak before it over allegations of supplying poor quality masks, PPEs, and other medical equipment to the government.

Yesterday, ACC Director Mir Md Zainul Abedin Shebly separately quizzed Razzak and Motiur Rahman, coordinator (medical team) of Toma Construction Ltd, for about six hours to glean information from them.

On July 1, the ACC director had summoned Razzak, Motiur and chairman of Elan Corporation Aminul Islam Amin to appear before it for interrogation over the allegations.

Aminul, already accused in a case filed by the

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Rickshaws going against traffic in front of the Bangabhaban during the busy morning hour yesterday. One would think that the most basic traffic rule is enforced at least around the presidential palace.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

NORTH MACEDONIA

144 Bangladeshi migrants rescued from truck

AP, Skopje

Authorities in North Macedonia found 211 migrants, including 144 Bangladeshis, packed into a truck near the country's southern border with Greece during a routine check on a regional road, police said Tuesday.

A border patrol stopped the truck about midnight on Monday near the town of Gevgelija, and found the migrants including the Bangladeshis and 67 Pakistanis. Among the rescued migrants, there were also 63 children.

The truck driver, a 27-year-old Macedonian national identified by police only by his initials EP, was arrested.

The migrants were detained and transferred to a shelter transit centre in Gevgelija pending deportation back to Greece.

The Greek border with North Macedonia was closed earlier this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, but trafficking networks remain active in the area, ferrying migrants who make their way from Turkey into Greece and then head north toward more prosperous countries in the European Union's centre and north.

On June 22, 64 Bangladeshi migrants have been found in a truck on a highway near North Macedonia's border with Greece.

The driver evaded arrest during the inspection late Monday near Strumica in the country's southeast. In a statement Tuesday, police gave no other details about the migrants.

The migrants were detained and transferred to a holding site in border town of Gevgelija, pending deportation to Greece.

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BANGLADESHI WORKERS IN MIDDLE EAST

Diplomatic efforts on to stop repatriation

PM tells parliament; says authorities corrected list of poor families for cash assistance amid pandemic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government made diplomatic efforts to stop different Middle Eastern countries sending Bangladeshi migrant workers home.

Responding to a query from ruling Awami League lawmaker Benjir Ahmed from Dhaka-20, she informed parliament that Bangladesh was under diplomatic pressure following the novel coronavirus outbreak over repatriation of Bangladeshi migrant workers from those countries.

But the government made diplomatic efforts to ease the pressure, the leader of the House said.

Hasina said different countries were sending back migrant workers who went to the host countries through illegal means and those involved in crimes.

She said she has already sent letters to several heads of state or government of the Middle Eastern countries as part of her government's diplomatic efforts.

The foreign and expatriates welfare ministries have taken necessary measures, including contacting different Middle Eastern countries, in this regard, the PM added.

She said her government has sent medical equipment and pharmaceutical items to different countries as part of its "food and medical diplomacy".

Different Middle Eastern countries have sent back over two lakh migrant workers to India, but only 22,000 Bangladeshi expatriate workers have returned home so far, the premier told the House.

"The number of the returnee Bangladeshi migrant workers is still low due to timely diplomatic initiatives taken by the government."

Hasina said her government continued diplomatic efforts so that expatriate Bangladeshis could continue in jobs in their respective host countries.

She asked the manpower recruiting agencies to send Bangladeshi workers abroad after proper verification of their jobs and employers.

Referring to measures taken for the expatriate workers, the PM said Bangladesh has proposed at the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to set up a fund for the expatriates.

Besides, the government has taken measures to provide incentives and loans to the returnees, she added.

About the recent killing of several Bangladeshis in Libya, Hasina said the government was taking appropriate actions against the recruiting agencies who had sent them to Libya.

"Bangladeshi migrant workers will not be in danger abroad if the recruiting agencies export manpower by following proper rules."

The PM said the people of the country should be aware of illegal migration.

She told the House that her government was taking stern actions against the recruiting agencies responsible for illegal migration.

Replying to another query from AL MP AKM Rahmatullah from Dhaka-11, the PM said the role of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the Language Movement was erased from the history.

"Many people, including intellectuals, used to forget to mention in their writings about the role of the Father of the Nation in the Language Movement," she said.

"Attempts were made to completely erase the name of the Father of the

JS seat will be vacant

FROM PAGE 1
arrested by Kuwait CID on June 6 and sent to jail after interrogation.

Papul, managing director and chief executive officer of Marafie Kuwaitia Group, is accused of human trafficking, money laundering and bribing.

During the quizzing by Kuwait's Public Prosecution, he confessed bribing Kuwaiti officials millions of dollars for getting job contracts and job demands for recruiting foreign workers, mostly Bangladeshis.

Workers alleged they had to pay Tk 7-9 lakh each for jobs in Kuwait but were paid lower than that was contracted for and even left jobless. Some Kuwaiti officials have also been detained in connection with the case.

In her brief speech at the parliament, Hasina informed the House that the government also launched investigation against Papul in the country.

The premier mentioned that Papul in the last parliamentary election in 2018 had sought nomination from Awami League, but she did not give him nomination for Laxmipur-2 constituency.

"We had left the seat to Jatiya Party. But Jatiya Party's Noman [Mohammad Noman] didn't participate in the election and that man [Papul] won in the national polls as an independent MP," Sheikh Hasina said.

She also said Papul somehow made his wife MP from a seat reserved for women. "But we didn't do that."

Jatiya Party has recently expelled Mohammad Noman, a former MP of Laxmipur-2, allegedly for remaining inactive in the party as he supported Papul of his constituency in the 2018 election in exchange of a huge amount of money.

Hanunur Rashid cited newspapers quoting Foreign Minister AK Abdul

Nation from the history and propaganda was carried out against Bangabandhu after assassinating him in 1975."

Hasina said she has already initiated the process to publish a book on the secret reports of the Pakistani intelligence agency on Bangabandhu so that the country's people can know the true history of Bangladesh.

Responding to a supplementary question from Jatiya Party lawmaker Mujibur Haque Chunnun from Kishoreganj-3, she said Bangabandhu had never shared his experience of suffering in Pakistan jail with his family members.

'NAMES DROPPED FROM LIST'
Taking part in an unscheduled debate on alleged irregularities and corruption in preparation of the list of poor people for government cash assistance, Hasina said the government dropped "all other" names from the list.

"We have developed a system in Bangladesh Bank. After getting the list of the beneficiaries, we called the phone numbers and checked the registration numbers of those enlisted so that only the eligible persons get the government stimulus assistance either through their mobile phone account or bank account."

"After completing the verification process, all other names have been dropped from the list. That's why preparing the list of beneficiaries took more time," the PM said.

Earlier, speaking on a point of order, opposition BNP lawmaker Harunur Rashid alleged that the AL-backed public representatives of union and upazila parishads were involved in widespread irregularities in preparing the list of beneficiaries as fake names were included in it.

He demanded the PM take measures to ensure transparency in preparation of the list and take stern actions against those involved in irregularities.

The leader of the House said the list of 50 lakh families for distribution of money was prepared by scrutinising it thrice.

"We didn't prepare the list only based on names sent by the union parishad members or chairmen. We prepared it through checking NID cards, voter list and other relates issues at the same time," she said.

Infection rate

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Nasima said. "The death toll now stands at 2,197 and the death rate at 1.28 percent."

Two-third of the people who died in those 24 hours were between 50 and 70 years old.

Among the deceased, 12 were from Dhaka, 14 from Chattogram, nine from Khulna, three from Rajshahi, four from Sylhet, one from Rangpur and three others were from Barishal division.

Overall, 79 percent of the deaths occurred among male patients.

144 Bangladeshi

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Hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees fleeing conflict and poverty countries used Greece as a springboard to European countries in 2015 and 2016, when an EU-brokered accord with Turkey all but halted the flow, trapping many in Greece.

At least 5,200 migrant children from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Africa currently live in Greece, many of them in harsh conditions.

Momen that Kuwaiti authorities arrested Papul as a "local resident" of Kuwait as he was on a visit there without using diplomatic or official passport of Bangladesh.

He said according to the Article 66 of the Constitution, if anyone accepts citizenship of any foreign country or express loyalty to any foreign nation, he won't be able to participate in the national election.

Meanwhile, Arab Times on Tuesday reported that Kuwait's Central Agency for Public Tenders canceled the extension of the contract for cleaning services at Kuwait International Airport and its facilities, as the contract was concluded with the company of the Bangladeshi MP accused of money laundering and visa trading.

Quoting sources, Arab Times reports the Central Agency for Public Tenders explained that the decision to cancel the extension of the contract with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation has been taken due to the suspension of the company's file in the Public Authority for Manpower based on criminal investigations and charges against one of the owners of the company.

In the same context, sources confirmed that one of four companies owned by Papul has many cleaning contracts with government agencies that are still valid.

Sources stressed the need to quickly address the problems related to contracts of the Bangladeshi MP before they exacerbate, given that the companies' accounts were seized by the Public Prosecution and it is not possible to liquidate them, it said.

They said the failure to pay the salaries of ordinary cleaning workers might prompt them to go on strike and this could harm the work of government agencies, the newspaper reported.



A man sleeping under a tree in Gulistan park in the capital as the city suffered the scorching heat yesterday afternoon. Many low-income people have slid into poverty and lost their shelter during the shutdown of the economy.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

They allowed it, now out to disown it

FROM PAGE 1

also warned them about charging extra [for the test] last month [June]. But they paid no heed."

Speaking on the issue, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said it was her government that unearthed the irregularities and arrested the suspects.

"We would have been happy, had a parliament member informed us in advance about the irregularities in this matter. Nobody informed ... we, the government found the irregularities and took appropriate actions. Rab went there and took proper measures after identifying the persons responsible," she said.

On Monday, the mobile court of Rab, led by its Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam, raided Regent Hospital's Uttara branch and sealed it off in connection with issuing fake Covid-19 test certificates and collecting money from patients.

The same team sealed off the hospital's Mirpur branch yesterday.

The hospital had no permission to run RT-PCR tests.

Inspector Zulhas Mia of Rab-1 filed a case against Regent Group Chairman Md Shahed and 16 others with Uttara West Police Station on Tuesday night.

The other accused include Regent's Managing Director Masud Parvez; its Project Officer Rakibul Islam; Human Resources Officer Amit Banik; IT officers Mahbub, Shaikat, Palash; health technologists Ahsan Habib

Public health, country's image abroad at stake

FROM PAGE 1

Earlier, law enforcers tracked down several gangs involved in making and issuing fake Covid-19 test certificates.

Prof Muzaherul Huq, former regional advisor of WHO South East Asia region, said this would increase the risk of further transmission in the country and beyond.

"This would create a bad image of Bangladesh and its health system in other countries," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"As a result, expatriates, who would want to return to their workplace, may face problems and even may not get permission."

If a real Covid-19 patient gets a fake negative certificate, they would spread the virus unwillingly among family members and others, he said.

If a patient was given a fake positive certificate and was forced to get admitted to a hospital, they may get infected at the hospital, not to mention the hassles they faced, Muzaherul Huq said.

Former Ambassador Humayun Kabir said such an incident would tarnish the image of the country and other nations would get the message that Bangladesh is not behaving responsibly.

"It may be done by some people, but the whole country has to face its consequences," he told The Daily Star

Borrowing from banks doubles

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revenue collection forced it to increase the ceiling to Tk 82,421 crore to meet the deficit financing.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) logged Tk 188,500 crore in the July-May period of last fiscal year, down 2 percent from Tk 193,202 crore a year ago.

The NBR is yet to release the revenue generation data of FY20, but it is likely that the collection would be less than the previous year's receipt of Tk 223,892 crore.

The high borrowing will persistently continue this fiscal year as the government will be unable to fulfill the gigantic revenue target given the ongoing economic fallout, said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

The government should have taken required measures, including reforming the tax administration, process of tax collection, strengthening the automation system and amending the required laws, he said.

"The government is getting into a sinkhole due to its negligence in taking the timely initiatives," he said.

and Hatim Ali.

The chairman, managing director and seven others are on the run. Rab arrested eight staffers during their drive in Uttara branch on Monday.

A virtual court in Dhaka yesterday placed seven of the officials and employees on a five-day remand each.

"SHAHED A FRAUDSTER"
Whenever Md Shahed met someone, he introduced himself as Shahed Karim or sometimes Karim, sometimes as a major of the army or sometimes lieutenant colonel or sometimes colonel, said Rab's Intelligence Chief Lt Col Sarwar-Bin-Quasem at a press briefing at its headquarter in Uttara yesterday.

Shahed was a fraud and master of bluffs. He cheated others of a huge amount of money.

"We came to know that he had a multi-level marketing business where he embezzled a lot of money from people. Later, he landed in jail. After serving two years, he came out in 2011. He didn't stop. He continued with his fraudulence.

"He had photos with many high-ups in Bangladesh. He used the pictures as leverage and to get benefits and favours from others," he said.

Asked about media reports of Shahed being a member of the Awami League's foreign affairs sub-committee, he said, "Fraudsters don't have any political identity. They use names as leverage. He gave fake

identities at different times. He has actually no political identity."

COMPUTER OPERATORS MADE COVID-19 REPORTS

Computer operators at Regent Hospital used to make fake Covid-19 certificates, Rab said, adding that Shahed himself forced his employees to do so.

They found around 4,500 Covid-19 test reports out of the 10,000 so-called tests the hospital had done. The hospital gave patients 5,500 reports without testing. The government accredited laboratories said that they didn't make the 4,500 reports Rab found.

Rab said that they first started investigating the quick test reports after sample collection from home.

"... what we got is really astonishing ... something that we did not expect," he said.

For the first test, they took Tk 3,500-4,000. If tested positive, he or she would come for the next test. They charged Tk 1,000-1,500 for the second.

Shahed made around Tk two to three crore illegally in the last three months, Rab said. But he didn't even pay many of his staffers salaries, he added.

"We will investigate where this money went. We may file a money laundering case in this connection," said Sarwar.

[Muntakim Saad contributed to this report]

certificates to at least 37 people.

The following day, the Directorate General of Health Services revoked the permission to JKG Health Care for collecting COVID-19 samples.

On June 15, Rapid Action Battalion raided a photocopy shop in the capital's Mugda area and recovered a stash of fake Covid-19 certificates.

They also arrested four people on charges of being involved in making and selling illegal certificates.

Rab said individuals without visible symptoms of coronavirus are buying fake negative certificates for traveling and attending offices and courts. Meanwhile, many are collecting fake positive certificates to avail public holidays and various benefits.

On June 4, two youths were arrested in Savar for selling fake Covid-19 certificates.

Law enforcers last month claimed to have detected around a dozen syndicates, who are selling fake certificates during the pandemic.

They provided a printed "Covid-19 negative/positive" certificate or an email, for Tk 5,000 to Tk 9,000.

In cooperation with some hospital staffers, these syndicates mainly target those in need of a Covid-19 negative certificate to go abroad, said officials of police and Rab.

Russia tells US to 'mind own business' over media freedom

AFP, Moscow

Moscow has angrily told the US embassy to "mind your own business" after Washington's diplomatic mission raised concern about curbs on media freedom in Russia.

Rebecca Ross, the spokeswoman for the US embassy, on Tuesday expressed concern about a clampdown on journalists in Russia.

"Watching arrest after arrest of Russian journalists - it's starting to look like a concerted campaign against #MediaFreedom," she tweeted.

"Mind your own business," the Russian foreign ministry tweeted late Tuesday.

Earlier that day the FSB security agency, the successor to the Soviet-era KGB, arrested a respected former journalist, Ivan Safronov, 30, on suspicion of state treason.

His detention sparked an uproar among supporters and journalists who say his arrest is punishment for his coverage of Russia's defence sector.

ACC quizzes

FROM PAGE 1

Directorate General of Drug Administration over importing substandard KN-95 masks, did not appear before the graft watchdog citing illness.

Aminal sought time to appear before the commission, said ACC Public Relations Officer Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya.

Wishing anonymity, an ACC director said they recorded statements of Razzak and Motiur yesterday. After completing quizzing of all the people concerned, the commission would cross-check the statements to identify those behind the corruption.

Today, the ACC will grill the director of Meditech Imaging, Humayun Kabir, and Dhaka Central International Medical College and Hospital Chairman Motazzur Islam Mithu, also the owner of Lexicon Merchandise and Technocrat.

The controversy over the mask supply came to the fore in early April when health professionals in various hospitals were questioning the quality of respirators, with some resorting to social media to vent their frustration.

With the complaints over poor quality respirators surfacing, the Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD), the government body that sources medical supplies, withdrew the masks received from JMI Hospital Requisite MFG Ltd.

It also served a show-cause notice to the company.

In an official statement, the JMI then said it was a packaging mistake.

Later, a government probe body found that JMI supplied "research-stage N95 masks" manufactured with "unapproved imported raw materials" against the demand for regular ones.

But the committee did not say what steps should be taken against the supplier.

Earlier, ruling party lawmaker Ekramul Karim Chowdhury, also a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to abolish "Mithu Syndicate" of the health sector. He blamed the syndicate for the mismanagement in the sector.

On a Facebook Live video from his verified account on June 22, the lawmaker said the "Mithu Syndicate" has brought the whole health ministry under their control. And that's why people were not getting proper health care services.

On June 18, the ACC formed a committee to probe into the allegations of corruption in the procurement N-95 mask, PPE, and other safety gears.

After formation of the probe committee, ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmood said anyone found involved in corruption would be brought to book.

the government imposed an interest rate cap of nine percent," Hussain said.

The government had also taken several initiatives last fiscal year to curb the high investment in savings certificates, which forced it to borrow more fund from the banking sources, according to him.

Meanwhile, Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank, said the economy may blast off after the second half of this fiscal year, which would create a huge credit demand for the private sector.

"The government should borrow major portion of its target from the central bank in order to give a breathing space to banks, such that they will provide the required loans to businesses," he said.

Last fiscal year, the government borrowed Tk 10,441.45 crore from the central bank and Tk 61,805 crore from commercial banks.

The outstanding government borrowing from the banking sources stood at 180,342 crore after the end of last fiscal year.

COVID-19

211 judges, court staffers infected so far: ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 211 lower court judges and court staffers across the country have been infected with Covid-19 till 10pm on Sunday.

Among them, 44 are judges of subordinate courts and 167 are court employees, a law ministry press release said on Tuesday.

Of the infected, 20 have recovered, while Lalmonirhat Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal Judge Md Ferdous Ahmed died.

Magura District and Sessions Judge Kamrul Hasan is receiving treatment at a hospital, and other infected judges and employees are being treated at home, it said.

Meanwhile, two court staffers have died from Covid-19, according to the press release.

Law Minister Anisul Huq has been observing and giving necessary directives to the ministry's monitoring desk, which assists infected judges and staffers by facilitating proper treatment.

Law Secretary Md Golam Sarwar reports to the minister periodically regarding this matter, the release added.



Writer Mushtaq Ahmed, journalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol, Rashtra Chinta organiser Didarul Islam Bhuiyan and cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore are four of the many people arrested under the Digital Security Act in the past few months. With their faces graffitied on a wall at Palashi, Chhatra Federation demands repeal of this highly-criticised law and release of all who were arrested. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Coordinated Covid-19 response imperative

Speakers at dialogue urge govt

UNB, Dhaka

A strong coordination among the government institutions and NGOs is needed to tackle the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic in the country, speakers said at a virtual dialogue yesterday.

They came up with the suggestion in a webinar on "Experiences from the current situation at the grassroots level: Achievements and Challenges", organised by the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, convener of the platform and distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), moderated the event while Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of civil society platform Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), presided over it.

Badiul Alam said different organisations have taken vast programmes to tackle the pandemic but it should be done in a coordinated manner.

"We have to emphasise three issues -- communication, coordination and community engagement -- to tackle the Covid-19 situation. There is lack of resources and absence of coordination in the country. Data scarcity is also a big problem here," he said.

"Everyone should be more conscious to prevent the pandemic. The government should utilise NGOs and volunteers in this regard," he added.

Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and former adviser to a caretaker government, said there is a lack of coordination among the NGOs. "Data scarcity should also be addressed," she further said.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of CPD, said natural disasters, including the recent Amphan, posed a challenge amid the pandemic in the country.

"Our country's problems should be resolved at local level through good coordination. Accurate data is significant to resolve these properly," he added.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya suggested that the government take proper policy strategy to implement the SDGs, overcoming the existing situation.

CONTAINING COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

Quader urges all to avoid gatherings during Eid

BSS, Dhaka

Avoid gatherings and follow health guidelines during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha in order to contain Covid-19 transmission, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

"Everyone has to be aware to prevent the spread of coronavirus during the upcoming Eid," he told a virtual press conference from his official residence in Dhaka.

Safety zones have to be created everywhere, including cattle markets, bus and launch terminals, ferry ghats, shopping malls and kitchen markets, he said. This has to be done by maintaining social distancing and following health guidelines.

Quader, also Awami League general secretary, said, "We have to remain alert so that the joyous journey of Eid with family members does not turn into a sad voyage."

The minister said a section of dishonest people are cheating citizens over the coronavirus crisis -- by fraudulent sampling, issuing fake certificates, and erroneous plasma donation, adding that the government has taken a strong stance against such scams and irregularities.

The minister also called out people who are moving freely hiding Covid-19 symptoms and infections, alongside those who are going abroad with false Covid-19 negative certificates. Calling upon people to take treatment from isolation once they are found with symptoms, he said if they conceal this information, the country's image will be tarnished and the fate of millions of expatriates will become uncertain.

He also announced AL advisory council member Amir Hossain Amu as the new spokesperson and coordinator of the central 14-party alliance.

ENGLISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS

Guardians demand 50pc tuition waiver

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of guardians demanded 50 percent tuition waiver from all English-medium schools, as authorities are only conducting online classes.

Bangladesh English Medium School Parents Forum, in a press conference at National Press Club, said many parents are going through financial hardship, so authorities should take the situation into consideration.

The forum convener AKM Ashrafur Haque and member secretary AZM Salahuddin made the six-point demand.

They said students should not be barred from classes due to delay or non-payment of fees, and an autonomous regulatory body should be formed to oversee school activities.

Other points include ensuring quality education at all English-medium schools by formulating an acceptable policy; formation of school managing committee with representation from guardians; and keeping tuition and other fees at an acceptable level.

"We want the prime minister's intervention to meet our demand," Ashrafur told this newspaper.

Earlier in June, Obhibhabok Oikya Forum, a platform of guardians, demanded full tuition waiver from all non-government schools and colleges due to the financial crisis.

Barishal city streets in sorry condition

Monsoon takes toll as repair work remains halted

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

A large number of paved roads in Barishal city are in poor shape, with the monsoon season bringing out the worst in these.

The situation has particularly deteriorated in the last two months, as many of the roads have got submerged following rain and commuting along them have become a headache, said locals.

Most streets in the city have developed potholes, some of which become formidable-sized puddles after rain.

This correspondent found nearly 50 roads in the city -- including Bhatikhana Road, Kawnia Road, Bogura Road, Bandh Road, Lakutia Road, BM College Road and Public School Road -- in such a dilapidated condition.

Only Sadar Road, Hospital Road and Chawkbazar Road were found to be comparatively better situation.

According to Barishal City Corporation, 267km out of total 593km city roads in 30 wards are paved with bitumen. About 20-22 bituminous roads stretching around only 40km are in good condition, an official of Barishal City Corporation (BCC) admitted, seeking anonymity.

Nazrul Biswas, a resident of Taltali Road area, said, "We've been suffering due

to these unrepaired roads. The situation turns horrible during the monsoon."

Rickshaw-puller Kanchan Mia said he has to struggle to pull rickshaw along waterlogged roads riddled with craters.

During rainy season, Port Road, Steamer Ghat Road, BSCIC Road, Lakutia Road, Taltali Road and Rupatoli Road often get inundated, much to dismay of commuters.

Gobesh, Dutta, a vegetable trader of the area, said, "We have no alternative but to use roads clogged with dirt."

Shah Sajeda, convener of citizen's platform Conscious Citizen Committee, said, "We demand that BCC authorities resolve the problem immediately."

Contacted, BCC Chief Engineer Nurul Islam said the Covid-19 situation is delaying repair work. "We will fix some roads after the monsoon ends," he added.

Sources at the city corporation said authorities sent a proposal of a Tk 1,100 crore project to the LGRD ministry to mend damaged roads and construct new ones six months ago. The ministry replied two months ago with some corrections, said a BCC official, preferring anonymity.

The BCC chief engineer said, "We also have a plan to start repairing the roads soon with our own revenue."

Andrew Kishore's funeral on July 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Legendary playback singer Andrew Kishore's funeral will be held on July 15, his brother-in-law Dr Patrick Bipul Biswas said yesterday.

He will be buried at the cemetery of the Church of Bangladesh near Rajshahi Circuit House on the same day, he said. He said it has been slightly delayed so that Kishore's son and daughter, who live in Australia, have enough time to reach Rajshahi to attend their father's funeral.

Kishore's son Joy Andrew Soptok is likely to land in Bangladesh tonight and reach Rajshahi tomorrow. But his daughter Minim Andrew Songya is unable to return before July 14 night, he said.

"If all goes well, his funeral will be carried out according to plan," Dr Biswas told The Daily Star.

Andrew Kishore breathed his last at his elder sister Dr Shikha Biswas and her husband Dr Patrick Biswas' house in Mahishabathan area of Rajshahi on Monday evening.

His body was kept in the mortuary of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

M'singh volunteers step up for Covid-19 patients

Set up isolation centres, provides free oxygen service

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

At a time when the country's healthcare sector is feeling the heat of the coronavirus crisis, volunteering organisations and individuals are stepping up to fill gaps in the system left open by the deadly virus.

In Mymensingh, HELDS Foundation, a Phulpur-based volunteering organisation, is one such collective that's helping locals resist the virus.

Though its regular projects are limited to health, environment, and literacy sectors in Phulpur upazila, during the pandemic, the organisation has taken the initiative to run a 20-bed isolation centre at Mymensingh, set up three more in surrounding areas, and is now set to start a free oxygen service for critical Covid-19 patients of the district.

Tasfique Haque Nafew (22), secretary of the foundation, said they have received four cylinders from donors will soon get another 18.

To avail the service, patients can contact the foundation on one of their two phone numbers.

"If a doctor recommends oxygen support, our volunteers will take the cylinders to the referred hospital," Nafew added.

The foundation set up its three-room isolation centre, called "Shanti Nagar", on June 22 at Phulpur Degree College for patients who cannot afford self-quarantine.

Mahmudul Hasan Shuvo, a factory worker, came to the facility on July fourth, a day after testing positive.

"I came here as I live in a one-room residence with my wife. The volunteers support me with necessary food and medicines," he said.

"We run the centre from contributions of our own administration. We have spent Tk 74,000 to arrange the 20-bed facility with bedding and four oxygen cylinders," said foundation president Abdullah Al Sayeem Lithu.

The organisation has extended its service to centres at Bhaluka Degree College in Mymensingh as well as Muktijuddha Complex in Mohanganj of Netrakona and at a school in Jamalpur sadar.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



PHOTO: TITU DAS

A raft of ducks play on a puddle in the city's Rupatoli Kheyaghat area, while a motorbiker swerves to evade water. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

Lighter vessel capsizes in Karnaphuli

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A lighter vessel, carrying some 1,400 tonnes of scrap iron capsized in the Karnaphuli river yesterday morning.

All 12 crew members of the vessel -- Borni Prince-2 -- were rescued by staff of another lighter vessel crossing the river, said Ataul Karim, general secretary of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

The vessel was loaded with 1,400 tonnes of scrap iron from a mother vessel at the outer anchorage in the bay on Tuesday evening.

After loading, the vessel reached the river bank for unloading, Ataul further said.

It mistakenly hit a port buoy and capsized at the spot, he added.

Navy and coast guard members are now trying to salvage the vessel.



A capsized lighter vessel in the Karnaphuli river yesterday morning. Carrying 1,400 tonnes of scrap iron, the vessel hit a port buoy and overturned. All 12 crew members were rescued. Members of Navy and BGB are conducting the salvage operation.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Quick, safe, sustainable Rohingya repatriation to benefit all: India

External affairs minister writes to Bangladesh counterpart

UNB, Dhaka

Repatriation of Rohingyas in a quick, safe and sustainable manner will be beneficial for all, India has said.

Indian External Affairs Minister Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar conveyed to his Bangladesh counterpart Dr AK Abdul Momen that his country feels the necessity of quick repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar.

The Indian minister mentioned this in a letter written to the Bangladesh foreign minister, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Jaishankar appreciated Bangladesh for sheltering Rohingyas. He reaffirmed his government's commitment to stay beside Bangladesh and its people to overcome the challenges of Covid-19.

The Indian minister also said the partnership between the two countries will continue towards the goal of mutual development.

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen recently said almost three years have passed and although Myanmar agreed to take Rohingyas back, not one of them went back home yet.

Bangladesh is now hosting over 1.1 million Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar district and most of them entered Bangladesh since August 25, 2017 amid military crackdowns in Rakhine State of Myanmar.

Biman resumes flights to UAE from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines is going to resume flights to the Dubai and Abu Dhabi route from today, paving way for stranded Bangladeshi workers to return to workplaces in UAE.

The carrier was originally set to resume regular flights to the two destinations on July 6. However, on July 5, the national airliner decided against it.

Sources at Biman said the airliner was forced to take the decision after the foreign ministry asked them to not carry any passengers from UAE to Bangladesh.

In response, Biman argued that flying one-way from Dhaka to UAE will cause huge losses for it.

Mohibul Haque, senior secretary, civil aviation ministry told this newspaper on Monday, "After talking to the foreign ministry, we have decided to resume regular commercial flights on Dubai and Abu Dhabi routes."

Bill passed at JS okaying virtual court proceedings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament yesterday passed a bill titled "Adalat Kartrik Tathya Projukti Byabohar Bill 2020" [use of information communication technology by court] in a bid to empower country's courts in carrying out trial proceedings through videoconferences and other digital means. Law Minister Anisul Huq placed the bill which was passed by voice votes.

This law was already promulgated by President Abdul Hamid with an aim to reduce the backlog of huge number of cases in different courts due to countrywide closure since March 27 to June 30. The ordinance was approved by the cabinet on May 7.

According to the previous law, the trial proceedings were only run in physical presence of judges, counsels and witnesses in the court.

Following promulgation of the ordinance, it was possible to run the proceedings during the coronavirus situation as social distancing was necessary to contain the spread of Covid-19.

It was possible for the judges to run the trial proceedings through videoconferences and other digital means keeping the accused in jails, the lawyers in their residences and the witnesses in other places during the coronavirus crisis as per the ordinance. Several opposition MPs of Jatiya Party and BNP proposed several amendments to the bill which were rejected by voice votes. They also demanded withdrawal of the bill -- the demand was also rejected by voice votes.



Workers of Dhaka South City Corporation spray insecticide in drains in the capital's Wari yesterday, which is under lockdown due to the pandemic. Both city corporations of the capital have launched drives to prevent an outbreak of dengue.

Andrew Kishore's

FROM PAGE 3

His body will be taken to Rajshahi City Church in Kazihata area at 9am on July 15 for the religious formalities.

If the institutions' authorities permit, his body will be kept at the Shaheed Minar of Rajshahi University and later at Rajshahi Government College premises for general public and cultural activists to pay their respects.

He will be buried in the afternoon, said Dr Biswas.

Kishore's parents and a brother were also buried in the same cemetery.

"Christians have a tradition of visiting their relatives' graves on November 1 every year. On such a day in 2017, Kishore and I visited the cemetery together," recalled Dr Biswas.

"At the end of our prayers, he walked around the cemetery and chose a beautiful spot. He said he wants his burial to be done at that spot," Dr Biswas said, "And we will fulfil his wish."

Returning to his home in Rajshahi on July 20, Andrew Kishore passed the last week of his life at Dr Biswas' residence.

"One of his last wishes was that he was a son of Rajshahi, so he should be buried in Rajshahi," he said.

M'singh volunteers

FROM PAGE 3

"These centres have 10 beds each until now. However, we plan to scale up to 20 per centre," said Jannatul Ferdous Swarna, one of the 100 volunteers who serve at these centres by rotation.

The foundation aims to set up a total of 500 isolation beds, including 50 in Phulpur, said volunteer Sabina Yeasmin Madhobi.

Doctors from Phulpur Upazila Health Complex will keep contact with the isolation centre round the clock, assured Dr Pranesh Chandra Pandit, residential medical officer of the hospital.

Praising the initiative, Phulpur UNO Nitesh Chndra Sarker said if such humanitarian initiatives are taken, it will reduce the damage of the virus.

Favipiravir effective in Dhaka

FROM PAGE 12

Covid-19 infected patients, we have conducted a double blind placebo controlled randomised clinical trial in Bangladesh and we named it 'Dhaka Trial,' said Syed Gulam Mogni Mowla, associate professor of the Department of Medicine, Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Mowla said this during a PowerPoint presentation at a seminar styled "Study on safety and efficacy of Favipiravir (Favipira) on Covid-19 patients in selected hospitals of Bangladesh", organised by the BSM in collaboration with Beacon Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (BPL) at The Dhaka Westin yesterday.

Favipira, the generic version of Japan's anti-flu drug Avigan, has already been manufactured by BPL, one of the country's leading pharmaceutical companies.

Eskayef Pharmaceuticals manufacture same drug under the brand name of Favipir and are supplying it to hospitals to treat Covid-19 patients.

Apart from around 14 pharmaceuticals companies, including Beximco, Renata, Orion Pharma, and Square are also producing this drug.

The trial protocol was approved by the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) and the Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC).

It was conducted on a total of 50 Covid-19 patients, who were undergoing treatment at Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital, Dhaka Mahanagar General Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital and Muga Medical College and Hospital in Dhaka.

After using Favipira on the patients for four days, 48 percent of the results were Covid-19 negative in PCR testing report and within 10 days, it was 96 percent, said a healthcare official working with the treatment of Covid-19 patients.

The drug improved lung function three times higher than the placebo group and also shortened the longevity of the virus, Mowla said.

The results of the Dhaka trial found that patients who received Favipira had a 44 percent more viral clearance than those who received the placebo drug.

"The good thing is that Favipiravir has no significant side effects on the liver, kidneys or blood sugar and we did not find significant differences Favipira and the placebo group," he added.

"Through the Dhaka trial, we found Favipiravir to be an effective drug with negligible side effects in treating Covid-19 patients," he claimed.

He also suggested that the BSM start early use of the drug to avoid the fatality rate from

increasing.

Prof Billal Alam, president of the BSM said, "We are pleased to reach a clear-cut decision for treating Covid-19 patients through the Dhaka trial conducted on our own patients."

Billal also thanked all the doctors, nurses and health workers for their tireless efforts to take care of patients infected with coronavirus.

Prof Abdur Rahman, dean of the Faculty of Medicine at DMCH, said it has been proved that Bangladesh is capable of manufacturing a quality drug.

He also requested all local drug manufacturers to go for a big volume of exportation after producing the drug to boost the country's overall economy.

Prof ABM Abdullah, dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said there was no specific drug for Covid-19 treatment.

So, Favipiravir is one of the hopes for treatment, as its clinical trial proved that it is effective at mild to moderate stage.

Doctors can use this drug to treat Covid-19 patients, he said, adding, "But the general public cannot use it as preventive measures."

Prof Dr Syed Modasser Ali, chairman of Bangladesh Medical Research Council, thanked the medicine society team for excellent research work that find the right path of treating Covid-19 patients.

"We believe Favipiravir will be the game changer and will reduce the pressure on the healthcare system," Ali added.

India, China

FROM PAGE 12

appeared complete on Tuesday. Satellite images from the bend of the Galwan river as it crosses the Line of Actual Control and flows into Indian territory, showed the area cleared of Chinese troops and structures.

Sources said the Chinese are now firmly on their side of the Line of Actual Control -- the de-facto border between India and China.

The Chinese and Indian troops had started the withdrawal at four spots in Ladakh -- Galwan Valley, Hot Springs, Gogra and the Fingers region of Pangong -- leaving a buffer zone in between after Sunday's talks.

China and India had both agreed on the need for urgent disengagement and de-escalation on the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh, where a face-off between the troops of the two nations have been on since April. In May, the troops had been involved in a brawl near Pangong Lake.

'Where will we go?'

FROM PAGE 12

at Crescent Jute Mill for around 20 years now. His wife, 60-year-old Jabeen Begum, is also a temporary worker at the same mill.

They are yet to receive their salary for the month of June as well as benefits such as Baishakhi allowance or Eid-ul-Fitr bonus.

The now laid-off workers will also not be able to stay in the mill colonies any longer. Workers said this was announced through mike in the area on Sunday.

As both Molla and Jabeen are temporary workers, they are not set to receive any benefits of the golden handshake -- meaning they have to look for work elsewhere immediately or return to their village.

But even returning to the village requires money, said Molla, and local shops are also refusing to give goods on credit to the workers anymore.

At his age, he may have to join his son in the back-breaking work of brick breaking.

Others are contemplating leaving with no work prospects or payout expected.

Eramat Ali, 57, another temporary worker, has worked at Crescent for 16 years. Despite his daughter being an honours student of economics at BL College in Khulna, Eramat is contemplating moving his family back to his village in Wazirpur upazila of Barishal in the next few days.

Some are already leaving.

This correspondent spoke to one worker of Platinum who sold his only valuable possession -- a refrigerator he had bought for Tk 22,000, a few years back. He sold it for Tk 7,500 and is using the money to move the rest of his possessions and his 7-member family back to their village in Gopalganj.

UNCERTAINTY, FEAR

The government on July 2 announced that all 25 state-owned jute mills under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) will be shut down by providing cent percent dues of some 25,000 workers.

While visiting the Khalishpur area that day, this correspondent found police personnel with water cannons deployed on BIDD road from Notunrasta Mor to Platinum Jute Mill. The entire road seemed to be under police control.

"We are worried over the police presence," said Parvez Akhter, a worker of Crescent Jute Mill. Several other workers echoed his views.

Kanai Lal Sarkar, spokesman of Khulna Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star, "We want to ensure law and order. For this, we conduct our regular patrol in Khalishpur area."

Two labour leaders of the recently closed state-owned jute mills were detained from their Khulna homes on Monday morning.

The detainees, Waliar Rahman and Nur Islam, are temporary workers of Eastern Jute Mills and Platinum Jute Mills respectively.

Waliar is the convener of Jute Industry Protection Youth Alliance and Nur is an adviser to the Alliance.

On this, Kanai Lal told The Daily Star that they were detained for interrogation.

Janardan Dutta Nantu, coordinator of Khulna unit of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, and Abdul Karim, general secretary of Khulna unit of Socialist Workers' Front, condemned the "arrest" of the two labour leaders and demanded their immediate release.

In a statement issued on Monday, they said the two leaders actively took part in the recent workers' movement demanding withdrawal of the government's decision to close 25 state-owned jute mills.

The two have been arrested in the dark of night to suppress the movement, the statement added.

On Tuesday, Waliar and Nur were produced before the magistrate court and shown as arrested in a case filed on April 4, 2019 over vandalism of a police box at Notunrasta Mor of Daulatpur during a jute mill workers' protests for due wages. They are now in judicial custody.

Foreign companies

FROM PAGE 12

In a joint communiqué marking the end of Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh's four day visit, Poland supports India's efforts towards durable peace and good neighbourly relations in South Asian region.

PROTECTIVE DAM ERODES IN SIRAJGANJ

Erosion by the furious Jamuna has now reached the town protective embankment of Sirajganj devouring part of the sub-divisional town and six unions of Kazipur Police Station rendering thousands of people homeless and destitute. Engineers and officials of flood control department are working round the clock to check further erosion and protect the embankment breach of which would cause alarming situation threatening the entire subdivision. The people of the villages who are threatened by the erosion are also working simultaneously to tackle the situation.

SOURCES: July 10, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Japan's new

FROM PAGE 12

first bullet trains began running on it on October 1, 1964, between Tokyo and Osaka -- and it passes the 12,400ft-high Mount Fuji.

The summit of Mt Fuji has been considered sacred since ancient times and bullet train staff have been known to bow to it as the train passes.

Govt decision

FROM PAGE 12

the fees immediately and increase Covid-19 testing capacity to effectively check the pandemic.

At a time when more cases were being confirmed through increased testing, the health ministry suddenly on June 30 decided to impose fees on the coronavirus testing, said TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman.

It is not unusual to rise a question on whether the government by taking such a reckless decision during the crisis is discouraging people from undergoing testing, he said.

Iftekharuzzaman said although the testing fees of Tk 200 might seem insignificant to those who made the decision, the amount was still a huge burden for those who could not arrange one meal a day regularly.

"Such a discriminatory and inhuman decision is unacceptable," he added.

The precondition for success of the government steps to fight the pandemic is that those have to be taken based on reliable data, said The TIB executive director.

Sadly, Bangladesh is one of the top countries infected with Covid-19 where fewer number of testing are taking place, he said, adding that the number of testing has decreased as fees has been imposed.

Flood-hit people

FROM PAGE 12

upazila, said, "We stayed at a temporary flood shelter for around 10 days. After coming back home, we found our vegetable garden, cowshed, and fences around our house have been damaged."

In Gaibandha, water of the Brahmaputra and Ghaghat rivers is now flowing below the danger level after 12 days, raising people's hope of improving the flood situation.

But the situation may worsen again next week as there may be heavy rainfall in the upstream, said Mokhlesur Rahman, WDB executive engineer in Gaibandha.

Water of the Jamuna started flowing below the danger level after 10 days at Mathurapara point in Bogura's Sariakandi.

According to the flood forecast, there will be another flooding in the area within next 10 days, said Humayan Kabir, WDB assistant engineer in Bogura.

In Jamalpur, the flood situation in the district improved further as water is going down fast from the inundating areas.

The flood affected people, who took shelter at flood centres, relatives' houses, on roads and high grounds, are returning homes.

But many of them are facing crisis of drinking water and difficulties in maintaining hygiene as 355 tube wells and 381 latrines have been damaged, said sources at the local administration.

In Sirajganj, water has started receding from houses in Kazipur upazila.

"Although floodwater has gone down from my home, I have no scope to return home because flood may hit again. I will have to search for shelter again," said Jahanara Begum of Shuvogachha.

Contacted, KM Rafiqul Islam, WDB sub-divisional engineer in Sirajganj, said it would take time to get rid of waterlogging.

Many people are still waterlogged and passing hard days due to shortage of food and drinking water in Faridpur.

"I had to sell one of my cattle seven days ago. Now I am running my family with the money as I have no work for a month due to the flood," said Arman Sheikh of Char Gopalpur village in Charbhadrassan upazila.

Like him, at least 120 families of the village have been suffering for 15 days.

Moreover, poisonous snakes are being spotted in the areas, villagers said.

Salma Begum, 27, of Char Gopalpur village, said, "One of her relatives died from snakebite 14 days ago in Munshirchar village."

Abdus Sobhan, district relief and rehabilitation officer, said 53,200 people in the district had already been affected by flood. They got 200 tonnes of rice and Tk 3 lakh for the flood affected people. They would distribute those soon.

[Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Bogura, Pabna, Jamalpur, and Faridpur contributed to this report]

Veteran journo DP Barua

FROM PAGE 12

Memorial Award.

DP Barua, also a language movement veteran, authored "Culture and Tradition of Bengali Bouddha", "Bangladesh-China Relationship from a Buddhist Perspective" and "His Holiness Sangaraj Shilalankar, eighth highest religious leader of the Buddhist -- a short biography".

Born on April 10, 1930 at Mohamuni village of Raajan upazila of Chattogram, Barua had his academic background in English literature. He secured his honours and master's degrees from the University of

Dhaka (DU).

Barua was the first Buddhist student who became General Secretary of DU's Jagannat Hall dormitory Students Union.

He became the chief editor and managing director of state-owned news agency BSS in 1991 and he served the post for six years.

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of the veteran journalist.

Jatiya Press Club President Saiful Alam and General Secretary Farida Yasmin also expressed profound shock at his death.

We are deeply shocked and grieved at the sad demise of **Mr. D P Barua**, the founding Trustee of ESTCOT, the founding trust of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) who passed away on July 8, 2020. **Mr. Barua** was a language movement hero who also held the position of the Managing Director and Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) until 1996.

On behalf of the Education, Science, Technology & Cultural Development Trust (ESTCOT) and the IUB Board of Trustees, Members of the Faculty and Management, Students and Alumni, we express our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and pray to the Almighty to grant eternal peace to his departed soul.

IUB
Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

Bangladesh Municipal Development Fund (BMDf)
Grameen Bank Bhaban, Level-13, Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216
Phone: 9022875, 9022932, Fax: 9016239
Web: www.bmdf.gov.bd, E-mail: info@bmdf.gov.bd

No. BMDf/D-36/2019/672

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.sprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of:

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description of the goods	Last selling date & time	Closing date & time	Opening date & time
478265	BMDf G-10	Supply of 4WD Double Cabin Pickup	10-Aug-2020 12:30	10-Aug-2020 14:30	10-Aug-2020 14:30

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.sprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@sprocure.gov.bd).

GD-1112

Managing Director

ANNUAL GOVT GRANT

Leaders pocketing lakhs from tea workers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A section of tea worker leaders in 19 tea gardens under Kulaura upazila have allegedly pocketed lakhs of taka from several thousand unsuspecting poor tea workers.

The leaders have been collecting more or less Tk 500 from the workers on the pretence of enlisting the workers' names in a list of 3,735 impoverished tea workers, each of whom are eligible to receive Tk 5,000 financial grant from the government's social services department for 2019-20 fiscal year.

Workers of Clevedon Tea Garden, under Joychondi union, where the grant has been allocated for 575 workers this fiscal year, alleged that their leaders told them that they would only enlist names of those who pay up.

Moreover, the workers also accused the leaders of practicing favouritism and nepotism in preparing the grant recipients' list every year. Same person has received the annual grant for more than two times, while names of many deserving workers had been left out of the list due to this unethical practice.

When asked why they were collecting money (ranging from Tk 200 to Tk 1,000) for enlisting, the leaders said it was to cover for various expenses including transportation to and from the government offices, making duplicates of workers' photographs and photocopies of their ID cards, said a number of tea workers.

Ajit Urang, a tea worker at Clevedon Tea Garden, said the

leaders do not have to incur any extra expenses during the enlistment process as all tea workers made their own photographs as well as photocopies of their ID cards before providing those to the leaders.

According to many tea workers, they became upset after finding out, from a Facebook post on Upazila Proshashan Kulaura, that payment of money, in any form, was not required of them to be able to receive the annual grant from the government.

Ashu Urang, a tea worker at the same tea garden, said Tea Garden Workers' Panchayat Committee President Mohan Lal Goala, its Treasurer Rambachan Goala, and committee members Bikash Mudi, Susan Urang and Mukul Chandra Bunarji have been collecting at least Tk 500 from each worker, with the assurance that the payment would ensure their receiving the grant.

Another tea worker, Subas Goala, said the president of the committee always shows different excuses every year to collect money from the workers and if anyone refuses to comply, he threatens them with removal of their names from some list.

Demanding exemplary punishment for those involved in the irregularities, Shankar Urang, a member of Ward 5 (Clevedon) for Joychondi Union Parishad, said the collection of money in exchange for the grant by the committee members is a clear violation of Cha Sramikder Jibanman Unnayan Karmasuchi Bastobayan Nitimala-2013.

Asked whether the allegation

brought against him and the other members of the committee were true, President Mohan Lal Goala admitted to have collected the money for various expenses such as making duplicates of photos and ID cards of the workers, travelling to government offices and preparing the "master role".

He, however, claimed of collecting an insignificant amount, between Tk 100 to 120, from each worker.

Similar allegations are surfacing at all tea gardens in Kulaura upazila and the upazilas that surround it.

Contacted, Kulaura Upazila Nirbahi Officer ATM Farhad Chowdhury said the grant is in fact a gift from the prime minister and it has to be disbursed free of charge among the poor workers.

After receiving complaints of anomalies in the process of preparing lists of recipients, he held a meeting this Sunday (July 5) with Panchayat committee leaders of 19 tea gardens in the upazila, managers of the tea gardens and chairmen and members of union parishads in the upazila.

The social services officer in the upazila has been instructed to investigate the allegations at Clevedon and other tea gardens and take stern lawful action against anyone found involved in financial transactions during the process of enlistment for disbursement of the grant.

He also said that at the meeting he has warned all concerned to return all the money that was collected illegally from the workers. Otherwise, the person responsible will face strict action from the administration.

Coastal fishermen face triple blow

Covid-19 pandemic, onslaught of super cyclone Amphan, and ongoing 65-day ban on fishing compound their misery

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Coastal fishermen, especially those fishing at sea, are passing days amid much hardship, facing the coronavirus pandemic, super cyclone Amphan and lastly the ongoing 65-day-long ban on fishing while the compensation provided by the government is too small to meet their requirement.

After the report of first coronavirus infection in the country in mid-March this year, fishermen could not catch fish in the sea due to strict health regulations under the government directives.

They have also been badly affected by the onslaught of super cyclone Amphan that hit the coastal region on May 20 while the ongoing 65-day ban on all types of deep-sea fishing, aimed at ensuring a safe breeding season for marine fish, began the same day.

The ban will end on July 23. The longtime unemployment left the fishermen in dire straits.

Many of them are depending on loan and help for running their families while some are trying to do other work.

Abu Bakar, 45, a fisherman of Gangamati area adjacent to Kuakata beach under Kalapara upazila, said he is somehow managing to survive by borrowing from relatives.

"Often we have to pass the days half-fed. I started fishing in the sea in childhood. Other than the ancestral occupation, I don't know any work to earn a living," he said. Hanif Mia, 40, another



Trawlers lie anchored at Mohipur fish landing station in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali during the ongoing 65-day ban on fishing in the sea.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

fisherman in the same area, said he had never seen such a disaster in his life.

"As the fishing has remains banned for long, I occasionally sell vegetables in Kuakata to survive with a family of six. But I don't have the capital to run the trade regularly," he said.

Basir Uddin, a fisherman from Latachhali area, said, "I could not catch fish during the lockdown due to coronavirus. Then cyclone Amphan disrupted our life. Afterwards came the 65-day ban. We are in great distress. So far, my family has got 46 kg of rice as support from the government, which is too little to meet our requirement."

The fisheries department has arranged providing 92 kg of rice as aid in two installments to each of the fishermen who have become

unemployed during the ban period. The first installment of 46 kg was distributed in late June, while the second installment is yet to arrive.

Md Ansar Uddin Mollah, chairman of Latachhali Union Parishad, also a leader of Alipur trawler owners' association, said, "The fishermen families are now in great distress. The compensation given by the government do not cover everyone. It is important to bring all registered fishermen under the programme."

Kalapara Upazila Fisheries Officer Manoj Kumar Saha said there are 18,305 registered fishermen in the upazila, about 90 percent of whom fish in the sea. Fishermen are living a miserable life due to the coronavirus outbreak, the onslaught of super cyclone Amphan and the 65-day ban.



A section of tea workers in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Ministry of Water Resources Water Resources Planning Organization 72 Green Road, Dhaka-1215 Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) Table with 15 rows detailing procurement information.

Boat capsized: Two bodies recovered Two others still missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Bodies of two people out of four, who went missing following a boat capsizing in the Padma river in Kumarkhali upazila on Tuesday, were recovered yesterday.

Divers found the bodies of Shariful Islam, son of Jalil Mistri, and Jubayer, son of Ranjit Ali, of Jamalpur village, in Bheramara upazila, floating in Ghoshpur area, about two kilometers from the incident spot around 3:00pm yesterday.

Meanwhile, two passengers of the sunken boat-- Jewel Hossain, 30, son of Haran Sheikh, and Zakir, 25, son of Naju, of the same area -- still remain missing till filing of this report yesterday evening.

Deputy Assistant Director of Pabna Fire Station Saifuzzaman said divers were continuing the search operation to trace the missing two.

A small boat carrying nine passenger from Bheramara upazila capsized in the river while they were going to Ghoshpur in Kumarkhali upazila on Tuesday.

Although, others managed to swim ashore, the four went missing, Officer in Charge (OC) of Kumarkhali Police Station Mojibur Rahman said.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর সেকফোম, টোপাখোলা ফরিদপুর দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর সরকারি শিশু পরিবার (বালিকা) টোপাখোলা, ফরিদপুর দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর সমন্বিত দৃষ্টি প্রতিবন্ধী শিক্ষা কার্যক্রম ফরিদপুর দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর বাক-শ্রবণ প্রতিবন্ধী বিদ্যালয় ফরিদপুর দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর সামাজিক প্রতিবন্ধী মেয়েদের প্রশিক্ষণ ও পুনর্বাসন কেন্দ্র বায়তুল আমান, ফরিদপুর দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার সমাজসেবা অধিদফতর সরকারি শিশু পরিবার (বালক) ফরিদপুর দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

China opens security agency HQ in Hong Kong

China yesterday opened a new office for its intelligence agents to operate openly in Hong Kong for the first time under a tough new security law, transforming a hotel into the force's headquarters. The new base is a hotel overlooking the city's Victoria Park, a location that has hosted pro-democracy protests for years, including an annual vigil each June marking Beijing's deadly Tiananmen crackdown. A plaque bearing the security agency's name was unveiled early yesterday in front of Hong Kong government and police officials, an AFP reporter on the scene said. A Chinese flag was unfurled on a pole erected outside the building while a plaque bearing the emblem of the People's Republic of China went up overnight. Beijing imposed a new security law on Hong Kong last week targeting acts of subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign collusion. Similar national security laws are used to crush dissent on the mainland and police in Hong Kong have already made arrests for people voicing certain political views now deemed illegal, such as advocating independence or autonomy.

UK to resume Saudi arms sales a day after sanctions

Britain said it would resume arms sales to Saudi Arabia, halted last year after a UK court ruling over the Gulf kingdom's bombing campaign in neighbouring Yemen. Weapons exports were stopped in June 2019 after the Court of Appeal ordered the government to clarify how it assesses whether their use in Yemen's civil war breaches international humanitarian law (IHL). The conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives and triggered what the United Nations has described as the world's worst existing humanitarian crisis. The announcement came just a day after Britain slapped sanctions on 20 Saudis for their suspected roles in the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Government figures analysed by CAAT show that Britain had licensed nearly £5 billion (\$6.4 billion) in weapons to the kingdom since its Yemen campaign began in 2015.

Indian govt panel to coordinate probe into Gandhi family trusts

Indian Ministry of Home Affairs has set up a panel to coordinate tax violation and money laundering investigations against three Gandhi family trusts including the controversial Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF). The ministry yesterday informed that it has constituted an inter-ministerial committee to coordinate investigations into violation of various legal provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), Income Tax Act and Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) by Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust and Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust. The Centre's move follows recent allegations launched by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on the Congress and the Gandhi family claiming that China had funded the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. According to some estimates, the donation was to the tune of \$2 million between 2004 and 2006 and \$9 million between 2006 and 2013.

SOURCE: ANN, REUTERS, AFP



A man looks for his belongings at his damaged house after floods caused by torrential rain, in Kumamura, Kumamoto Prefecture, southwestern Japan, yesterday. Torrential rain pounded central Japan yesterday as authorities said 61 people were feared dead in days of heavy downpours that have triggered devastating landslides and terrifying floods. PHOTO: REUTERS

Look out for brain damages

Scientists warn of potential wave of Covid-linked severe neurological complications in recovered patients; UN warns over faulty PPE, medicines

REUTERS, London

Scientists yesterday warned of a potential wave of coronavirus-related brain damage as new evidence suggested COVID-19 can lead to severe neurological complications, including inflammation, psychosis and delirium.

A study by researchers at University College London (UCL) described 43 cases of patients with COVID-19 who suffered either temporary brain dysfunction, strokes, nerve damage or other serious brain effects. The research adds to recent studies which also found the disease can damage the brain. "Whether we will see an epidemic on a large scale of brain damage linked to the pandemic - perhaps similar to the encephalitis lethargica outbreak in the 1920s and 1930s after the 1918 influenza pandemic - remains to be seen," said Michael Zandi, from UCL's Institute of Neurology, who co-led the study.

COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, is largely a respiratory illness



that affects the lungs, but neuroscientists and specialist brain doctors say emerging evidence of its impact on the brain is concerning. "My worry is that we have millions of people with COVID-19 now. And if in a year's time we have 10 million recovered people, and those people have cognitive deficits ... then that's going to affect their ability to work and their ability to go about activities of daily living," Adrian Owen, a neuroscientist at Western University in Canada, told Reuters in an interview. In the UCL study, published in the

journal Brain, nine patients who had brain inflammation were diagnosed with a rare condition called acute disseminated encephalomyelitis (ADEM) which is more usually seen in children and can be triggered by viral infections. The team said they saw a alarming increase in ADEM cases.

"Given that the disease has only been around for a matter of months, we might not yet know what long-term damage COVID-19 can cause," said Ross Paterson, who co-led the study. "Doctors need to be aware of possible neurological effects, as early diagnosis can improve patient outcomes."

Meanwhile, a UN report yesterday said that a rush by countries to buy personal protective equipment during the pandemic has created an opportunity for criminal groups, which are peddling sub-standard equipment and likely to move on to medicines soon.

Criminals have adapted quickly, also running scams where no equipment is supplied at all, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in the report.

'Sociopath' father shaped 'narcissist' Donald Trump

Niece says in her book; White House rubbishes her claims

AFP, New York

Donald Trump's niece describes the US president as a lying narcissist who was shaped by his domineering father, according to excerpts of her memoir published Tuesday.

The White House immediately hit back, describing Mary Trump's "Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man" as "a book of falsehoods."

The memoir is due out on July 14 amid a legal battle to stop its publication and is already a best-seller on Amazon. Mary, a clinical psychologist, writes that Trump saw "cheating as a way of life," according to The New York Times.

She accuses Trump of "hubris and willful ignorance" stretching back to his younger days.

She alleges that the future US leader paid someone else to take the SAT pre-collegiate exam, helping him get into the University of Pennsylvania's prestigious Wharton business school.

The Times doesn't explain how she knew.

"The absurd SAT allegation is completely false," said deputy White House press secretary Sarah Matthews.

The 240-page book says Trump is a product of his "sociopath" father Fred Trump who created an abusive and traumatic home life, The Washington Post reported.

Mary Trump says Trump paid proxy to take college entrance exam for him

Book says 'willful ignorant' Trump saw 'cheating as a way of life'



The memoir is billed as the first unflattering portrayal of Trump by a family insider.

Mary is the daughter of Fred Trump Jr, Trump's older brother, who died in 1981 from complications related to alcoholism.

Foreign policy experts have spent years trying to nail down just what might be the 45th commander in chief's guiding philosophy or set of principles.

Mary Trump writes that one of his sisters once said this: "He has no principles. None!"

His niece writes that Trump shows all the signs of having a narcissistic personality.

"The fact is, Donald's pathologies are so complex and his behaviours so often inexplicable that coming up with an accurate and comprehensive diagnosis would require a full battery of psychological and neurophysical tests that he'll never sit for," she claims.

The book is set to be the latest bombshell book to dish dirt on Trump after former aide John Bolton's tome, which describes the Republican leader as corrupt and incompetent, hit shelves last month.

Trump has described that book as "fiction."

AIR RAIDS AND INDISCRIMINATE ATTACKS IN CHIN STATE AND RAKHINE

Amnesty decries 'war crimes'

Says UN Security Council 'must act', demands ICC investigation

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Myanmar's military has killed civilians, including children, in indiscriminate air attacks amid worsening conflict in the country's western Rakhine and Chin states, a prominent rights group has said, urging the United Nations Security Council to launch a war crimes investigation.

In a new report yesterday, Amnesty International said it collected new evidence showing Myanmar's military - also known as the Tatmadaw - bombed several villages in Chin state in March and April, killing more than a dozen people.

One witness who was interviewed remotely told the group that an air raid in Paletwa Township on March 14 and 15 killed his uncle, his brother and his brother's 16-year-old friend.

Two people from another family in the same village cluster said nine people, including a seven-year-old boy, were also killed in the bombardment.



"Our family is destroyed," the boy's father told Amnesty.

In another round of aerial raids in Paletwa, a town near Bangladesh border, on April 7, seven people were killed and eight wounded, the report said, citing testimony from a farmer.

The indiscriminate attacks, which Amnesty said amounted to war crimes due to civilian deaths, came amid a surge in fighting between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army (AA), an armed group seeking greater autonomy for the Buddhist Rakhine people who make up most of the state's population. Rakhine is also

home to the mostly Muslim Rohingya, and borders Chin state, whose people are mostly Christian.

"While Myanmar authorities were urging people to stay at home to help stop COVID-19, in Rakhine and Chin states its military was burning down homes and killing civilians in indiscriminate attacks that amount to war crimes," said Nicholas Bequelin, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Regional Director.

He called on the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for prosecution.

"Shocked to know that the central government has dropped topics like citizenship, federalism, secularism and partition in the name of reducing CBSE course during the COVID-19 crisis," Mamata Banerjee tweeted Wednesday.

"We strongly object to this and appeal to the HRD Ministry, Government of India, to ensure these vital lessons aren't curtailed at any cost," the Chief Minister said.

On Tuesday the CBSE (central board for secondary education) said it would

DROP OF SECULARISM, DEMOCRACY FROM CURRICULUM

Mamata 'shocked', Shashi Tharoor sees evil design

NDTV ONLINE

India's West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has said she is "shocked" by the centre's decision to drop subjects like democratic rights, federalism and secularism from the Economics and Political Science syllabuses of Classes 9 to 12 in all CBSE-affiliated schools.

Banerjee said she "strongly object(ed)" to the move, which was announced Tuesday by the education ministry on account of the "extraordinary situation in India" - a reference to the COVID-19 pandemic that has seen schools shut for over two months.

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"We strongly object to this and appeal to the HRD Ministry, Government of India, to ensure these vital lessons aren't curtailed at any cost," the Chief Minister said.

On Tuesday the CBSE (central board for secondary education) said it would

reduce students' workload in light of the lockdown. Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal said, "It has been decided to rationalise syllabus up to 30 per cent by retaining the core concepts."

This reduction in syllabus is applicable for the entire 2020-21 academic year, the government said.

"Core concepts", it transpired, did not include like "secularism" and "federalism" for Class 11; "environment and natural resources" and "social movements" for Class 12; and "democracy and diversity" and "caste, religion and gender" for Class 10. Class 9 students will not be taught from chapters on "democratic rights" and one on "food security" has been deleted as well.

Mamata Banerjee isn't the only opposition leader to criticise the exclusion of such topics from the syllabus of young Indians who, as Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said, are "on the cusp of becoming voters".

Tharoor tweeted: "One has to doubt the motives of those who selected the topics to drop. Have they decided democracy, diversity, secularism and 'the like are more dispensable concepts for tomorrow's Indian citizens?'"



Uighurs urge ICC to probe 'genocide'

AFP, The Hague

Exiled Uighurs have urged the International Criminal Court to investigate China for genocide and crimes against humanity, filing a huge dossier of evidence with the Hague-based court to back their case.

The evidence handed to the ICC's prosecutor accuses China of locking more than one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in re-education camps and of forcibly sterilising women.

China has called the accusations baseless and says the facilities in the northwestern Xinjiang region are job training centres aimed at steering people away from terrorism.

China is not an ICC member but lawyers for the Uighurs said the court could follow the example of its ongoing probe into the treatment of Rohingya Muslims by Myanmar, which is also not party to the tribunal. ICC judges ruled in 2018 that the Rohingya investigation could go ahead because the situation in Myanmar affects people in neighbouring Bangladesh, which is an ICC member.

The evidence filed with the court showed that China was guilty of "harsh repressive measures" which include murders, disappearances, torture, and harrowing accounts of sterilisations and birth control measures.

The dossier includes a list of senior Chinese Communist Party members who are allegedly responsible for the treatment of the Uighurs including President Xi Jinping.

US starts WHO withdrawal

FROM PAGE 12

The far-right leader has consistently ignored virus containment measures such as social distancing despite Brazil being the world's second-worst hit country with more than 66,000 dead.

Brazil accounts for the lion's share of infections in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the caseload has now surpassed three million, according to an AFP tally.

In Washington, a senior US official said the United States had informed UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of its intention to leave the WHO, effective July 6, 2021.

President Donald Trump has been critical of the WHO's pandemic response, accusing it of bias toward China and ignoring early signs of human-to-human transmission.

The US is the largest financial contributor to the agency, providing \$400 million annually.

Joe Biden, Trump's main challenger in November's presidential election, said he would immediately reverse the decision if he wins.

The pandemic has killed more than 131,000 people in the US, by far the highest death toll of any nation, and on Tuesday the country logged a record number of new

daily cases at more than 60,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Officials have said hospitals in some parts of the country are in danger of being overwhelmed.

Top infectious diseases expert Anthony Fauci has warned the US is still "knee-deep" in only its first coronavirus wave.

But Trump pounced on that comment Tuesday, saying America was "in a good place" and adding: "I disagree with him."

Experts are still struggling to understand Covid-19, and the WHO said it was open to new research suggesting the virus can spread through the air farther and for longer than initially believed. Scientists had lobbied for the agency to recognize the possibility.

Global leaders called for a comprehensive approach to counter the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, which International Labour Organization chief Guy Ryder said yesterday had plunged the world of work into "unprecedented crisis".

"Let's be clear: it's not a choice between health or jobs and the economy. They are interlinked: we will either win on all fronts or fail on all fronts," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told an ILO summit that will be addressed by dozens of heads of state and government via recorded messages.



Hearts painted by a team of artists from Upfest are seen in the grass at Queen Square, following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Bristol, Britain yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

FRESH OFF THE PRESS

An Ominous Incense

A Bengali debut novelist takes on our troubled political climate

MURSALIN MOSADDEQUE

There are two things that I believe are enough to make me lose my sanity during times of unrest—scrolling down my Facebook feed and the afternoon TV news. The characters in Megha Majumdar's new novel, *A Burning* (2020), become unavoidably embroiled in both.

Majumdar deftly conjures up a tense air while narrating the events following a terrorist attack. A Bengali Muslim woman (who is oddly named Jivan) takes the fall for the incident just because she had written a post on Facebook, and the pundits on TV news and the agitated social media mob pounce on her like hungry wolves.

It is not hard to see why this novel has created such buzz in the literary and publishing circles abroad. Megha Majumdar writes with a great sense of awareness and sensitivity and her focus on the dimensions of social and political ethos is commendable. However, the novel also has all the elements the Western audiences crave—a terrorist attack, a Muslim falsely blamed, misinterpreted social media posts, and token representations of oppressed minority groups. It almost feels like she is

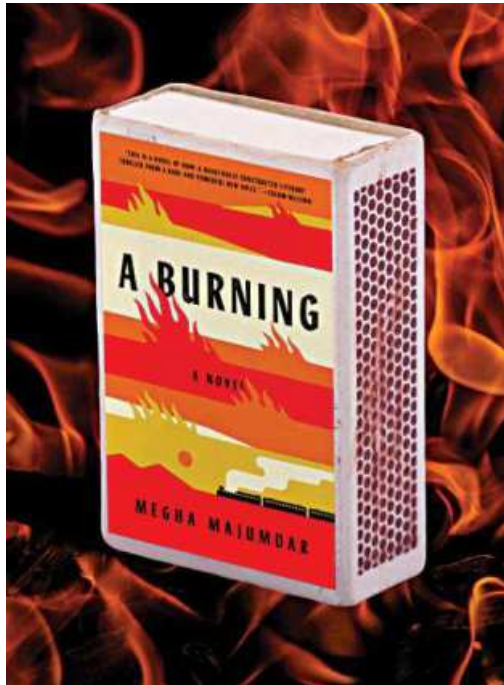


PHOTO COLLAGE: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

what falls flat is how she attempts to render the diction of Lovely's speech with an odd caricature of broken English. "In this life, everybody is knowing how to give me shame. So I am learning how to reflect shame on them also."

Both Lovely and Jivan live in a slum. Literature and art often portray a one dimensional picture of people in the low socioeconomic class—though middle-class figures have complex persona and interpersonal dynamics, there is a banality of seeing only the poverty of these people from the surface. Majumdar's novel falls for a similar trope when Jivan is recounting her childhood to a journalist. But, inexplicably, she makes no mention of the discrimination she undoubtedly had to face while growing up as a woman and a Muslim in a patriarchal society where Hindus are the majority. The mass outcry against her seemingly comes only from their need to find a scapegoat and attempts at vilifying her are strangely unaffected by her gender or religion, in an otherwise polyphonic narrative.

The third notable character, with whom we are less likely to sympathise, doesn't get a name in the book. He is merely referred to as PT Sir—Jivan's physical education teacher from school. Despite his initial affections for Jivan, he gives false statement in court against her in the hope of gaining ranks in a political party where they don't blink twice when innocent Muslim families are butchered by cow vigilantes. His personal insecurities make him vulnerable to manipulation and his arc reflects how our individual derangements can affect facets of oppression on a grand scale.

The rise of right wing governments across the globe has made us wary of our future. Megha Majumdar's *A Burning* offers a gloomy account of this tumultuous world, where the vile like PT Sir ascend the stairs of power at the expense of the most vulnerable members of the society like Jivan. The novel's tone gives it a zealous fervor. It depicts life as it appears on the news—a bit dizzying and nauseating, but often inevitable.

Mursalín Mosaddeque grew up in the suburban town of Rangpur in Northern Bengal. He can be found @bluets001 on Instagram.

The rise of right wing governments across the globe has made us wary of our future. Megha Majumdar's *A Burning* offers a gloomy account of this tumultuous world, where the vile like PT Sir ascend the stairs of power at the expense of the most vulnerable members of the society.

ticking boxes for a liberal audience who want to pat themselves on the back for having read this book. Yet, despite its adoration in the West, the novel takes place quite close to home for a Bengali reader such as myself. The eponymous "burning" takes place in a railway station in Kolkata.

Tension between Hindus and Muslims are nothing new in our subcontinent. It resulted in the anomalous partition in 1947 and the riots that ensued around that period. State-

sponsored pogroms in Gujarat have killed thousands of Muslims since then. The eviction of countless Hindus from their ancestral homes in Bangladesh have been supported or tolerated by ruling parties in the past. Majumdar's novel is brilliant in chalking out this nationalistic jingoism that is often associated with the oppression of a minority group. It skillfully addresses how the state is complicit in these acts of violence—Jivan is framed for sedition, her execution is hastened, and she becomes a victim of those playing for power. Her allegiance to the state is repeatedly questioned during the legal trial she has to face. While she is walking to the court one day, an angry voice from the mob yells, "Go back to Bangladesh."

Jivan's fate rests in the hands of another central character, Lovely, a member of the hijra community. Lovely exudes great personal resolve and strength. She is determined to be an actress despite facing constant ridicule and hardship. Majumdar depicts with great sensitivity how someone like Lovely faces discrimination and hatred in society, but

THE BOOK REPORT

The club for every girl

Nostalgia, comfort, and the power of female friendships—when the show is as good as our favourite childhood book series

SHABABA IQBAL

I came across *Kristy's Great Idea*, the first book of Ann M Martin's *The Baby-Sitters Club* legacy, at 16, in my school's library in Qatar. Soon, I was borrowing more of them from the library and buying them from different bookstores. They were my own little secret—while fantasy fiction like *The Vampire Diaries* and *The Mortal Instruments* trended among readers my age, I was thrilled to find these 1980s' stories about middle-school girls living their independent lives, being empowered by friendship.

The *Baby-Sitters Club* books were published between 1986 and 2000, selling over 176 million copies worldwide. The series came as a welcome breather amidst horror-adventure fiction like *Goosebumps*, *Nancy Drew*, or *Hardy Boys*, set in the fictional town of Stonybrook, Connecticut, with seven friends Kristy, Claudia, Mary Anne, Stacey, Dawn,

and their predictable plots could only stretch my imagination so far, but there was a sense of comfort and familiarity that I felt in that universe filled with the nostalgia of pizza parties and sleepovers with friends. At 16, which I consider a formative year in my life, I could relate to the lessons and realisations that the girls had, and in understanding friendship, they were my constant, albeit younger, companions.

Netflix's adaptation of *The Baby-Sitters Club*, released on July 3, pulls off the tricky feat of setting this story in 2020, while staying true to all that avid fans loved about the book series. Much like the books, each instalment of the show revolves around and is narrated by a particular character. This lets each of the girls flesh out their individual stories and relationships. Small details from the analogue days enrich this adaptation—the baby-sitters still use



ILLUSTRATION: ABRESHMI ANIKA CHOWDHURY / @ABRUSHMI

Mallory, and Jessi. Books like *Sweet Valley Twins* were also offering similar glimpses into day-to-day middle-class American life, but *BSC* was special—Martin wanted her readers to see girls as assertive entrepreneurs and problem solvers at a time when there weren't many female protagonists as such, especially as young girls.

In the first book, Kristy gets the idea for a baby-sitting club from watching her mother struggling to find a sitter for her younger brother. Kristy and her friends love taking care of kids and a club would let them have fun and earn some money. And so, by identifying a demand in the market, Kristy sows the seeds of a successful enterprise. Claudia, the artist in the group, creates a logo. The girls meet in Claudia's room thrice a week, and use her private landline for bookings. They save money by making fliers and rely on peer referral from their best clients. Each of the girls also write in a journal after a babysitting job, taking notes on what worked, what didn't, and what could be improved. At the heart of *The Baby-Sitters Club* appeal lies this narrative about girls, aged between 11 and 13, managing their own finances, with their childhood innocence and enthusiasm still in place. It was this do-it-yourself agency that resonated with me and shaped my beliefs about hard work and responsibilities.

Even more valuable were the friendships that the girls forged. Martin created characters with varying backgrounds and family histories, who learned how to work through their differences and prioritise sisterhood. They encountered broken families, childhood diabetes, and the loss of a beloved grandmother. But their friendships and babysitting jobs helped each of them embrace these issues and were intertwined with who they were and who they became.

After my childhood best friend moved to Canada, over the years, we fell out of loop with each other's lives. The changes were tough to face. With time, I understood that we could still be friends even if we no longer had shared interests. I learned this from Kristy, when Claudia starts developing an interest in fashion and boys, and from Mary Anne, who realises she can be best friends with both Kristy and Dawn. I will not overstate the significance of the books; they were hardly an accurate depiction of reality,

a landline to schedule appointments and advertise through fliers instead of social media promotion, but all with believable explanations.

Showrunner Rachel Shukert understands that things like an overprotective father, a parent remarrying, divorce, and childhood illness are timeless motifs that are relevant across generations. Yet, the show updates the cultural landscape in which the narrative takes place. The community is more racially diverse: Japanese-American Claudia, once the sole non-white founding member of the club, is joined by Mary Anne, who is now Latina. As in the books, Stacey's move to Connecticut comes after she is diagnosed with juvenile diabetes, but it is spurred on by cyber bullying, as a video of her going into insulin shock goes viral around her school in Manhattan.

In a standout moment in the fourth episode, 'Mary Anne Saves the Day', based on the book of the same name, timid Mary Anne calls the hospital when a kid she is babysitting falls ill. The child in question is transgender, and Mary Anne stands up to the hospital staff for mis-gendering the young girl: "As you would see if you looked at her and not her chart, Bailey is not a boy. And by treating her like one [...], you're making her feel insignificant and humiliated. So, from here on out, please recognise her for who she is."

While Shukert tackles these serious issues—even showing, significantly, how delightful it can be when a young girl gets her first period and learns how to use a sanitary napkin with the help of her best friends—she also remembers that the smaller things, like redecorating bedrooms, fights with friends, and crushes on older boys, are just as valid.

Sadly, I had to leave my *The Baby-Sitters Club* collection behind when I moved back to Bangladesh from Qatar. I eventually caught up to the trendy books that people of my age read, but *The Baby-Sitters Club* occupies a significant space on my heart's shelf. At 27, as I reflect on how I found comfort and strength in those books, I am excited for a new generation to discover these young, charismatic girls through the show.

Shababa Iqbal is a trainee sub-editor of *Arts & Entertainment* and *Star Youth*, *The Daily Star*.

BOOK NEWS

Sanctuaries lost for book lovers

EMRAN MAHFUZ, TRANSLATED BY TOWRIN ZAMAN

The Covid-19 pandemic has hit the knowledge centres of capital Dhaka. Many bookshops are slowly shutting down and publishing houses are struggling to survive. Amidst this crisis, writers and booklovers are seeking state patronage to help them survive.

The first hit came when Elephant Road's Dipanpur bookstore announced that they were closing down. Also shutting down are Katabon's Kobita Café and bookshops Moddhyoma, Nalonda, and Pencil in Banani.

According to the owners, the establishments have been closed for about four months because the pandemic forced book sales and earnings to plummet. Rents, salaries for employees, and other expenditures could no longer be borne.

"We did not expect that Dipanpur would see such a crisis," said founder Dr Razia Rahman Jolly. The bookshop was opened in memory of Faisal Arefin Dipan, a secular publisher killed by extremists. "We received unprecedented response when the news of us shutting down spread on social media. Now preparations are

underway for us to get back on our feet. An incentive by the Ministry of Culture is also in the process."

Kobita Café director poet Nahida Ashrafi said, "There is no point in staying open during this crisis. It has been closed for the past three months. I have decided to fully shut down Kobita Café after two months and have informed the owner of the space about our decision. But the decision can still be overturned. Everybody's cooperation is crucial. Only then we can see how far we can go."

Researcher and Director General of Bangladesh Museum, Faizul Latif Chowdhury shared his thoughts on how to save these institutions that have been invaluable in shaping the creative and intellectual palettes of Dhaka residents. "The government, just like their contribution to the textile sector, can pay special attention to the bookshops, keeping in mind the importance of our culture," he told *The Daily Star*. "One solution can be to buy books from the struggling bookshops and distributing them to private and public libraries. Another option could be to bear the costs of the bookshops for at least six months.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

This will not only garner the government praises but also bring immense benefit to the literary and cultural society. The National Library can help them in this task."

Kobita Café and Dipanpur started their journey on a small scale, around four years ago. Gradually, both started operating as full-fledged bookstores. Both have several thousand books in their collection. They serve light snacks and there is an arrangement for

afternoon lunch, and a stage for regular programmes. Kobita Café in particular became popular among the literary fans of Dhaka for its art and literature-based events. Both bookshops started their work from a deep love of books.

Emran Mahfuz is a poet, writer, and editor of *Kaler Dhoni*. Towrin Zaman is a research consultant who writes in her spare time.

DS BOOKS DESK

After holding polls which closed on July 5, the Daily Star Book Club will be reading Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* starting Wednesday, July 15. Read-along rules, discussions, and a list of stores where the novel is available are all up on DS Books' social media pages.

Feel free to join the read-along by becoming a member of the Daily Star Book Club group on Facebook. To stay updated, follow the 'Daily Star Books' page on Facebook and @thedailystarbooks on Instagram! You can also email us at thedailystarbooks@gmail.com.



ILLUSTRATION: NABHA NUSARBA

DAILY STAR BOOK CLUB PICK

Ensure delivery of kits to testing centres

Govt must cut through red tape to deal with the pandemic effectively

THE number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Bangladesh has reached over 1.7 lakh. Now is the time to ramp up tests to measure the spread of Covid-19 and identify hotspots in order to contain the virus. However, the rate of testing has significantly dropped recently—on July 2, 18,362 tests were conducted across the country, but now the daily number of tests has dropped to under 15,000. This has been attributed to a shortage of testing kits, especially in Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj, where some centres have been forced to reduce or even suspend testing. Recently, the government took the decision of introducing a fee for testing—according to a government circular, “many people took advantage of it (tests) without even having any symptom.”

In this context, it is unacceptable that more than five lakh Covid-19 testing kits have been lying in the warehouses of several companies in the capital for the last couple of months. According to a report in this daily, a number of suppliers have alleged that the Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD), which is responsible for public purchase and distribution of medical equipment, is delaying the approval and delivery of kits. These allegations include the delay of sampling procedures for over a month, although the process is not meant to take more than a day; the cancellation of orders for kits after they have already been imported; and refusal to receive kits even after issuing work orders for them.

What is even more disappointing than this dragging of feet is the statements given by top government officials regarding these baffling delays. The directors of CMSD and the DGHS have both declined to comment, and a spokesperson for the DGHS claimed that there is no testing kit crisis in the country and that 1.88 lakh kits are now at their disposal. If this is the case, why has the number of daily tests been reduced, and why are fees being charged for this abundance of testing kits? If more kits are not needed, why are companies being given work orders, only to have them delayed or even cancelled?

We are in the middle of the worst public health crisis this country has ever seen. Now is not the time to pass on the blame or cover up realities. The WHO has made it very clear that robust testing is one of the main tools for understanding the spread of the pandemic and coming up with relevant policies. We urge the government to immediately cut through this red tape and ensure that imported testing kits reach hospitals and testing centres without further delays.

A welcome move to reach the hungry before Eid

Govt should also not forget the newly poor

WE appreciate the government's initiative to distribute free rice to the extreme poor people ahead of Eid-ul-Azha. The food aid will be given to one crore VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) cardholders across the country to mitigate their sufferings due to flood and coronavirus outbreak. Under the initiative, each person will get 10 kilogrammes of rice for free. While we commend this initiative for the extreme poor and destitute people, we must remind the authorities that they should also provide food assistance to the people who have become newly poor due to the pandemic.

The number of poor people in the urban areas has increased by a large proportion in the last few months as many rickshaw and rickshaw-van pullers, transport and construction workers, street hawkers, day labourers, garment workers and domestic help lost their livelihoods. These people also need the government's food assistance before Eid.

It is good to learn that the government has set some 12 criteria of which at least four will have to be fulfilled by a person to be eligible for receiving the assistance. The criteria include landless households or those who have only homesteads; households dependent on daily wage labour; households dependent on women's income or begging; households headed by widowed, divorced or separated women, etc. The disaster management and relief ministry's directive to redistribute the VGF cards in unions and wards based on the 2011 census is also very important since many cardholders may have died by this time, while many others may not be eligible for the assistance anymore.

We hope that this time there will be no corruption in the process of providing food assistance to these vulnerable people. We have seen in the recent past how the government's efforts to provide relief to the pandemic-affected people were marred by corruption as some members of the ruling party as well as local public representatives misappropriated relief materials meant for the poor. Anomalies in the database of people eligible for the government's assistance were also reported in the media when the government went for distributing cash incentives to the extreme poor in May, before Eid-ul-Fitr.

We hope this time any corruption in making the list and also in relief distribution will be checked through proper monitoring. And as we have mentioned earlier, the government should also provide food assistance to the urban slum dwellers, who have slipped into poverty due to the pandemic.

Surviving Covid-19 is not the end of the story

SHAMIM AHMED, GIAS U AHSAN, SHARMIN MAJUMDER, and SALMA HASAN

COVID-19, caused by the novel coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2, has led to a pandemic that is increasing the burden of mortality and morbidities throughout the world. It has brought many challenges including prevalence of disability and caused major disruption to healthcare services. About 12 million people around the globe have been infected by the virus so far, with a vast majority of them already recovered. However, half a million valuable lives have been lost due to this deadly disease. In addition, the virus may have a lasting effect on the body in general—as well as in major organs including lungs—for those who have survived the infection.

In the aftermath of a major disease outbreak, many patients require rehabilitation to help them get back to a normal life or adapt to living with disability. Patients who have required intensive care for more than a few days often have wider physical, cognitive and mental health support needs following their discharge from acute settings. As Covid-19 is a multi-system disease, we are increasingly recognising more subtle deficits in patients who are less severely affected, even in those who did not require hospital admission.

Although we are still at the early stage of tracking the long-term health effects of the coronavirus on recovered individuals, the virus seems to be exerting damage even beyond the respiratory system. Some survivors have reported having shortness

of breath, unusual fatigue and body aches months after the initial infection. Studies conducted in Asia also reported that some recovered patients had signs of impaired function of their lungs, heart and blood vessels, liver, kidneys, and intestines. In addition to the persisting effects of the virus, patients hospitalised with severe Covid-19 are likely to have to deal with a wide range of physical, cognitive, and mental health problems as a consequence of spending long

prioritising sleep and regulating energy, staying active, and eating micronutrient-rich diet would be helpful to fight with the post-Covid-19 exhaustion. Seeing a respiratory physiotherapist about how to exercise can also be helpful, if needed.

Most patients who survived on a ventilator are prone to having muscle weakness. Thus, regular movement of limbs, sit-ups, standing or walking with help might be needed to reduce that weakness. Some survivors might need to

factor for everyone to boosting the immune system. In addition, since food and immune system are inextricably connected, consumption of vitamin C and vitamin D, nutrients such as iron, zinc, and selenium would be helpful to maintain a well-functioning immune system. Food containing probiotics, such as yogurt, is also recommended to add healthy bacteria in the gut environment and aid proper absorption of nutrients.

It's also important to remember that



The coronavirus seems to be exerting damage even beyond the patient's respiratory system.

PHOTO: REUTERS/GIORGOS MOUTAFIS

The most common physical challenge for recovered Covid-19 patients is shortness of breath. It means simple physical activities like walking or climbing stairs can become challenging for them, especially for those who are old. People have to be patient at this point.

time in the ICU, receiving emergency treatment as well as critical care support for survival. These conditions are supposed to be further complicated as body's immune system gets compromised through battling off the infection.

The most common physical challenge for recovered Covid-19 patients is shortness of breath. It means simple physical activities like walking or climbing stairs can become challenging for them, especially for those who are old. People have to be patient at this point, because it might take a long time to get past this symptom with or without medication, depending on the severity of the condition. They are also likely to be affected by the post-viral fatigue syndrome which is the next most common residual manifestation among the recovered people. Proper rest such as

follow a basic exercise programme with the consultation of physiotherapists. Post Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS) was prevalent among many survivors who reported problems with thinking and judgment, concentration challenges, delirium or memory deficit. It is important to make sure that these survivors do not go through any kind of social stigma or discrimination and that they receive continuous support from their friends and family. Social and behavioural health scientists can help deal with cognitive dysfunction at a mass level.

Taking steps to boost immunity is absolutely necessary for patients who have already been affected by Covid-19 as well as for those who have not reflected any visible symptoms. Adequate and sound sleep is the single most important

without a sound mental state, attaining a healthy body, fighting pandemics, or regaining lost energy are impossible. To ensure a strong mental state, having a stress-free relationship, ensuring consensual sexual behaviour, and meeting with a professional counsellor are all good initiatives. While getting stress under control can help, it is also important not to suffer in silence. Last but not least, please practice physical distancing, good hand hygiene, look after the vulnerable, and follow authentic social and behavioural health guidelines to be safe and healthy.

Shamim Ahmed is a doctoral researcher at the University of Toronto; Gias U Ahsan is Dean, School of Health and Life Sciences, North South University; Sharmin Majumder is a PhD student at the University of Toronto; and Salma Hasan is a GP registrar, National Health Service, England.

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

Building Forward with Digital Agriculture

MICHAEL KREMER and GILBERT F. HOUNGBO

THE Covid-19 pandemic is reshaping societies around the world, in part by accelerating the digital revolution that was already underway at the beginning of the year. Since then, corporations have instituted mass teleworking. International gatherings now take place online, with heads of state and industry participating from home. Students learn remotely, and digital payments are further edging out cash.

But with technology influencing our lives more than ever, there is a risk that it will spread unevenly, entrenching existing inequalities and leaving the world's poorest people further behind. That is not inevitable. Digital technologies can help end global poverty and hunger faster, including in rural parts of developing countries, where the majority of people earn their living from agriculture.

Digital agriculture—whereby farmers use mobile phones and other digital technologies to access customised, actionable agricultural information in real time—could revolutionise how these communities secure and improve their livelihoods. By making the right investments today, while many agricultural extension officers are restricted from visiting farmers in person, we can kick-start digital adoption and start to close the income gap that has long held rural areas back.

It should go without saying that family farmers need timely, accurate information as much as any small enterprise does. That is why governments in developed and developing countries have for decades supported farmers with public information campaigns. The world's longest-running radio drama, *The Archers*, was created in the 1950s to help farmers increase agricultural productivity following the rationing and food shortages during World War II.

Today, most farmers in the world's remotest places have mobile phones, and thus are equipped to receive targeted agricultural advice through simple text or voice messages, even without access to the Internet. For example, in Odisha, India, Precision Agriculture

for Development delivers customised, crop-specific, free agricultural advice to almost 800,000 farmers through their phones.

There is extensive, rigorous evidence that such advisories—delivered at scale and at low cost—can change farmers' practices for the better. There is also growing evidence to show that farmers

digital technologies offer a host of other opportunities for poor, rural communities. With support from the United Nations International Fund for Agriculture Development, remote sensors have been deployed to help farmers optimise water and fertiliser levels for their crops, and drones are being used to identify plants in poor



Most farmers today, even in the world's remotest places, have mobile phones and thus are equipped to receive targeted agricultural advice through simple text or voice messages, even without access to the Internet.

PHOTO: REUTERS

who are empowered with digital information will increase their yields, incomes, and resilience against shocks. A recent paper co-authored by one of us (Kremer) in *Science* demonstrates that farmers who received digitally delivered recommendations were 22 percent more likely to adopt the recommended agrochemical inputs, yielding USD 10 in benefits for every USD 1 spent.

Moreover, while farmers rely on mobile phones to receive market information, access bank accounts, and monitor weather forecasts,

health so that remedial action can be taken.

Innovations in digital agriculture also can help farmers increase their yields and incomes by adopting locally suited seeds and fertiliser, protecting crops from diseases and pests (such as fall armyworm or locusts), adapting to climate change, selling at the best possible price, and accessing financial services. All of these applications can expand farmers' opportunities and reduce their risks.

In fact, digitisation has the potential

to transform the agricultural sector in developing countries. But doing so will require further innovation and strong partnerships between governments, businesses, and farmers, as well as a regulatory environment to ensure that technology remains affordable and accessible.

The private sector should be encouraged to advance, adopt, and re-engineer technologies for, and in collaboration with, small-scale farmers. Investing in digital agriculture today offers the promise of a quadruple return.

For starters, digitisation can help many of the world's poorest people weather the Covid-19 crisis, by giving them remote access to advice, inputs, and markets. Moreover, it can increase the overall food supply and boost food security through higher yields. Third, it can accelerate the adoption of a proven, cost-effective, scalable strategy for increasing long-term farm production and improving the livelihoods of poor, rural people. And, finally, it can give farmers a voice, enabling governments to direct and measure the impact of agricultural investments.

But digital technology is not a panacea. While farmers increasingly are equipped with mobile phones, they also need advice that is tailored to their needs, as well as access to agricultural inputs (fertilisers and seeds) and markets to sell their products.

With the coronavirus pandemic still running its course, now is the time to think about not just building back, but building forward. By accelerating investment and innovation in digital agriculture, we can protect the world's poorest people from some of the worst effects of the current crisis. When we all emerge from lockdown, one hopes that we will have already laid the foundation for building a fairer, more prosperous, and sustainable future.

Michael Kremer, a 2019 Nobel laureate in economics, is Professor of Economics at Harvard University and a co-founder and board member of Precision Agriculture for Development. Gilbert F. Houngbo, former prime minister of the Republic of Togo, is President of the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development.

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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

Shielding frontline healthcare workers should be the priority



MD SALIMUZZAMAN BHUIYAN

THE coronavirus crisis continues to engulf the country as well as the rest of the world. A large number of doctors in Bangladesh (62 as of July 5)—mostly senior clinicians working on the front line—have died due to Covid-19. Many more frontline healthcare workers (over 5,000) have become infected. This is unusual compared to the situation in the western world. The entire healthcare sector was rightly shocked by this development and wants to know how the situation has deteriorated to this point.

I have spoken to a few of my professional friends in Bangladesh over the last few days. I have no doubt in my mind that this was mostly due to the Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) currently in use by the frontline healthcare workers. In this connection, I would like to highlight the following issues.

Inadequate PPEs: In the beginning of the coronavirus crisis in Bangladesh, the government health services and the private healthcare authorities were unprepared. Healthcare workers were not provided with sufficient PPEs to protect them from coronavirus infections. Some clinicians even attended patients without using PPEs. Many of them made their own PPEs while awaiting delivery from their authorities. Supply of PPEs was delayed in many cases. Even we could

hear the urgent call for help and requests for PPEs from a thousand miles away. I am aware that a few Bangladeshi volunteers from the UK and the USA have sent PPEs to help their fellow frontline fighters in Bangladesh.

Poor quality of PPEs: Many of the PPEs produced locally were not up to the World Health Organization (WHO) standards. There was hardly any quality control by the appropriate authorities in the beginning. This has meant a serious breach of the health and safety standards of healthcare and put the lives of frontline healthcare workers at risk.

Training on PPEs: Training on how to put on the PPEs (donning) and how to dispose of them (doffing) is limited

in Bangladesh. Safe disposal of used PPEs is very important because these are most likely to be infected. There is a high risk of contracting the disease during doffing. Every healthcare facility in the country where Covid-19 patients are looked after needs to train their healthcare workers how to do donning and doffing safely. I have seen an excellent video on this issue posted by One Health Bangladesh in the social media. I would recommend every healthcare worker to watch this video carefully.

Mask fit test: An important element of the PPEs is face mask. The coronavirus spreads from the infected person to the healthcare workers via nose and mouth. We need to wear WHO-recommended face masks. We in the

We need to protect our vulnerable healthcare workers from the dangers of Covid-19. First we need to identify the high-risk group of frontline health professionals based on age (50+plus years) and associated comorbidities.

needs a protocol, testing methods and training. The electronic machine is expensive and needs software, a protocol, testing methods, accessories and training. One of the electronic machines is PortaCount Respirator Fit Tester 8048.

Shielding high-risk healthcare workers: In the UK, the NHS England has taken the policy of risk assessment of all high-risk frontline healthcare workers based on ethnicity, age, sex (male) and comorbidities. The high-risk vulnerable group of workers were either shielded at home or moved to a safer non-Covid-19 area of work. In New Zealand, high-risk healthcare workers (10 percent of the workforce) were sent home in the beginning of the Covid-19 infection. Now those workers are coming back to work.

We need to support and protect our vulnerable healthcare workers from the dangers of Covid-19. First we need to identify the high-risk group of health professionals based on age (50+plus years) and associated comorbidities, e.g. serious heart condition, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes, chronic kidney disease, obesity and immunocompromised state. Then we urgently need to shield the vulnerable healthcare workers at home.

Covid-19 is a serious threat to our nation including the lives of the frontline workers, especially the experienced doctors. We need to save them from getting infected or worse. Otherwise, we may end up with a seriously damaged and broken healthcare system in Bangladesh in the future.

Md Salimuzzaman Bhuiyan is a consultant anaesthetist and intensivist, Furness General Hospital, and general secretary, Bangladesh Medical Society in the UK.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

A lab technician, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), collects samples for coronavirus testing at the Fever Clinic in Dhaka's Shahbagh area.

UK use mostly FFP3 masks and, in Bangladesh, N95 masks are being currently used. Every single healthcare worker in the UK, the USA, Australia and New Zealand had to go through the mask fit test. If you fail to pass a test for a particular type of mask, you are not allowed to use that mask during patient care. The risk of using a poor-quality, faulty or unfitted mask is contamination with the virus by breathing infected air around the edges of the mask and into the lungs. Mask fitting is usually difficult for a person with beard who may fail the standard mask fit test. However, beard-friendly respirators or masks are also available.

Unfortunately, as far as I know, the mask fit test is not available in Bangladesh. There are a variety of both manual and electronic quantitative mask fit testing machines available in the market. The manual (Medical Respirator N95 Fit Test) is simple but

How about a Hippocratic Oath in the police code of ethics?



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

ANY idea of incorporating a Hippocratic Oath in the police code of ethics might sound utopian or unusual at the least. However, recent developments in the sphere of

criminal law enforcement around the world compel us to revisit the ethical dimension of policing. In Bangladesh, where at least 44 policemen have died from coronavirus infection while trying to provide essential services, it is also an opportune moment to dwell upon the salutary preventive role of a conventionally coercive organisation like the police. Since human liberty is inextricably linked with policing, the police officials—quite like the physicians—need to develop a sensitivity to respect the sanctity of human life and proactively help keep people out of harm's way.

Considering the recent incidents of police misconduct in the USA and elsewhere and the renewed push for police reforms, it is imperative that police departments anywhere in the world "learn a new language" and evaluate the purpose and priorities of their job. The profession of policing needs to evolve with the needs and demands of the 21st century.

The unconscionable tragedy of George Floyd's death in the USA, in May, laid bare the deficiencies of

American policing, a reality which resonated with cities and communities across many countries. The sad fact is, the protests that have sprung up against racism and police brutality ever since have done little to bring about the desired reforms.

There is no denying that those involved with policing need to do some soul-searching and reconsider what they stand for professionally. Rewriting the police code of ethics would be a desirable starting point. Those who have knowledge of the work culture of criminal law enforcement know that many aspects of the current law enforcement code of ethics date back to the mid-20th century. Changing the code of ethics, therefore, would be unprecedented and profoundly impactful.

In drafting a new code of ethics worthy of a democratic society, policing should turn to Hippocrates. It is well known that the Hippocratic Oath for physicians is commonly summarised as "Do no harm". We also know that a physician's job is to examine the patient, diagnose the medical condition underlying present symptoms, and prescribe an effective course of treatment. A doctor who only attends to the visible symptoms, provides ineffective medicine, or treats in a manner that is ultimately harmful has failed the patient. Going by the above standards, policing in many countries including the USA may be guilty of malpractice.

Experts believe that a police code of ethics designed around the Hippocratic Oath should incorporate four key themes that are not highlighted in

the present policies and practices. The themes are: evidence-based policing, emphasis on crime prevention, professional identity, and sanctity of human life.

Over the last few decades, a vast body of scientific evidence has emerged regarding what works in policing and, perhaps more importantly, what does not. Policing is not an abstract intellectual issue. We know how police interventions directly impact the lives of community members. So ignoring the evidence in favour of so-called tradition or age-old practices or a personal opinion will be an irresponsible thing to do. Unscientific policing is unethical policing.

The present code is largely focused on enforcement and the desire to apprehend is entrenched in the policing system. This orientation needs to give way to heightened crime prevention. It is the gradual decrease of crime and disorder that policing should seek to achieve.

The police code of ethics must be able to clearly establish that police are, first and foremost, members of the community—not some higher caste standing between good and evil. It should advocate the protection of the weak and innocent while opposing unnecessary use of force and violence.

Policing must fundamentally acknowledge the sanctity of human life and duty to protect every person, even individuals who have placed themselves or others in jeopardy. The police have an ethical duty to render aid to prevent loss of life.

One may recall that Hippocrates viewed the art of medicine as

something fundamentally connected with the love of humanity. The very fabric of policing, therefore, needs to go through a transformation until the same can be said about law enforcement. It is time for a new code.

It may well be that the traditional

sensitive, who are agents of assistance rather than control, accountable not just for what they do but how they do it, and are no longer the unthinking, unquestioning functionaries responsible only to their seniors. The move toward this new code of ethics



Police officers wearing face masks patrol the Bazar Station Road area of Sirajganj Sadar Upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

discipline code is now less useful to a modern police service than a properly introduced code of ethics and sound training in its principles. The change in policing ethos brings with it a new image of the police officers—officers who are required to be culturally

and replacing older styles of discipline is a significant one. Societies are changing, as are people's expectations from the police—the police should respond appropriately.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a former IGP.

QUOTABLE Quote

NIKOLA TESLA (1856-1943)
Serbian American inventor and engineer who discovered and patented the rotating magnetic field.

I don't care that they stole my idea... I care that they don't have any of their own.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Close
- 5 Washington follower
- 10 Not dissonant
- 12 Municipal
- 13 Follow
- 14 Laughable
- 15 Long, long time
- 16 Heel
- 18 Hauler's unit
- 19 Pinter works
- 21 Fast runner
- 22 Independence Day sights
- 24 Sink feature
- 25 Independence Day sights
- 29 Volcano shape
- 30 Whoever
- 32 Crude abode
- 33 Iris setting
- 34 Blue
- 35 Bakery come-on
- 37 Boring movie
- 39 Mink's cousin
- 40 Natural in Vegas
- 41 Bar orders
- 42 Throw

DOWN

- 1 Spirited horse
- 2 Graduate's distinction
- 3 Open, in a way
- 4 Letter after sigma
- 5 Corrosive stuff
- 6 Clamor
- 7 Film set on Pandora
- 8 They're underage
- 9 Play part
- 11 "Smiley's People" author
- 17 "Shoot!"
- 20 Nino's mother
- 21 Sculptor Moore
- 23 Female in a pride
- 25 Patriot's day
- 26 Completely
- 27 Balkan region
- 28 Traps
- 29 Lack of order
- 31 Perfect places
- 33 Shucking units
- 36 Got together
- 38 Trawling need

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

R	I	S	E	R	B	U	S	T	S
A	M	P	L	E	A	L	P	H	A
S	P	A	M	S	S	N	A	R	L
C	A	N	I	M	E	A	N	I	T
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BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

COVER STORY

Breathe into the verse of life

Asaduzzaman Noor's career in the showbiz industry began when he joined 'Nagorik Natya Sampradaya' back in 1973. Since then, he has gone on to appear in several popular television dramas, theatre plays and cinemas. Not only has he excelled in acting, but he is also a talented poet known for his recitation skills, and he even took part in the general elections of Bangladesh multiple times, with the first being back in 2001. In 2014, he was made a Minister for the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. In this interview with Rafi Hossain, he talks about his recent poetry 'Let this black life breathe', what he hopes the world will be like after the pandemic and about his journey in acting.

Rafi Hossain: Welcome to *Uncensored with Rafi Hossain*. Today, we are here with a very special guest, Asaduzzaman Noor. Noor bhai, tell us about your recent poetry based on the murder of George Floyd.

Asaduzzaman Noor: Truth be told, I don't get to write much poetry nowadays. I used to write mostly when I was in school and college, and some of the poems I wrote then were even published. Now, I'm very busy with other things, so I had to take a break from poetry. But, after the murder of George Floyd, like a lot of people, it affected me, and I decided to turn my feelings into words again and wrote a piece about it. I read it to my daughter and wife, and they both seemed to like it. So, I recorded it and uploaded it online, and it got a lot of positive feedback. A lot of people from both here and abroad called me to say that they really loved it. However, just because I wrote this piece doesn't automatically mean that I am a poet and I am going to be writing regularly.

Rafi Hossain: If there are more events in the future that really affect you, will you be writing poetry about those?

Asaduzzaman Noor: I once saw a picture of a child who was injured in an accident, and the child's family was running from one hospital to another searching for treatment. Unfortunately, that child did not survive. After reading about that story, I felt very sad, and I wrote a piece about that. However, I never published that piece. So, if an event occurs that makes me feel emotional, I will write about it.

Rafi Hossain: What made you start reciting poetry?

Asaduzzaman Noor: It started when I was in school. We had many competitions for reciting poetry, and I took part in them. My parents were both teachers, so even at home, I would recite poetry. When I used to read, my father would help me with my pronunciation, and that helped me. My father was also very adept at recitation.

Rafi Hossain: How did you start doing it professionally?

Asaduzzaman Noor: When I came to Dhaka in 1968, people were protesting the Pakistani government. It was around October, and most Awami League leaders were in jail or hiding. So, the students were protesting a lot. I was involved in the protests, and I think that I am very fortunate as I got to see history unfold in front of my eyes. Back then, I was involved in theatre, but mainly in an organisational role. The *Motia Group* had a cultural platform, and we used to organise a lot of plays there. Not

standing beside others to help, and I think that they won't stop doing so after this pandemic is over. I also believe that now, we will see people be more empathetic towards others and help make things easier for other people.

Rafi Hossain: You have always had a very iconic beard. Tell me, what inspired you to grow a beard?

Asaduzzaman Noor: After the liberation of Bangladesh, I joined the Press Information Department as the press relation officer, but I also had to do translations. Back then, I used to live in Bakshibazar, and the office was in Dhanmondi. It took me a couple of hours to reach the office. So, I had to wake up at six in the morning and leave the house by seven. In one hour, I had to shave, get ready and make my breakfast. It was very difficult for me,



so I decided to reduce one task and started to grow my beard. After that, everyone told me that the beard suited me, so I kept it. However, after I started acting, many people questioned how I can play different roles with this beard. To that, I always said that people from all walks of life in Bangladesh sport beards, so I don't see why it would be a problem for me to have a beard.

Rafi Hossain: How did your friendship with Humayun Ahmed start?

Asaduzzaman Noor: He appreciated my acting, and we bonded while doing dramas. While we were shooting a drama, I had to do a scene which would take only a couple of minutes, but it ended up taking a couple of hours, so I got frustrated and expressed how I felt about it. Humayun Ahmed got angry at my remarks, and he said if I wanted, I could just go. So, I just left. Then, around midnight, I heard the doorbell ring at my house, and I saw that Humayun Ahmed had come. He came with his crew and had a bouquet in his hand. We then shot the scene the following day.

Rafi Hossain: You excelled in both dramas and theatre; how come you didn't do many cinemas?

Asaduzzaman Noor: When I used to act regularly, we didn't get many opportunities to do films. But, when I got the opportunity, I did films like *Aguner Poroshmoni*, *Chandrokotha* and *Hooliya*, among a few others.

Rafi Hossain: Thank you for talking to us, Noor Bhai. It was great to talk to you and discuss these topics.

Ridwan Intissar Mahbub



LET THIS BLACK LIFE BREATHE

ASADUZZAMAN NOOR
TRANSLATED BY SHUPROVA TASNEEM

Let me breathe
Underneath my black skin
(there is) red blood,
Wilting like a fresh rose
My breath—
One by one, the petals are falling
Let me breathe—

I can't breathe.

That sky is blue,
Let me see it
White peak of the White House
Let me see—
Over there, democracy is coming alive
Or dying
Let me breathe

I can't breathe.

Your powerful knee
Choking me
I can no longer sing
Yet they say, from my black voice
Innocence falls—ivory innocence
I can't breathe

Let me breathe.

With these powerful hands
I hurled that ball
In delight, dismay
The crowd roared once
I triumphed.
Now my arms are paralysed
I can't move them.

Let me breathe.
I can't breathe.

I am forgetting
My mother's face
My childhood memories
They are blurring—Quincy, Xiana
My playground
Jesus Christ.
Inside a dream
In intense pain
One last time
I cry out—I can't breathe!

With a flock of birds
I spread my wings
I fade
Into that distant horizon.
On the last melancholy breeze
My lament remains
Let this black life breathe.
I can't breathe.

GRAPE VINE

ASIF AKBAR

on kabir suman's composition



Popular singer Asif Akbar will be releasing a new song written and composed by renowned Indian-Bangla songwriter and singer Kabir Suman. The musical arrangements for the song, *Syriar Chele*, has been done by Shawkat Ali Emon. The lyrics of the song depicts the struggles of a three-year-old Syrian child, whose life forever gets marked by the conflicts of war. Asif Akbar said, "I get emotional when I see inhumanity, and Kabir Suman wrote a song which touches that very emotion in my heart. I feel fortunate to be part of this wonderful project." The song will soon be released under the banner of ARB Entertainment.

POPY'S

hope for the future



National award-winning actor Sadika Parvin Popy has been staying at her hometown, Khulna, for nearly four months now. During this time, the actor has been facing trouble with social media. There are many fake accounts under her name on Facebook. Popy said, "People opened many Facebook accounts and pages using my name. But, I have only one official account. If people get scammed from those accounts it is not my fault. I would like to make my fans and followers aware and request them to be more careful." She added, "The entertainment industry has fallen back due to the pandemic. However, I believe if we all stand hand in hand together, we can revive the industry post-pandemic."

MOSHARRAF KARIM resumes shooting

After a four-months long hiatus due to pandemic, noted television actor Mosharraf Karim is back for shooting. He was finally able to stand in front of a camera this month. Recently, he has completed shooting for a drama, titled *Baro Loker beti* for Eid-ul-Adha. Starring opposite of him, actor Urmila Srabonti Kar will be seen on screen. The drama is directed by Rafat Majumder Rinku. Aside from this, the actor also shot a drama, titled *Wish* by Raihan Khan. He will also start shooting for a seven-episode series titled *Girgiti*.



many plays would be held back then, so we would bring in students, teachers and even office workers who would do plays and have them perform. Syed Hasan Imam would direct most of our projects. People like Golam Mostofa, Anwar Hossain, Abul Hayat, Lucky Enam and many other famous names were involved with us. Back then, I would do whatever job I was required to do. I would be the prompter, I would arrange tea for everyone, and sometimes I would do some small roles. That was my experience of theatre before the independence. In 1972, I was made a narrator for a musical directed by Abul Hasnat. I received a lot of praise for that, and that's how it started for me.

Rafi Hossain: After this pandemic is over, do you think that we will all be more humane?

Asaduzzaman Noor: I see that a lot of young people are

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.

IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY

It's Okay to Not Be Okay is a South Korean romantic television series on Netflix. It has been directed by Park Shin-woo, produced under the banner of Studio Dragon, Story TV and Gold Medalist, with Kim Soo-hyun and Seo Ye-ji in the lead. It tells the story of a healthcare worker at a psychiatric ward and an author with an antisocial personality disorder who help each other, and slowly fall in love. It was originally released on June 20, 2020.



THE POLITICIAN

The Politician is a comedy-drama web television series on Netflix. It has been created by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Ian Brennan, produced by Kenneth Silverstein, Todd Nenner and Lou Eyrich, among others, and stars Ben Platt, Zoey Deutch and Lucy Boynton, alongside Gwyneth Paltrow and Jessica Lange, among others. The story revolves around the different political elections of an ambitious teenager who has his heart set on becoming the president someday, and is ready to do anything to make his dream come true. It was originally released on September 27, 2019.

Into the Night

Into the Night is a Belgian sci-fi thriller TV show, first aired on May 1, 2020 on Netflix. It was created and developed by Jason George, produced under the banner of *Entre Chien et Loup*, and stars Jan Bijvoet, Nabil Mallat and Pauline Etienne, among others. The storyline, which is based on the novel *The Old Axolotl* by Jacek Dukaj, follows passengers of a hijacked plane as the world below them perishes being exposed to sunlight.

Shreya Shomoyeeta & Amina Hossain





England opener Dom Sibley is castled by West Indies pacer Shanon Gabriel on the first day of the first Test at Ageas Bowl in Southampton yesterday. (INSET) Players observed a minute's silence in memory of all the victims of Covid-19 as international cricket returned after 117 days.

Cricket returns with rain

AFP, Southampton

Rain meant there was no play before lunch on Wednesday's opening day of the first Test between England and the West Indies at Southampton, the first international cricket match since March. The eagerly anticipated fixture marks the sport's global return from months of coronavirus-enforced lockdown. The last Test match, between New Zealand and India, concluded on March 2, six days before the final of the Women's T20 World Cup in Australia. But as the players warmed up on the outfield under grey skies, there was sufficient rain for the Ageas Bowl pitch to remain fully covered and prevent the toss taking place at 0930 GMT as scheduled.

National team camp in Savar or Gazipur?

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is struggling to choose a suitable venue where a safe residential training camp can be conducted amidst the coronavirus pandemic ahead of the World Cup Qualifiers in October. The BFF has assessed the advantages and disadvantages of four possible places and have sent their assessments to the National Teams Committee (NTC), headed by BFF vice-president Kazi Nabil Ahmed, for a final decision. The BFF House, Fars Hotel, the BKSP in Savar and Sara Resorts in Gazipur are all under consideration. Previously, the training camp had been held place at Bangabandhu National Stadium with players being accommodated at Fars Hotel. "We have sent comprehensive reports to the NTC and are awaiting a final decision, which may come by Saturday," BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said. "We will proceed in line with the recommendations

of the NTC. In the meantime, we are also supposed to get guidelines from the BFF medical committee, which is maintaining communications with FIFA and AFC on Covid-19 guidelines." BKSP and Sara Resorts are likely to be prioritised over the BFF house and Fars Hotel, which are both situated in crowded localities, further complicating management's already tough job of keeping all members of the national team safe. Head coach Jamie Day sought a five to six-week camp, including an overseas camp, starting in the last week of August to bring players back in shape after a long break. However, the process is supposed to get underway in the first week of August through the testing of all persons related to the national team. Bangladesh are scheduled to host Afghanistan on October 8 but the BFF is awaiting AFC guidelines to meet the criteria to host the match in Sylhet. The team will then travel to Qatar for an away game on October 13. "We have preliminary informed Sylhet administration and Sylhet DFA

and National Sports Council about Bangladesh's home match against Afghanistan in Sylhet and requested them to take the necessary steps but we have yet to declare the venues of our last two home matches against India and Oman," said Shohag. "It is certain the October 8 tie against Afghanistan will take place in Sylhet, which had before staged the international matches of Bangabandhu Gold Cup. If the first match in Sylhet is staged successfully, the BFF will take fresh decisions on whether to hold last two home matches in Sylhet," Shohag said. Everything is still dependent on the AFC's new guidelines, which are expected to be prepared this month, he informed. "If we see it is not possible to hold the match in Sylhet in line with AFC guidelines, then we have no option but to change the venue. We believe we won't face any problems in staging the match in Sylhet," Shohag said, adding that the NTC also gave off the impression that they would prefer the two home matches to be held in Sylhet.

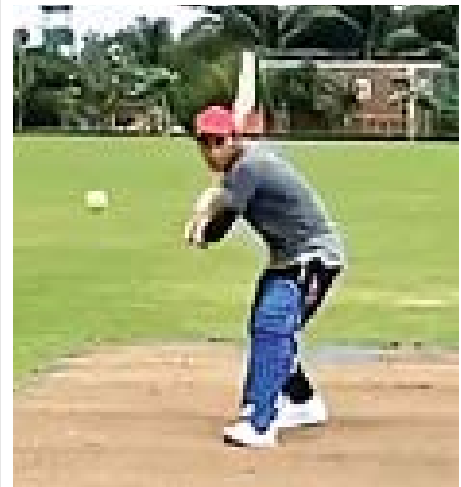
Lax Mushy causes a stir

MAZHAR UDDIN



International cricket made its return in England yesterday after a long break due to coronavirus pandemic. Many other countries like Sri Lanka, West Indies, Pakistan and South Africa had already made up their minds regarding taking the challenges in new normal. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), however, is yet to make up their minds on resumption, barring the recent disclosure that they have kept grounds and practice facilities fully prepared and functional so that they can bring cricketers back on the field sooner rather than later. Cricketers working on fitness from home has become a common sight on social media but there is an exception in the form of experienced Mushfiqur Rahim. The wicketkeeper-batsman on Tuesday posted a video on social media where he was seen knocking the ball, rolling and running at the Fortis Sports Club ground, located in the capital's Badda, that has created lot of confusion among the cricketers regarding the guidelines of BCB. Previously, Mushfiqur and another wicketkeeper-batsman, Mohammad Mithun, were denied by the Bangladesh

home of cricket in Mirpur on Monday. "We have been away from cricket for over three months and, like Mushfiqur, we also miss the game a lot. But we have some guidelines from the BCB about not going outside for training and we are trying to follow that. Now if Mushfiqur is training despite all the risks involved, it actually portrays that we, the other cricketers, are not ready to take the field, which is not true. I think we should have proper guidelines from the board on whether we can do skill training elsewhere apart from Mirpur," said a national cricketer requesting anonymity. According to the BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury, the board normally 'discourages' such individual training keeping the current coronavirus situation in the country in mind. "Mushfiqur is one of the most experienced cricketers of the Bangladesh team and he knows how to take proper safety measures and practice. We have prepared our training facilities in Mirpur, but due to the area falling under the red zone, we urged cricketers to train from home. We even allowed them to take instruments. However, we do discourage cricketers from going outside and doing skill training, keeping their safety in mind. It is their individual responsibility to realise the situation," Nizamuddin told



Cricket Board (BCB) when the cricketers wanted to have individual training sessions at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, as the area has been marked as a Covid-19 red zone. However, Mushfiqur's recent training video raised questions among other cricketers, who are also keen on training outdoors but are uncertain about the exact guidelines from the BCB on whether they can practice individually near their neighbourhoods. Players are divided in their opinions over the resumption of cricket in this situation, but many were surprised by Mushfiqur's outdoor practices. Some did not respond to it positively. There was the feeling that there was no need to go outside, especially after the BCB recently took the initiative of allowing players to borrow gym equipment for maintaining fitness at home. Mushfiqur was the first to avail the facilities from the board and posted a photo of his visit to the

The Daily Star. "Mainly, Dhaka is very congested and risky so we discourage practice here, especially in Mirpur which is a red zone. If anyone who is outside Dhaka wants to practice, they must inform us and follow our guidelines." According to the BCB Cricket Operations Committee chairman Akram Khan, it is Mushfiqur who has to take responsibility if anything unpleasant happens and not the board. "This is not the first time he was practicing outside his house. We have seen him running in the streets. We saw him working out in an empty field. He will have to take responsibility for his actions. We are not responsible if anything untoward happens due to this," said Akram. Many cricketers are left wanting proper guidelines from the BCB rather than hearing the word 'discouraging' about whether they will also be able to train over the country at their own risk.



The clash between Milan and Juventus at San Siro started on a sombre note, with tribute paid to the late music composer Ennio Morricone. The game ended on a sombre note for the Bianconeri, who despite taking a 2-0 lead including one goal from Cristiano Ronaldo, were subject to a 4-2 defeat by the Rossoneri, orchestrated by Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

'I'm president, coach and player'

AFP, Milan



Zlatan Ibrahimovic ignited a late comeback against Serie A leaders Juventus and then declared that if he had been at AC Milan from the start of the season, they would be Italian champions. With Milan two goals down on Tuesday, Ibrahimovic converted a 62nd minute penalty for his sixth goal this season. Four minutes later he set up Franck Kessie for the equaliser then immediately headed for the bench where he spent the rest of the match giving advice to teammates as Milan scored twice more for a 4-2 victory. Rafael Leao hit Milan's third

goal in five minutes as Ibrahimovic reached the bench and Ante Rebic added the fourth in the 80th minute behind closed doors at the San Siro. "I'm president, coach and player but I'm only paid as a footballer," Ibrahimovic, who rejoined Milan from LA Galaxy on a six-month contract at the end of December, told broadcaster DAZN after the game. "If I had been here from the start we'd have won the Scudetto." "I'm old, it's no secret, but it's just a number," said the 38-year-old Swede. "I played more today than the last game. I feel good, to be honest, and I am trying to help the team in every way." Speculation surrounds the future of Milan coach Stefano Pioli and Ibrahimovic was coy on whether he

would be back next season. "There's still a month to go and let's see, there are things here that we're not in control. Playing without fans is a shame, a strange situation," Ibrahimovic said. "It could have been the last time you see me live at San Siro." "I like playing in this Milan team, I do what I can do intelligently, I arrive and then if I don't make a difference I don't like it. I want to help my teammates and the fans." The defeat meant Juventus wasted the chance to move 10 points clear at the top of the Serie A after second-placed Lazio's shock defeat at Lecce, but Cristiano Ronaldo's side sit seven points clear with seven matches remaining and remain on track for a ninth straight title.

MUSA JUWARA'S incredible journey

GOAL.COM



Musa Juwara arrived in Italy in 2016 on a boat as an unaccompanied minor, and since then, a new family and football have changed his life. The 18-year-old Gambian striker equalised for Bologna in the 74th minute against Internazionale on Sunday, following Romelu Lukaku's opener, before his compatriot Musa Barrow netted a winner six minutes later to secure an unlikely victory over Antonio Conte's Serie A title hopefuls. It was an ill-tempered contest, with both sides having a player sent off, but that will matter little for Juwara, who has enjoyed a remarkable rise to prominence in recent years, having first set foot in Europe four years and one month ago. Born in 2001, he arrived in Italy when he was just 15, landing on the coasts of Sicily after crossing the Mediterranean on a boat. The teenager had been orphaned at a young age, and was raised by his grandfather before deciding to travel to Europe in search of a brighter future. He spent time in Ruoti, in the province of Potenza, before discovering his passion for football with Virtus Avigliano, where coach Vitantonio Summa took him under his wing and also acted as a legal guardian. Summa, along with his wife, eventually became Juwara's custodial parents. The first club to bet on Juwara's youthful promise was Chievo Verona, although he truly caught the eye with Torino at the 2019 Torneo di Viareggio, an annual youth tournament held in Tuscany. Here, he scored three goals in as many games, demonstrating the potential that had seen him named in The Guardian's Next Generation 2018 list. Last summer, Bologna took a punt on Juwara, and he initially joined their U-19

squad. He made his debut in an Italian Cup game against Udinese in December, and made his first Serie A appearance two months later against AS Roma, coming on for his fellow Gambian Barrow. The teenager caught the eye in a brief cameo against Juventus after being brought on for the final eight minutes of the 2-0 defeat on June 22, making an impression with his speed and movement. Bologna coach and former Lazio defender Sinisa Mihajlovic firmly believes in Juwara's talents, despite having used him sparingly so far this term. The Yugoslavia great gave the 18-year-old



a longer run-out against Inter, introducing him with 25 minutes to play as Bologna looked to overcome the deficit. "Sinisa told us at the interval that, with a goal, we would win the game," Juwara told journalists after the victory. And so it proved, as Juwara equalised after capitalising on Roberto Gagliardini's mis-kick, nine minutes after his introduction, before Barrow, who had earlier struck the woodwork, secured an outstanding victory and further dented Inter's faint title aspirations. Four years and one month after first arriving in the country on a boat, following a dangerous and treacherous journey, Juwara is the name on Italy's lips.

7-1 has become an expression

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Six years after Brazil suffered their most humiliating experience on a football pitch, the 7-1 World Cup thrashing on home soil at the hands of Germany has become a joke, an expression and even a meme. That infamous scoreline has taken on a meaning of its own to describe any kind of defeat or a heavy blow -- physical or figurative. "They gave us a one-seven" or "that was a one-seven" has entered into common parlance in the land more accustomed to stunning victories and brilliant achievements. It was July 8, 2014 when World Cup hosts Brazil took on Germany in the semifinal at the Mineirao stadium in Belo Horizonte with an expectant nation behind them. But the five-time champions suffered the worst defeat in their history and the biggest ever loss by a team that has won the World Cup. The scoreline is not the only thing from that game to have become a cultural reference in Brazil. Now, when describing something that happens repeatedly, Brazilians will say "and a German goal" or "was that another German goal?"

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'Where will we go?'

Workers left in despair after state-run jute mills closed

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Thousands of workers of nine state-owned jute mills in the Khulna-Jashore industrial belt, passing days in mounting tension before the announcement of closure, are now sunk in gloom with the mills shut down.

There are 8,100 permanent and about 30,000 temporary workers at the nine mills -- seven in Khulna and two in Jashore -- according to the BJMC office.

"The workers do not want shutdown of the jute mills, rather they want to work more vigorously to overcome the losses of the mills," said Sahana Sarmin, president of Platinum Jute Mill Workers' Union.

"Where will we go after the mills are closed?" is a common question among the workers, she said.

Narrating her woes, Eratun Khatun, a worker of Platinum Jute Mill, said she was a temporary worker for 16 years at the same mill where her late husband Omor Ali Gazi worked.

"My husband died 11 years ago and I became a permanent worker in November 2011. I am the lone bread earner for my family. If I lose my job, how will my daughter Shiuli Akhter, a college student, continue her studies?"

Eratun has at least the consolation that she, in the near future, will receive the much-talked about golden handshake, as a permanent worker.

Temporary workers, however, some of whom have worked for decades at the mills, will receive no such payout.

Md Abdul Berek Molla, 63, has been a temporary worker

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A concrete building being slowly devoured by the Jamuna at Beltia village of Tangail's Kalihati upazila. At least 40 such structures, mostly homes, have been washed away over the last couple of days after erosion damaged a portion of the flood protection embankment in the area. The villagers have blamed the Water Development Board's negligence in this regard. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

Veteran journo DP Barua passes away

UNB, Dhaka

Veteran journalist and former chief editor and

managing director of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) Deba Priya Barua died at his residence in the capital early yesterday.

Barua, also a senior member of the Jatiya Press Club, breathed his last at 5:30 am at his house in Moghbazar, said a press release.

The 91-year-old journalist left behind his wife, three sons, a host of relatives, well-wishers and colleagues to mourn at his death.

He started his career in journalism in The Morning News newspaper in 1958.

Barua was honoured with the International Buddhist Peace Award, Atish Dipankar Gold Medal Award, World Peace Envoy, Biddarabadi by Supreme Sangha Council (monastic order) and Dr BM Barua

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Flood-hit people in dire need of immediate help

Many return to their ravaged homes from shelters as water recedes in six districts

STAR REPORT

Many flood victims, who took shelter elsewhere, are returning home in several districts as floodwater has started receding from their houses.

But floodwater damaged their dwellings and farmland badly.

The victims said they do not have money to buy food, let alone repair their houses.

In Kurigram and Lalmonirhat, around 5 lakh people in the two districts were affected by flood. About 10 percent of them living in low-lying areas took shelter on dykes, roads, and at flood centres, said local offices of Water Development Board.

"The fences around my house have been washed away. My vegetable garden has also been damaged," said Abu Hossain of Mashalerchar in Kurigram Sadar upazila.

He along with his six-member family stayed on a WDB dyke at Jatrapur for several days and returned home yesterday morning.

Mobarak Hossain, a flood victim of Sindurna in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Foreign companies will not own natural resources

July 9, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU FEELS MUCH BETTER

Bangabandhu who was taken ill on July 5 now feels much better, according to the prime minister's personal physician Prof Nurul Islam. Even though the physician would like Bangabandhu to rest a few days more as he was very weak the prime minister is anxious to return to work immediately. Bangabandhu is reported to have engaged himself in important state business often enquiring about the progress of work of important sectors.

MINERAL CORPORATION SOON

Dr Mofiz Chowdhury, minister for power, natural resources, and scientific and technological research, declares today that the government would soon establish a mineral development corporation with a view to exploring the mineral resources of the country. He says that outside help may be sought but no foreign government or companies would be allowed to enjoy ownership of our natural resources.

INDIA AND POLAND CALL FOR BANGLADESH'S UN ENTRY India and Poland today call for admission of Bangladesh in the United Nations and other world organizations and declare that any attempt to ignore the realities will only add to tension and instability in the Subcontinent.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



CORONAVIRUS TEST Govt decision to slap fees inhuman

Says TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government decision to impose fees on Covid-19 testing is "discriminatory", "inhuman", and "suicidal" during a rise in the positive cases, Transparency International Bangladesh said yesterday.

In a statement, the graft watchdog said after the decision came into effect, Covid-19 testing went beyond the capacity of the poor, while the number of confirmed cases also "dropped" with decreasing number of tests.

As a result, the risk of coronavirus infections increased, and the fear of not having the real picture of coronavirus infections in the government action plans to control the pandemic has been intensified, it said.

TIB demanded that the government withdraw

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Japan's new bullet train can run during quake



MAIL ONLINE

A new bullet train has entered service in Japan that's the country's fastest, smoothest, most comfortable and safest yet -- it's able to "escape" to safety in the event of an earthquake.

The N700S -- the 's' stands for 'Supreme' -- has a top speed of 360kmph (223mph), though the line it serves, the Tokaido Shinkansen line, has a maximum operating speed of 285kmph (177mph).

This line, which links Tokyo with Osaka and Kobe, is one of the world's most famous. It became the world's first high-speed line when the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

BORDER STAND-OFF India, China complete pullback in some areas

NDTV ONLINE

The two-km mutual withdrawal of Indian and Chinese troops at Ladakh -- on since Sunday after the Special Representative level talks -- is complete in some areas, sources said yesterday.

The withdrawal at Patrol Point 15 in Hot Springs is now complete. The 2-km mutual withdrawal at Patrol Point 17A (Gogra) will happen today or tomorrow, they said.

Some movement by the Chinese near the Pangong lake -- the Finger 4 Area -- is happening. Vehicles and tents have been removed but the ridge line remains occupied by the Chinese troops, sources said.

The withdrawal at the Galwan river valley, where Indian and Chinese troops clashed with fatal results -- the first in decades --

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

COVID-19 PATIENTS Favipiravir effective in Dhaka trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Society of Medicine (BSM) has found effectiveness of Favipiravir as a clinically proven drug for the treatment of Covid-19 patient.

After ending trial in Wuhan province of China and Russia, the Dhaka trial revealed similar effectiveness of Favipiravir in treating Covid-19 infected patients.

The BSM found around 96 percent patients to be Covid-19 negative in their RT-PCR testing after application of this drug.

"To evaluate the usefulness and safety of Favipiravir in treating

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PRAYER TIMING JULY 9

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

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A man feeding caged rabbits at a pet shop in Kataban area. The place has recently seen a rise in customers, as the scope of recreation has shrunk around the city due to Covid-19, and as a result, many people, especially children, are opting to buy pets.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

US starts WHO withdrawal

More evidence backs airborne spread of virus; ILO says world of work in 'unprecedented crisis'

AGENCIES

Amid escalating coronavirus pandemic, the United States has started its withdrawal from the World Health Organization, the world body which is at the forefront of the war against the deadly pathogen.

The American pull-out from the WHO comes as the UN agency conceded there was "emerging evidence" coronavirus is transmitted through particles in the air, heightening fears over an illness that has already infected over 11.8 million people worldwide and caused more than 544,000 deaths.

Meanwhile, International Labour Organization yesterday warned that the pandemic has plunged the world of work into "unprecedented crisis".

Countries are struggling to keep a lid on new cases as they attempt to restart economies, with Australia's second-biggest city becoming the latest victim of a second surge after recently lifting virus restrictions.

Millions in Melbourne returned to lockdown yesterday that was forecast to run six weeks, as soaring community transmission brings more than 100 new cases daily in the city.

Meanwhile, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has tested positive for the coronavirus after months of downplaying the dangers of the disease.

Bolsonaro, who said he had experienced only mild symptoms so far, said he was feeling "perfectly well" as he removed his mask in a TV interview Tuesday to announce his diagnosis.

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