

ATM Salehuddin Chowdhury passes away

City Desk

ATM Salehuddin Chowdhury, former director of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, passed away at Combined Military Hospital at 6:30pm on Thursday.



He was 71 and had tested positive for Covid-19, said a press release.

The deceased was buried at his home village on Friday morning.

He is survived by his wife, two children and numerous admirers.

Throughout his career, he has been director general of Bangladesh Sugar Crush Research Institute, president of Krishibid Institute of Bangladesh (KIB) and board member of KIB Complex.

Six months

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The government has also exempted land revenue for holdings upto 25 bighas. As a part of decentralisation of the administrative authority the subdivisions have been upgraded to districts.

DIPLOMATIC VICTORY IN MIDDLE EAST

Bangladesh has scored a major diplomatic victory by making a breakthrough in the Middle East hitherto considered a safe zone for Pakistan.

What hastened Iraq, the first country from the Middle East, to accord recognition to Bangladesh is not known yet but it is now clear that the Middle East countries are getting to realise that they no longer can ignore Bangladesh – the second largest Muslim country in the world.

Foreign policy experts observe that the Iraqi recognition will set in motion phased out recognition by other Middle East countries.

SOURCES: July 12, 1972 issues of *Bangladesh Observer*, *Dainik Bangla* and *Dainik Ittefaq*.

California

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planning to offer mostly online-only education to their more than 10,000 foreign students, as well as US students, this fall.

"Shame on the Trump Administration for risking not only the education opportunities for students who earned the chance to go to college, but now their health and well-being as well," said Attorney General Becerra.

Forcing Californian universities and colleges to open in-person classes would threaten their finances and could turn them into "super-spreaders" of the disease, Becerra said.

The federal prosecutor for heavily Democratic California -- who has filed dozens of lawsuits over the Republican president's policies -- added: "We'll see the Trump Administration in court."

Harvard University, which also plans online-only classes next year, filed a separate lawsuit against the policy on Wednesday, along with MIT.

Deforestation

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Mourao said international investors want Brazil to show "results" in fighting Amazon deforestation before they will consider participating in environmental protection projects in the country.

President Jair Bolsonaro, a climate change skeptic, has facilitated farming and mining projects on protected land and indigenous reserves.

"It's not true that we're destroying the jungle to produce food," he said, also denying that Brazil was dismantling the state's environmental protection structure.



This handout photo taken and released yesterday by Singapore's Ministry of Communications and Information shows the city-state's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (C) waving as he cast his vote at Alexandra Primary School during the general election in Singapore. Wearing masks and gloves and being careful to observe social distancing, Singaporeans yesterday voted in a general election as the city-state struggles to recover from the coronavirus outbreak.

PHOTO: AFP

2 arrested for raping minor girl

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Station OC Mohammad Mainuddin said the eighth grader had been stalking the 12-year-old girl on her way to her madrasa for a long time.

On April 15, the girl was alone at her home, and the boy entered the house and raped her, the police officer said.

The boy told his friend Atiqul about the incident and Atiqul started blackmailing the girl that he would disclose the incident if she did not agree to have physical relations with him.

On May 28, Atiqul forcibly took

the girl to his house and the two raped her and caught the incident on mobile phone, the statement said.

The accused then asked her to continue physical relations. They threatened her to release the video clip, if she did not agree.

As the girl turned down their proposal, they shared the clip with some of their friends in the locality on Thursday. Following this, the victim's father lodged the case.

In Noakhali's Begumganj, police held three people, including a union

parishad member, for holding a village arbitration over a rape incident, while a female quack was held for giving medicine to abort the girl's pregnancy. But the rape accused, Kawsar Ahmed Hamid, 28, of Durgapur village in Begumganj upazila, was yet to be arrested.

Police said Kawsar had an affair with the 15-year-old girl and they had physical relations.

At one stage, the girl became pregnant.

On July 6, Kawsar forced the girl to have the abortion.

Later, both the families sat in an arbitration and decided that Kawsar would marry the girl. But he started dillydallying to marry the girl.

On Thursday night, the victim's mother lodged a case against 11 people.

Following the case, police arrested the four, said Harunur Rashid Chowdhury, OC of Begumganj Police Station.

The arrestees were produced before a Noakhali court which sent them to jail.

[Our Mymensingh and Noakhali correspondents contributed to this report]

Scientists find 'stream' of stars in our galaxy

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through our galaxy. "If there are any clumps of stars that are moving together in a particular fashion, that usually tells us that there is a reason that they're moving together," said Lina Necib, a postdoctoral scholar in theoretical physics at Caltech, who led the study, in a statement.

To find the stars now known as Nyx, researchers combined two major

projects that look to catalogue the workings of our galaxy. They were the "FIRE" project which is creating detailed simulations of the galaxy based on our full understanding of how they form and change over time, which worked alongside the Gaia space observatory's project to produce a full 3D map of our Milky Way and those stars beyond it, which hopes to catalogue about a billion stars.

Researchers hope to use both experiments to try and understand how the vast Milky Way that includes our own Sun came about.

But the new breakthrough came from using the two together – they first tracked the movements of stars as they moved through the virtual galaxy, and watched for ways to understand whether they had formed within the galaxy or if they had arrived there

from elsewhere, and then comparing that with real data from Gaia to understand where real stars are likely to have come from.

When the two pieces were combined, the researchers found that there appeared to be a huge, unexpected structure in the data. There seemed to be a cluster of 250 stars that was rotating alongside the Milky Way, but heading towards its centre.

A severe blow to foreign students

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must depart the country or take other measures, such as transferring to a school with in-person instruction to remain in lawful status," it said.

"If not, they may face immigration consequences including, but not limited to, the initiation of removal proceedings," it said.

The new policy came at a time when the number of Bangladeshi students is growing fast in the US.

According to the 2019 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, the number of students from Bangladesh studying in the United States stood at 8,249 during the most recent academic year (2018/2019).

This is an all-time high for Bangladesh, reflecting a 10 percent increase over the 2018 report and more than tripling since 2009.

Bangladesh now ranks 20th in the world in terms of sending students to the US for higher education.

The increase in the number of Bangladeshi students is highest in the South Asian region. Out of total 8,249 Bangladeshi students studying in the US, 5,278 study at the graduate level, a

13.5 percent increase over 2017/2018 academic year.

"A MINDLESS NEW POLICY" Nuhan said based on the recent instructions imposed by the ICE, international students risk being deported if universities conduct all courses online this fall.

"This means we will either have to leave the USA or transfer to a school that is conducting in-person classes," he said.

Now, since many students chose to go home due to the pandemic, they will be asked to risk their health and fly back. And if the student is in a country with travel restrictions, he/she may even have trouble coming back for in-person classes, risking visa status, he feared.

My international peers are scrambling to find expensive flights on short notice, knowing they'll have to actively risk an in-person semester or risk losing the education they worked so hard for.

"None of this is fair to us and with how the F-1 visa works, we can't do much to advocate for our rights and have to rely on our domestic peers and administration to step up for us to force a change", he added.

Nuren Iftekhar, a graduate student of chemistry at Virginia Tech said that being thousands of miles away from the country to pursue higher studies can be stressful for many reasons.

"But I honestly didn't think I'd have to wake up one day and be threatened with the prospect of being evacuated for a mindless new policy," he said.

"The fact that a decision like this would be taken against a large number of students is inhumane. We are once again being a victim of an asinine bureaucratic move that berates our hard work", he added.

The likely scenario is that the university authority would be unwillingly reopening their class putting the lives of students at risk. "Meanwhile on a personal level I'm now living under the constant worry of having to abandon my research that I've been working on for the past year and be forced out of the country, not knowing if I'd even be able to come back again," Nuren added.

He said the university and the professors are just as troubled by the situation. Their research is driven by a large participation from the international students.

"To say that the directive has been infuriating and even demeaning is an understatement", Prionti Dipita Nasir a student of Rochester Institute of Technology said.

Many of her friends at colleges that have chosen to be fully online are preparing to take leaves of absence, while still trying to push their respective college authorities to find suitable workarounds.

Too many of them are financially drained already, and so flying back home will be a difficult undertaking. "We are signing petitions to the government with the hope that it might miraculously end up reaching and swaying them", she said.

"Until the directive was declared, I was frowning at my college's decision to adopt a hybrid model -- one that will mix a high percentage of in-person classes with online offerings. This has proved to be a blessing in disguise because I, like other international students in my college, can remain in the country and continue my studies".

"But this is entirely conditional. If fully online instruction becomes necessary at any point, the directive will have serious implications for us," she said.

France uncovers 'massive fraud' of virus wage payouts

AFP, Paris

The Paris prosecutor's office said yesterday that it was investigating "massive fraud" across France by people falsely claiming temporary wage assistance for employees laid off during the coronavirus lockdown.

As the crisis hit, the government quickly introduced a system to pay around 84 percent of net salary for people no longer able to work.

Thousands of firms applied for the payments, allowing millions of people to avoid a sudden drop in revenue -- in the first month alone the programme paid out some 24 billion euros (\$27 billion).

But officials soon began noticing suspicious similarities in some applications, in many cases by people who surreptitiously used the tax registration numbers of firms that had not applied for the funds.

WHO releases new guidelines

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avoid crowds and ensure good ventilation in buildings, in addition to social distancing, and encourage masks when physical distancing is not possible.

"This is a move in the right direction, albeit a small one. It is becoming clear that the pandemic is driven by super-spreading events, and that the best explanation for many of those events is aerosol transmission," said Jose Jimenez, a chemist at the University of Colorado who signed the letter, which was published on Monday in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*.

In a press briefing on Thursday, Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said there is not a lot of solid evidence yet on airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2, but added: "I think it's a reasonable assumption that it does occur."

Although incomplete, Fauci said the evidence so far is "the fundamental basis for why we are now so intent on getting people -- particularly people without symptoms -- to wear masks. To be able to see if we can mitigate against that," he said.

Only a very small number of diseases are believed to be spread via aerosols, or tiny floating particles. These include measles

and tuberculosis -- two highly contagious pathogens that can linger in the air for hours and require extreme precautions to prevent exposure, reports Reuters.

Prior WHO guidance only acknowledged airborne transmission of the novel coronavirus during specific medical procedures. Linsey Marr, an aerosol expert at Virginia Tech who contributed to the WHO letter, said in an email that she is encouraged the agency is now acknowledging that airborne transmission may occur.

But she said the WHO is using an "outdated definition of droplets and aerosols" and is too focused on the size of the droplets and the distance they travel.

WHO defines aerosols as being under 5 microns because only particles that small could float in the air long enough to be inhaled. However, Jimenez and Marr said a much larger range of particle size has been shown to contribute to infection.

Rather than size, they said the differences between droplets and aerosols should be based on how the infection occurs: If a person inhales the virus and becomes infected, it's an aerosol. If the infection occurs by contact, they are droplets.

Although WHO has been focused on airborne transmission at long distances,

Marr said breathing in aerosols "is of greater concern at close contact and when people are in the same room."

WHO TEAM HEADS TO CHINA

An epidemiologist and an animal health specialist from the WHO were flying to China yesterday to try and identify the animal source of the pandemic.

The WHO said the advance team would be in Beijing for the weekend as they lay the ground for a wider mission aimed at identifying how the virus entered the human species.

"They're in the air right now," WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told reporters in Geneva.

Harris said there was no set timeframe for their mission, reports AFP.

The novel coronavirus has killed at least 550,000 people and infected more than 12.1 million since it emerged in China last December.

Scientists believe the killer virus jumped from animals to humans, possibly from a market in the city of Wuhan selling exotic animals for meat.

Chinese officials said early in the outbreak that the virus may have spread from a market in the city, which sold live and wild animals, but no further confirmation of that has been revealed.

'Member'

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Humayun was wanted in a case filed with Gulshan Police Station under Digital Security Act, the statement added.

Asked about Humayun's involvement, the ATU official refused to give an official comment.

They said that they have arrested Humayun after analysing his digital activities and they would be able to say clearly about him after interrogating during remand.

No respite

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Together the two spells would stretch the flood situation for three weeks this year, they said.

"The water level is going to rise for the next one week and it will take another few days for the water to recede. So the flood will sustain this time for another 10 to 12 days," said Md Arifuzzaman, executive engineer of FFWC, yesterday.

Analysing the floods since 1984, Professor AKM Saiful Islam of the Institute of Water and Flood Management (IWFM) found floods occurring in June only in 2000, 2010, 2012 and this year.

"In 1998 the flood lasted for 33 days. This year also the flood will last for at least 3 weeks," he said.

In the last five years, there were three big floods in 2016, 2017 and 2019, the professor said.

In 2016, the water level of the Padma-Jamuna confluence at Bahadurabad point in Sirajganj reached 20.71 metres breaking the record of 1988, which was 20.62 metres. In 2017, the water level rose to 20.84 metres breaking the record of 2016 and in 2019 the water level reached 21.16 metres breaking the record of 2017.

People's sufferings continue

Our Moulvibazar correspondent reports quoting Mahfuz Shakil, a resident from Nabiganj area, that water has entered his house as downpour continued since yesterday.

Saber Mia's house in Sylhet's Teghria is also inundated forcing him to plan moving to a flood shelter.

Executive engineer Sahibur Rahman from the Water Development Board (WDB) in Sunamganj informed The Daily Star that the Jadukata and the Surma rivers were flowing 30 cm above the danger level.

Meanwhile, our Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat correspondents said the Teesta started swelling and was flowing 15 centimetres above the danger mark at 3.00 pm yesterday.

The danger level of the river at Dalia point near Teesta barrage is 52.60 metre.

Executive Engineer Rabiul Islam of WDB at Dalia division said to ease the flood situation all the 45 gates of the barrage had been opened.

Teesta already flooded at least 15 shoals of Dimla and Jaldhaka upazila, marooning about 20,000 people.

Aklas Uddin from Teesta River's char Dowan in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha upazila just returned home after 10 days from a makeshift shelter on a highway. He had taken refuge there with his family from the first spell of flood.

"Now, we are going to face another flood," Aklas panicked.

Murder, rape

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him dead after he was rushed there, he added.

Later police confirmed his identity as Guraputu, OC Shahjahan said.

A locally made firearm, two rounds of ammunition and 200 pieces of yaba pills were also recovered from the spot, he said.

The body was handed over to family members following legal procedures.

Three cases for murder, arms and drug were filed in this regard, the OC said.

UN cross-border aid to Syria hangs on Russian decision

AFP, United Nations

The UN will announce the results of a vote on a resolution to prolong cross-border humanitarian aid to war-torn Syria, the authorization for which expires that evening.

It is unclear whether Russia, which vetoed a previous draft just three days prior, will once more block the vital assistance.

Stopping cross-border aid would be "a devastating blow to the millions of Syrian families who rely on this aid for clean water, food, health care and shelter," warned the NGO Oxfam.

Russia and China on Tuesday vetoed a draft resolution by Germany and Belgium providing for a one-year extension of the cross-border authorization and the maintenance of two crossing points on the Turkish border -- at Bab al-Salam, which leads to the Aleppo region, and Bab al-Hawa, which serves the Idlib region.

The UN authorization allows the body to distribute aid to displaced Syrians without needing permission from Damascus.

Russia and China argue that the UN authorization violates Syria's sovereignty, and that aid can increasingly be channeled through Syrian authorities.

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