

**CHILD MARRIAGE MARKS SHARP RISE IN JUNE**

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**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**2,666**  
New cases in 24hrs



**1,83,795**  
Total cases



**2,352**  
Deaths



**93,614**  
Recoveries



**GLOBAL UPDATE**



**569,098**  
Deaths



**12,926,176**  
Total cases

DEAL WITH REGENT HOSPITAL

## DGHS, ministry take refuge in blame game

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The health ministry and health directorate are at loggerheads over signing of a deal with Regent Hospital after the disturbing discovery of the hospital's involvement in issuing fake Covid-19 test results.

Neither the ministry nor the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) is now taking the blame.

The DGHS signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Regent in late March, turning it into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital, in a ceremony attended by Health Minister Zahid Maleque and many high officials.

The MoU was signed even though the DGHS knew that the hospital's licence had expired years ago.

Amid widespread criticism, the DGHS in a statement on Saturday said that it was directed by higher authorities at the health ministry to sign the MoU.

The health ministry yesterday asked the director general of DGHS to explain in three working days what his office meant by "directed by higher authorities".

The health services division of the ministry sent the letter signed by a deputy secretary. The letter wanted to know what was being considered while the deal was inked.

A health ministry official told The Daily Star that: "We are not responsible for the MoU, yet they [DGHS] blamed us. The ministry is going to issue another letter asking them to explain what the basis of their claim is."

Another official said the hospital was supposed to treat the Covid-19

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People living in Koborstan alley of the capital's Shyampur Muktaadhara residential area have been receiving orange-colour water from their Wasa lines for long. Many of them face stomach aches and skin diseases if the water is used for cooking or bathing. They are now forced to purchase drinking water. Inset, some water supply lines going into homes over a drain.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

JKG HEALTH CARE

## Dr Sabrina held over fake Covid certificates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested JKG Health Care Chairman Dr Sabrina Arif Chowdhury, also a government official, over issuing fake Covid-19 test reports, about three weeks after the scam came to light.

Meanwhile, the health ministry suspended Sabrina from the post of registrar at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases for violating rules.

Sheikh Muzibur Rahman, additional secretary of the Health Services Division, confirmed this to The Daily Star.

According to the ministry's order, she was suspended for professional misconduct -- holding the post of chairman of a private organisation while in public service -- and also corruption allegations.

As asked by the investigators, Sabrina went to the office of the deputy com-

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## Positivity rate soars despite poor testing

47 more die; 2,666 reported infected

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

The coronavirus positivity rate in the country has soared in the last few days despite a decline in the number of tests during this period.

The health directorate yesterday confirmed 2,666 new cases after testing 11,059 samples in the last 24 hours till yesterday afternoon, meaning the rate was 24.11 percent.

This is the highest single-day positivity rate since the first case was detected in the country on March 8.

Positivity rate is the percentage of positive cases against the total number of tests in a day.

The total number of infections in the country stood at 1,83,795.

Meanwhile, 47 more people died from the Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 2,352. The current death rate against the total infections is 1.27 percent.

The number of Covid-19 patients recovered during this period was 5,580, taking the tally to 93,614. The current

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## Major sex-work racket busted

CID claims to have arrested the ring leader, two associates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department yesterday claimed to have arrested the ringleader and two members of a syndicate that has been trafficking thousands of girls and forcing them into sex work.

The arrestees are Md Azam Khan, 45, the "godfather", and his associates Anwar Hossain Moyna, 50, and Alamin Hossain alias Diamond, 35.

Imtiaz Ahmed, deputy inspector general of the CID, disclosed the arrests while addressing reporters yesterday. He, however, would not divulge the time and place of the arrests.

Azam and those who worked for him would lure in girls aged 18-20 saying they would be provided with good jobs in Dubai.

They would never take money from the girls for travel and would instead pay them Tk 20,000-30,000 as advance salary.

Once the girls would reach Dubai, they would first be given jobs as receptionists or waitresses at three- or four-star hotels. A few days later, they would be forced to work at dance clubs and then as sex workers.

The girls would be tortured with electric shocks if they refused. Dubai authorities recently informed the Bangladesh embassy in United Arab Emirates about Azam's criminal activities, said Imtiaz.

"After coming to Bangladesh, Azam was trying to manage another passport to leave the country. On information, the CID arrested him with two associates," he said.

CID officials said Azam owned three four-star hotels and one three-star hotel in Dubai.

The hotels are Fortune Grand Hotel (four stars), Fortune Pearl Hotel

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## Sharpest rise in coronavirus cases in July

Report says the number of infections worldwide doubled in just a month and a half

AGENCIES

The coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 565,000 people out of nearly 13 million registered cases worldwide, has been accelerating sharply since the start of July, according to a count carried out by AFP from official sources.

The three biggest daily worldwide increases in new cases were seen on Saturday (more than 230,000), Friday (more than 225,000) and Thursday (nearly 220,000).

Since July 1, nearly 2.5 million new cases have been officially declared, a record level since the outbreak was first reported in China in December. The number of declared cases worldwide has doubled in just a month and a half, according to the report.

The United States (3,247,782 cases), Brazil (1,839,850), India (849,553), Russia (727,162) and Peru (322,710) account for more than half of the global total.

Worldwide, a total of at least

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MP'S ARREST IN KUWAIT

## Expatriates may suffer the fallout

Say speakers at webinar organised by Kuwait Transparency Society and TIB

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The arrest and trial of a Bangladeshi lawmaker in Kuwait on charges of human trafficking, money laundering and bribery is damaging the reputation of Bangladesh's politics, society and the people as a whole, Transparency International Bangladesh has said.

It may affect the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Kuwait, as well as the reputations of the expatriates working in other countries, the anti-corruption watchdog observed.

"Bangladeshi migrants in Kuwait may face job losses and repatriation," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said at a webinar titled "Role of Civil Society in Combating Organized Crimes," jointly organised by the Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS) and TIB yesterday.

Shahid Islam Papul, the lawmaker from Luxmipur-2, was arrested by Kuwait CID on June 6 and sent to jail after being interrogated by Kuwait's Public Prosecution.

Papul co-owned Marafie Kuwaitia Group with a Kuwaiti citizen. He is the managing director and CEO of the group and is accused of trafficking of some 20,000 foreign workers, mostly Bangladeshis, in exchange for Tk 7-9 lakh each.

Migrants alleged that many of them were not provided with jobs and wages as contracted and were instead charged money for work permit renewal. He also stands accused of bribing Kuwaiti officials for contracts for his company, the recruitment of foreign workers and laundering

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COVID CRISIS

## Buzz gone missing at book bazaars

NILIMA JAHAN

As the coronavirus pandemic has taken its toll on almost every business in some way or another, bookstores and book cafes in the capital are no exception.

Although the book markets in Nilkhet and Banglabazar, along with the book cafes in different areas of the capital, reopened in early June, they have been seeing a very few number of visitors, which has forced many owners to give up on their businesses.

Bookworms expressed their heartache on social media after the recent closure of Nilkhet's age-old Mostofa Boighor.

Fifty-five-year-old popular bookseller Golam Mostofa, who never tried his hand at any profession except selling books, had to sell his 30-year-old book store in the last week of June. He was not being able to pay the rent of Tk 45,000 as for his small shop with five depots.

"I thought the reopening after three months might help us to survive. But I was wrong. Our business is linked with the presence of students, especially university students. But you see, everyone is now in their village home, the nearby halls are empty, and we don't know when the educational institutions will be opened," said Mostofa.

He said it was getting impossible for him to wait for the uncertainty to end as his

sales dropped to Tk 1,500 per day in June as opposed to the regular daily sales of Tk 15,000-20,000.

Mostofa sold his store with around 15,000 books at Tk 14,50,000 and is now planning to go to his village home.

Staffers at these stores were pitchforked into an even more difficult situation as many of them are facing salary cuts and fearing job losses in the coming days.

For example, Rafiqul Islam, who has been working at the Barnali Boighor of Nilkhet Islamia Market for the past 25 years, is already facing a pay cut.

"We sell guides for BCS and other recruitment tests. I don't find more than two to three customers every day since the reopening of the market," he said, adding "I don't know how long the owner will pay the rent and give our salaries."

The situation is quite similar at the wholesale bookstores in Banglabazar.

For instance, Mojibur Rahman, owner of Muna Book Depot, is not opening his stores regularly for the last few days due to the decrease in sales. He supplies books to almost 30 book stores of Nilkhet every day. But he hardly received an order after reopening this time.

Reopening couldn't help the popular bookshop cafes like Dipanpur, Nalonda or Kobita Café as well, although these

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Cattle traders travelling towards the capital riding on the tailgate of a truck loaded with cattle. They are neither following the basic safety measures on roads nor the health guidelines for Covid-19 prevention. The photo was taken on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Radio Colony area of Savar.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Former JCD activist hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A group of unidentified criminals hacked a former activist of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) to death in Ramgarh upazila of Khagrachhari.

The victim -- Omar Faruq, 30, former joint convener of JCD Ramgarh College unit -- breathed his last at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Samsuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Ramgarh Police Station, said a group of miscreants swooped on Faruq around 11:00pm on Saturday and stabbed him indiscriminately with sharp weapons.

Critically injured, he was rushed to CMCH where he was declared dead. The body was sent to CMCH morgue for autopsy, he said, adding that the reason behind the murder could not be known immediately.

No case was filed in this regard as of 7:10pm today, said the OC.

Meanwhile, Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, president of Khagrachhari district unit BNP, demanded immediate arrest of the criminals.

## 'Drug peddler' killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

An alleged Rohingya drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight" with BGB members in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf early yesterday.

Syed Alam, 35, was a Myanmar national, but he had been living in Naitangpara of the upazila for the last 10 years.

On information that a large consignment of yaba pills would be smuggled into Bangladesh from Myanmar, a BGB team took position in Keyari Khal area, said Lt Col Foysal Hasan Khan, commander of BGB Battalion-2.

Around 2:00am, the team noticed two men roaming the area and another crossing the Naf river into Bangladesh from Myanmar, the BGB official said.

Seeing this, the troops asked the three to stop, but they opened fire, defying the instruction, injuring two of the BGB members, he said.

In self-defence, the BGB men retaliated, triggering the "gunfight", he added.

After the "gun battle", the BGB team found a man with bullet wounds.

The injured was taken to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex that referred him to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

He was declared dead after being taken to the hospital, the BGB official added.

The BGB claimed to have recovered 40,000 yaba tablets and a firearm from the spot.

## Buzz gone

FROM PAGE 1

or Kobita Café as well, although these places used to be a favourite hub for the literature aficionados a few months ago. Every evening, people would come to read books and have talks while sipping on their coffee.

The owners of these cafes, however, said customers hardly visited their shops after the shutdown.

Dipanpur was established on July 12, 2017, on the eve of the 45th birth anniversary of the slain publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan, and after three years of successful operation, Dipan's wife Dr Razia Rahman Jolly and his friends were planning to put an end to their endeavour last month, as the revenue plummeted to zero during and after the shutdown.

But as the news of the closure spread, some literary minds and friends gave Jolly a hand to continue to the venture. The Book shop opened on a limited scale on July 10.

Nahida Ashrafi, the owner of Kobita Café, too was about to shut her shop last month but changed her mind after being assured by the cultural affairs ministry about a stimulation package allotted for her business to survive.

"Since we got assurance from the ministry, we are hoping to open the café again in the first week of August, but I don't know how long we could survive," she said.

Jewel Redwanur, the owner of Café Nalonda, could not afford the continuous loss and closed the shop the last month.

"I applied for the stimulation package from the cultural affairs ministry, but I've heard they are providing only Tk one lakh. We need more than this amount every month to keep the café open," he said.

## UN to hold crisis talks as decaying Yemen tanker risks disaster

AFP, Dubai

An abandoned oil tanker lying off Yemen's coast with 1.1 million barrels of crude on board is deteriorating badly and could rupture at any time, with disastrous results for Red Sea marine life, UN and other experts warn.

The 45-year-old FSO Safer is anchored off the port of Hodeida under the control of the Iran-backed Huthi rebels, who have blocked United Nations efforts to send a team of experts to assess its condition.



The hustle and bustle of the Gulistan area in the capital is back after months of calm since the coronavirus outbreak. Hawkers are back taking over the pavement and the buses stop in the middle of the street to pick up passengers. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Sharpest rise in virus cases

FROM PAGE 1

12,736,737 infections, including 565,151 deaths, have been recorded.

Europe is the most affected continent in terms of fatalities, with 202,396 out of 3,355,128 cases while the hardest-hit country the United States has registered 134,815 deaths.

President Donald Trump appeared on Saturday for the first time publicly wearing a mask, as more than 66,000 new cases were recorded in the United States, according to the Johns Hopkins University, a new daily record.

In Florida, where nearly one in six of those new infections were recorded, the Walt Disney World theme park partially reopened after four months of shutdown prompted by the virus.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the region where the disease is surging the most, with more than 76,000 new cases registered on July 11.

Elsewhere, French officials warned of rising cases in metropolitan France as the death toll there topped 30,000.

Hungary's government barred travel from Africa, most of Asia apart from China and Japan, and restricting entry from several European countries after worldwide spikes in cases.

Australia's Victoria state marked a week of triple-digit increases in new infections yesterday, while a community outbreak in neighbouring New South Wales (NSW) has put the state on high alert.

LANKA CANCELS RALLIES  
Sri Lanka's ruling party yesterday

called off its rallies ahead of upcoming parliamentary elections and delayed the international airport's reopening over a surge in virus cases.

The South Asian country of 21 million lifted its lockdown in late June after declaring there was no longer any community spread of the virus.

But a swathe of cases emerged last week, including an outbreak at a drug rehabilitation centre that saw 253 patients tested positive in a single night.

India yesterday registered a record increase in the number of cases, taking the total number of affected people in the country to nearly 850,000, the world's third-highest, and prompting authorities to re-impose partial lockdowns in some densely populated areas.

Federal health ministry data showed that more than 27,100 new cases were reported in the previous 24 hours, while the death toll increased to 22,674, after 551 people succumbed in a day.

Iran's supreme leader yesterday called the resurgence of the coronavirus in the country "truly tragic" and urged all citizens to help stem what has been the region's deadliest outbreak.

"Let everyone play their part in the best way to break the chain of transmission in the short term and save the country," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a video conference with lawmakers, according to his office.

## INDONESIA OUTBREAK

Nearly 1,300 people at the Indonesian Army Officer Candidate School in the country's most populated province of West Java were tested positive and quarantined, with 30 initially hospitalised with mild symptoms, an official said.

Of the 1,280 confirmed infections, 991 are cadets and the rest are staff and their family members. Most have no symptoms.

On Friday, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called on countries to adopt an aggressive approach to tackling the virus, citing successful mitigation efforts in Italy, South Korea and elsewhere.

"Only aggressive action combined with national unity and global solidarity can turn this pandemic around," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted a decision to allow bars and other businesses to reopen may have come "too soon" after his country reported a record 1,500 new infections on Friday.

In Hong Kong, a spike has marked a setback for the city after daily life had largely returned to normal, with restaurants and bars resuming regular business and cultural attractions reopening.

Schools in the city will be closed from today after the city recorded "exponential growth" in locally transmitted infections.

other charges. Most of the cases were filed under Section 420 of the Penal Code.

NO EXPLANATION FROM DGHS  
Following the raid, the health service division on July 7 asked the DGHS to cancel the MoU with Regent immediately and to explain how Regent got permission to run as a Covid-19 hospital when it didn't have proper licence.

The division also asked the DGHS to launch an investigation into the allegation regarding the fake Covid-19 test results and the collection of samples from people's homes violating the MoU.

Contacted, Muhibur Rahman, additional secretary (hospital) of health division, said they had yet to receive the explanation from the DGHS.

## Positivity rate soars

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recovery rate is 50.93 percent.

Speaking on the positivity rate, experts said data suggest that the transmission of the virus is declining in the urban areas and is increasing in the rural areas.

The latest testing data from multiple labs in Dhaka and Narayanganj show a stable trend in the transmission of virus infection in these two major hotspots.

"When we started, we found around 40 percent positivity rate. It declined over the time and it was between 12 and 18 percent during the last seven days [as of Saturday]," Prof Saif Ullah Munshi, chairman of Virology at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) who heads the BSMMU Covid-19 testing lab, told The Daily Star.

Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist, said it was tough to measure the reality with inadequate testing.

"But transmission seems stable in Dhaka and Narayanganj, because most of the people are maintaining health guidelines," he said.

In Narayanganj, the average positive rate was 19.5 percent during the first 10 days of June, according

to Narayanganj Civil Surgeon Dr Mohammad Imtiaz.

The rate has dropped to around 12 percent in the first 10 days of this month, he said.

The number of Covid-19 tests has dropped significantly in recent weeks after the government imposed fees on the tests from the beginning of July.

DAILY BRIEFING  
Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general of DGHS said 43 of the deceased died at different hospitals while four died at home.

She said 50 percent deaths were reported from Dhaka division and 26.28 percent from Chattogram division and 2.34 percent from Mymensingh division.

Of the dead, she said, 36 were male and rest were female.

She said 23 of them were from Dhaka, six from Chattogram, six from Khulna, four from Sylhet, four from Rajshahi, two from Rangpur and two others from Barishal divisions.

One of them was aged between 11 and 20 years, two between 21 and 30, three were between 31 and 40, four between 41 and 50, 15 between 51 and 60, 14 between 61 and 70, six within 71 and 80 and two were between 81 and 90 years, Dr Nasima also said.

## Major sex-work racket busted

FROM PAGE 1

(three stars), City Tower Hotel (four stars) and Fortune Royal Hotel (four stars).

DIG Imtiaz said Azam has around 50 brokers in different districts of the country.

The brokers would lure girls with the hopes of a job that would pay Tk 50,000 thousand per month, he said.

Once the girls would agree, Azam took support from some agencies and managed tourist visas for these girls and would send them to Dubai in cooperation with two foreign airlines, he added.

"We have found the involvement of two airlines company that would take these girls out of the country," the DIG said.

Without disclosing the names of the airlines, he further said they are investigating the roles of those and the recruiting agencies.

The brokers would get Tk 10,000 for managing each girl, said DIG Imtiaz.

About the syndicate, he said they have come to know that Azam's two brothers are in Dubai and they also help him operate the syndicate.

"Besides, we have also found the involvement of two Indian and several Pakistani nationals," he said.

"We often face problem to investigate transitional crimes as the accused are found to be staying in different countries," he said.

Azam, from Chattogram's Fatikhkhari, was wanted in 15 separate cases, including six for murder, said the CID.

## Dr Sabrina arrested over

FROM PAGE 1

missioner of DMP's Tejgaon Division around 1:00pm yesterday.

"During the three-hour questioning, she could not give any satisfactory answers. We showed her arrested in the fraudulence case," Harun-Ur-Rashid, the DMP deputy commissioner, told journalists at his office yesterday afternoon.

Sabrina had earlier talked to the media as a spokesperson for the private organisation. As a government official, she cannot be the chairman of any such entity, the official pointed out.

She, however, has denied holding the post since the scam surfaced.

"All the arrestees in the case said Sabrina is the chairman of JKG Health Care. She cannot avoid her responsibility for what happened ...," the DC mentioned.

Asked why it took so long to arrest her, he said the investigation officer was gathering information on her.

Police said they would produce Sabrina before court today and seek her remand for questioning.

Earlier on June 24, police had arrested her husband and JKG Chief Executive Officer Ariful Chowdhury and four others for their alleged involvement in issuing fake Covid test reports.

The four are -- Humayun Kabir and his wife Tanzina Patwary, Sayeed Chowdhury and Al Mamun.

Humayun and Tanzina are former employees of JKG Health Care while Sayeed and Al Mamun still work there.

Md Mahmud Khan, assistant commissioner of DMP's Tejgaon Zone,

said Humayun, a graphic designer, prepared fake Covid test reports by duplicating official pads of the DGHS and the IEDCR.

"We have found fake IEDCR pads on JKG Health Care's laptops," said the police official.

If the coronavirus patient was a local, he or she would have to pay Tk 5,000 for a fake report. For a foreign national, the charge was \$100, Mahmud said.

Four cases have already been filed against JKG Health Care on various charges including fraudulence.

Earlier on Saturday, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) cancelled the permission for JKG Health Care to collect samples over allegations of irregularities and corruption.

Yesterday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said Regent Hospital owner Mohammad Shahed, allegedly involved in Covid test report scam, has no way to flee the country.

"Shahed has to surrender, otherwise he will be arrested... There is no way he can flee the country as his passport has been seized," he told reporters after a meeting at his ministry.

NBR'S DIRECTIVE

The National Board of Revenue yesterday directed banks to freeze the accounts of Shahed, Ariful, Sabrina and Regent Hospital Director Ibrahim Khalil.

It also ordered freezing the accounts of Regent Hospital, Regent KCS Ltd and JKG Health Care.

The tax authority asked the banks concerned to provide it with information on all those accounts.

## Britain pledges £705m to prepare post-Brexit borders

AFP, London

Britain yesterday pledged £705 million (\$890 million, 788 million euros) to prepare its borders for cutting ties with the European Union on December 31, amid concern within government that it is not ready.

The money will fund new border posts, IT systems and 500 new staff to both ensure security and handle new customs controls after Britain leaves the EU's single market and customs union, the government said in a

statement.

Britain ended its EU membership on January 31, almost four years after the historic Brexit vote, but agreed a standstill transition period until the end of the year while it tries to negotiate a new trade deal with Brussels.

The talks are moving slowly, sparking alarm among businesses that almost half a century of economic integration with the EU will end abruptly in a few months' time.

## Stranded in a strange land

15 Bangladeshis in Vietnam cry out for rescue

PORIMOL PALMA

As trafficking of Bangladeshis to Vietnam came to the fore after 27 stranded nationals demonstrated in Hanoi last week, 15 others are crying out to be rescued from the Southeast Asian country.

They said they were taken to Vietnam in early January, with promise of regular jobs in shipyards and minimum monthly salary of 650 US dollars. They were charged Tk 4-5 lakh each.

They were all given smart cards, which means Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, the regulatory body for overseas jobs sector in Bangladesh, issued them emigration clearance and licensed recruiting agents processed their visas, they said.

"After reaching Vietnam, we discovered that there is no fixed job for us. Bangladeshi brokers Atiq, Saiful and Jabbar sold us to a Vietnamese labour supply company called MPH," Faridul Islam, one of the 15 Bangladeshis stranded in Guntao area of Ho Chi Minh City, told this newspaper.

He said in the last six months, they were taken to many companies, neither of which could offer any job, except for a few days of employment.

"I was appointed to work for a glass factory for 22 days and was paid money equal to only Tk 7,000," Faridul, from Mymensingh's Trishal upazila, told The Daily Star over phone over the weekend.

Some others were employed by a few factories for a couple of days, but a percentage of the payments was pocketed by the brokers, he said.

"Throughout the last six months, we had to manage our own food and bring money from home to survive. I brought installments of Tk 50,000 twice," he continued.

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After finding out that he is Covid-19 negative, a young man celebrates by taking a selfie with the test result certificate in his hand and friends in the background at the capital's Mugda General Hospital yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Focus on online cattle markets

Home ministry suggests ahead of Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry yesterday suggested for giving an extra focus on online cattle markets ahead of Eid-ul-Azha to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

No cattle market will be allowed on the road and cattle-laden trucks must have banners mentioning the destination marketplace. Besides, such trucks will not be allowed to make a stoppage on the road.

The decisions came from a meeting at the home ministry, to review law and order situation ahead of the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

The meeting was chaired by Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan.

Senior Secretary of the Public Security Department Mostafa Kamal Uddin, Secretary of the Security Services division Md Shahiduzzaman, Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed and senior official of the ministry attended the meeting, among others.

According to a statement signed by home ministry's

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## Rajshahi airport remains shut due to doctor shortage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

After two months of suspension, flight operations on domestic routes finally resumed on June 1. However, even though most domestic airports of the country have started operations, Rajshahi's Shah Makhdom Airport is still closed due to the shortage of specialised doctors.

The airport has been lying shut since March 26 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, airport manager Md Sefatur Rahman said.

Last month, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) sent a letter to the Civil Surgeon of Rajshahi seeking a specialised doctor at the airport in order to maintain health guidelines, Civil Surgeon Dr Enamul Haque said. However, he was unable to do it.

"Appointing a specialised doctor at the airport is a luxury for us at the moment. We cannot even place doctors to other priority locations such as at railway stations, bus stands, and markets, which are more vulnerable than airports," Dr Haque also said.

This is because most specialised doctors are busy dealing with patients at hospitals, he said.

"Besides, what will be the function of a specialist doctor at the airport when necessary testing equipment aren't available there?" the civil surgeon said, adding, "The airport already has a deputy assistant community medical officer appointed who can perform primary check-ups."

While airports at Chattogram, Sayedpur, Sylhet, Jashore and Barishal have begun operation in three phases, airports at Rajshahi and Cox's Bazar are yet to open, airport manager Sefatur said.

He said the airports are unable to begin operations due to lack of doctors.

However, the authorities are considering reopening the airports with the medical officers or by appointing authorised doctors, he said.

"Our staffers are attending office regularly, waiting for orders for opening the airport," Sefatur said. "We are ready to resume operations."

## 368 killed in road accidents in June

Says Jatri Kalyan Samity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 368 people were killed and 518 others were injured in 358 road accidents across the country in June, a passengers' welfare body said yesterday.

For June, the death toll increased by 57.34 percent compared to that of May. In the meantime, the number of accidents and injured persons increased by 56.14 and 43.82 percent respectively, Jatri Kalyan Samity said in its monthly report, prepared based on reports published in national and regional newspapers and online news portals.

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of the welfare body, explained the sudden increase in the numbers saying, "In May, public transport movement was off due to the government enforced shutdown to contain the coronavirus. This is why the number of accidents and deaths were comparatively low for the month."

Additionally, he highlighted the lack of accountability of road safety agencies and their unabated corruption as one of the reasons behind the increase in statistics.

The report said at least 15 people were killed and four others were injured in 20 railway track accidents in June. In waterways, at least 45 people died, 60 were injured, and 10 went missing in 17 incidents, the report added.

## Bar council written exam likely in Sept

12,878 candidates in limbo, some protest near SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Since July 7, around 400 candidates have been demonstrating on the premises of Sonali Bank adjacent to the Supreme Court, demanding yearly enrolment of applicants in district courts, and enlistment of those who have passed the MCQ exams of 2017 and 2020 into the bar council.

Meanwhile, the bar council enrolment committee at a meeting on Saturday decided to take the written exam in September.

Ainul Islam Bishal, convener of Bangladesh Apprentice Lawyers' Association, said, "There is already a huge backlog. Hence our request was to enlist the 12,878 apprentice lawyers [into the bar council], who passed the MCQ exam in 2017 and 2020."

Advocate Yusuf Hossain Humayun, vice chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, on Saturday said they have decided to hold the written part of the exam in September. "We

discussed this in a virtual meeting. I cannot give an exact date yet as there is still a lot to be discussed -- exam halls must be arranged and we have to speak with educational institutions about this," he said.

The five-member committee consists of one judge from the Appellate Division, two judges of the High Court Division, the attorney general and a member of the bar council.

The protesters, however, said they are not convinced with this promise. Rather, they think that this is just an excuse to disperse them from the SC premises, said Ainul Islam Bishal.

The council's enrolment exams are supposed to be held every year in three steps -- one multiple choice question exam, one written exam and finally a viva voce.

The last time this process was completed in its entirety was in 2017, and no yearly enrolment was done in the last two years.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## AMASSING WEALTH ILLEGALLY

### ACC summons wife of lawmaker Shahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday summoned Kuwait-detained Bangladeshi lawmaker Mohammad Shahid Islam's wife and sister-in-law for quizzing over amassing wealth illegally.

In a letter signed by ACC's deputy director Md Salauddin, Shahid's wife lawmaker Selina Islam and sister-in-law Jesmin Akter were asked to appear before the commission on July 22, confirmed ACC Public Relations Officer Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya. There is allegation against Shahid, also director of NRB Commercial Bank, Selina and Jesmin of amassing wealth beyond the known source of income and laundering money abroad, the letter reads.

"For sake of fair investigation, it is necessary to record your statement," it said. On June 17, ACC imposed travel embargo on Shahid's wife, daughter and sister-in-law.

ACC asked the immigration department to prevent them from leaving the country. Earlier, the commission asked Selina and Jesmin to submit copies of their passports.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## SC'S APPELLATE DIVISION

### Full bench to start holding virtual proceedings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After four months, a full bench of Supreme Court's Appellate Division will start judicial functions virtually from today to hear and dispose of urgent cases.

The six-member bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, will begin proceedings at 10am and continue till 1:15pm.

Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court administration issued a circular, saying the bench will operate judicial functions on Monday and Thursday every week till further order.

The chief justice has decided to run virtual proceedings at the Appellate Division, strictly following health guidelines, according to the circular.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## LIBYA KILLINGS

### Sohag denied bail again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A virtual court in Dhaka yesterday again rejected a bail petition of Sohag Hossain in a case filed over trafficking of 26 Bangladeshis, who were killed in Libya on May 28.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after Sohag's lawyer submitted a criminal appeal against the rejection order of the lower court through an email.

In the order, the judge said it is a sensational case and the investigation officer -- CID Inspector AHM Rashed Fazal -- found his involvement in trafficking Bangladeshis to Libya. So, his bail was rejected.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on June 10 rejected his bail after his lawyer submitted a petition through videoconferencing.

On Thursday, the same court rejected bail petitions of two other accused -- Khalid Chowdhury and Mosammam Sanzida -- in the case.

Criminal Investigation Department on June 8 arrested Sohag, Khalid and Sanzida from different parts of Dhaka. Later, they were produced before a Dhaka court, which sent them to jail.

So far, 26 cases have been filed against 300 people with different police stations in connection with the incident. Sixty-seven people have so far been arrested and of them, 36 -- including an employee of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training -- were arrested by the CID. Of them, 20 have already given confessional statements in court.

## FRAUDULENCE BY 2 HOSPITALS

### Bring the accused to book quickly: Quader

UNB, Dhaka

People are astonished at the fraudulence of two hospitals in coronavirus sample testing, Road, Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

The minister made the remark while briefing reporters online from his official residence.

Quader, also Awami League general secretary, urged the authorities concerned to bring all the accused to justice soon after investigations.

The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina neither spared wrongdoers in the past nor will do so in the future, he added.

About cattle markets before the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha, the minister said permission will not be given to arrange such markets whimsically at any place beside highways.

Regarding experts' fear about coronavirus transmission during Eid, Quader said the National Technical Advisory Committee has advised not to allow setting up animal markets in some districts.

It will be better if their advice is followed properly, the minister added.

সম্মানিত গ্রাহকবৃন্দকে আরও উন্নত ব্যাংকিংসেবা প্রদানের লক্ষ্যে আমাদের দনিয়া শাখা এখন নতুন ঠিকানায় কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা করছে

**নতুন ঠিকানায় দনিয়া শাখা**

নতুন ঠিকানা: ৪৪৬ এশিয়া পার্ক নরায়ণাড়া ১নং মসজিদ রোড দনিয়া, কদমতলী, ঢাকা-১২৩৬

পুরাতন ঠিকানা: ৪৩৬ নরায়ণাড়া, ১নং মসজিদ রোড দনিয়া, শমিক আখড়া কদমতলী, ঢাকা-১২৩৬

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## RETURNEE MIGRANT WORKERS Govt to extend more support for their reintegration: minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is working to undertake some additional reintegration initiatives alongside the existing ones for the returnee migrant workers, said Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad yesterday.

He said this during an agreement signing ceremony between Probashi Kalyan Bank and Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) at the ministry, according to a press release.

Probashi Kalyan Bank Managing Director Mahtab Zabin and WEWB Director General Hamidur Rahman signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations, the release added.

Addressing as the chief guest, the minister said the ministry has already created a Tk 200 crore fund which will be disbursed as soft loan among returnee migrants who were affected by the coronavirus pandemic, for their sustainable reintegration.

Later, broader reintegration programme will be undertaken with the stimulus of Tk 500 crore announced by the prime minister, he said, adding, they were working for undertaking additional programmes for the reintegration.

He stressed for disbursing loan among migrants in group so that they can be benefited through cooperative.

Under the agreement, WEWB will provide the Tk 200 crore to the Probashi Kalyan Bank while the bank will disburse the money as soft loan at four percent interest rate among eligible applicants, said the release.

Returnee migrants who went overseas in regular way or sent remittance through authorised channel and family members of migrants who died with coronavirus infection will be eligible for the loan, it said.

They will have to use the loan as investment for small business, it added. Disbursement and management of the loan scheme will be implemented as per the rules formulated to this end.



An entire lane of this road in Kajla, Jatrabari has become too muddy for vehicles to pass through, resulting in heavy congestion on the rest of the road. Vehicles are often having to take the wrong side of the road to pass this part, where repair work was ongoing before the rain created a whole swamp. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Full bench

FROM PAGE 3

The last time a full bench of the Appellate Division had conducted proceedings was on March 12. Then the SC's Appellate and High Court divisions went on an annual vacation.

The chief justice declared general holiday for all courts across the country from March 26 due to the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Justice Md Nuruzzaman, an Appellate Division judge, has been holding hearings and disposing of cases as the division's chamber judge throughout the period.

On July 8, the chief justice at a full court meeting decided to continue running virtual functions of the Appellate and HC divisions until the situation improves.

The meeting decided that the chief justice will constitute at least four to five division benches of the HC, so they can act with judicial powers like that of regular division benches.

Justice Mahmud will increase single judge benches of the HC from the existing 13 to hear and dispose of more cases.

Al this will be done after ensuring necessary logistical support, including internet and server facilities.

## Bar council

FROM PAGE 3

In February 2020, the council held an MCQ exam but no word on the subsequent exams was heard till Saturday. Those who pass the MCQ exam can get two chances to pass the written exams.

The Appellate Division directed in 2017 that there should be yearly enrolment of applicants in district courts.

HUNGER STRIKE

During the protests, at least 10 people were on hunger strike. Afsana Mimi, an apprentice at Barishal district and session judge's court, came to Dhaka with 13 of her fellows to join the protest on July 7.

Mimi and her friend Hazera Akter had to be taken to Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital on July 9 after their blood sugar level fell due to their hunger strike.

Like Afsana and Hazera, nearly 400 candidates joined the protests. Afsana had completed her LLB from Barishal Law College in 2014, and she passed the MCQ exam 2017. She failed the written exam, and since then, she has had no other chance to get enlisted.

"I was supposed to get another try at the written exam in 2018, but that didn't happen. Now we're in the year 2020, in the middle of a pandemic, and the future seems even more uncertain," she said.

Afsana has been working under a senior lawyer and she earns a meagre Tk 100-300 per day, depending on the generosity of her seniors.

On the process of bar council enlistment, Advocate Ram Chandra Das of Dhaka Judge Court said the system in India is more efficient. "Since 2011, they [Indian bar council] started a one-step process of giving license to lawyers through a three-and-a-half-hour long, open book, analytical MCQ exam of 100 marks, where the pass mark is 40," he explained.

## Mahmud Yunus passes away

CITY DESK

S Mahmud Yunus, former accounts and finance officer of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority, passed away on July 6 at a hospital in the capital. He was 67.



He had been undergoing treatment in ICU with lung infection, says a press release. He left behind his wife and two children.

Mahmud Yunus was born in 1953 in Bauphal upazila of Patuakhali. He worked at Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority in different posts for 26 years. The BEPZA authorities expressed deep shock at his death.

## Five 'JMB members' held in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, MYSINGH

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) claimed to have arrested five suspected members of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in Mymensingh's Muktagacha upazila early yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Md Asad Ali (45), Mohammad Mister (48), Muklesur Rahman Muktar (28) and Md Rashed (32) and his brother Md Based Ali, said police.

Md Tafiqul Alam, senior assistant superintendent of police in Mymensingh, said tipped-off that some JMB suspects have been holding a secret meeting at a house in Kuripara village, a Rab team raided the area around 3am.

Md Hafizul Islam Babu, senior assistant superintendent of police, led the drive, said Tafiqul, also media officer of Rab.

He said four other members of the outfit managed to flee. Rab also seized a number of jihadi books and leaflets from them.

In primary interrogation, they confessed that they were involved with the militant outfit.

The arrestees were being interrogated at the Rab office as of filing this report in the evening.

## Focus on

FROM PAGE 3

public relations officer Sharif Mahmud Opu, law enforcing agencies were directed to take necessary steps to ensure health and hygiene issues at cattle markets, following the health minister's guidelines.

The health ministry has decided that cattle markets will be set up only outside Dhaka city this year, and the local government ministry and the city corporations will take steps in this regard, read the statement.

People planning to visit cattle markets must wear masks and if anyone is found without a mask, then he will have to purchase a mask from the leaseholder of the market. The leaseholders were also asked to set up hand-washing stations and sanitisers at the cattle market.

During the meeting, the minister and officials suggested to emphasise on online shopping to avoid the risk of widespread coronavirus transmission.

Besides, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and factory owners were asked to take necessary steps to pay workers' salaries and bonus on time.

The Coast Guard and river police were asked to take steps to check carrying of excess passengers on ferries and launches ahead of Eid. They were also asked to increase vigilance to prevent overloading of cattle on vessels.

Beside this, law enforcing agencies will take steps to stop circulation of fake notes, extortion, and drug traders like previous years, reads the statement.

The Industries and Commerce Ministry will set the prices of rawhide and its proper marketing. The Religious Affairs Ministry has taken decisions to hold Eid-ul-Azha Jamaat in mosques, the home ministry statement added.

## Stranded in

FROM PAGE 3

Faridul said one of the Bangladeshis got sick recently, but there was no one to take care of him or take him to the doctor. The only thing the others could do was contribute to buy him medicine.

All of them, he said, are struggling, thinking about how they would pay off the loans they took before going to Vietnam.

"Now, we're all dependent on the kind gestures of Vietnamese people. They think we got stranded because of the pandemic and are providing us food. Noodles are all that we eat twice a day now," Faridul said.

He said they had contacted the Bangladesh embassy in Hanoi and were supposed to return home on July 3, when 11 others were repatriated in a special flight arranged by Vietnam.

"The brokers did not give us our passports. So, we couldn't return, even though we were willing to pay airfare," Faridul said.

After news of stranded nationals demonstrating

near the Bangladesh embassy on July 2 made headlines, they are now being kept at hotels.

But the brokers -- Atiq, Saiful and Jabbar -- are threatening the 15, telling them not to contact the media in Bangladesh.

"They threatened us saying this is Vietnam, not Bangladesh, so be careful," Faridul said, pleading for help.

The Head of Chancery at Bangladesh embassy in Hanoi did not respond to repeated phone calls for comments.

Bangladesh does not have any labour recruitment deal with Vietnam.

However, using tourist and enterprise visas, recruiting and travel agencies send people there, said Rapid Action Battalion in Dhaka on Thursday, after arresting three directors of two recruiting agencies over illegally sending people to the Southeastern country.

The law enforcers also received names of eight Bangladeshi brokers who operate from Vietnam.

## ACC summons

FROM PAGE 3

national identity cards, TINs and income tax returns.

MP Shahid is currently being detained in Kuwait's central prison and is undergoing questioning by the public prosecution.

He was arrested on June 8 on allegations of human trafficking, money laundering and bribery.

6 CMSD OFFICIALS SUMMONED  
Meanwhile, ACC yesterday summoned six officials of Central Medical Stores Depot (CMSD) for quizzing over procurement of low standard N-95 masks and PPE.

In a letters signed by ACC Director Mir Md Zaynul Abedin Shebly, ACC summoned CMSD deputy director Dr Zakir Hossain, chief coordinator Dr Ziaul Haque, assistant director Dr Md Shahjahan, store in-charge Dr Sabbir Ahmed, store officer Kabir Ahmed and senior store keeper Yusuf Fakir.

Of them, Shahjahan, Sabbir and Kabir are asked to appear on July 19 and the rest on July 20.

Earlier, ACC summoned Dhaka Central International Medical College and Hospital Chairman Motazzul Islam Mithu, Meditech Imaging Director Humayun Kabir, JMI Hospital Requisite Manufacturing Ltd Chairman Abdur Razzak and coordinator (medical team) of Toma Construction Ltd Motiur Rahman and chairman of Elan Corporation Aminul Islam Amin for quizzing in this connection.

Mithu and Aminul did not appear before the commission showing ailments.

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 many resorting to social media to vent their frustration.

With the complaints over poor quality ventilators surfacing, CMSD, the government body that sources medical supplies, withdrew the masks received from JMI.

Meanwhile, ACC has asked acting director of Mugda Medical College Hospital Dr Rowson Anwar and management authorities of Hotel 71 to submit documents on expense of living of doctors, nurses and staff at the hotel.

ACC deputy assistant director Mohammad Shahjahan Miraj in separate letters on Thursday sought the information from them.

According to the letter, there is allegations against the hospital authorities of misappropriating money allocated for the living of doctors at the hotel.

"We've asked them to provide documents of agreement, hotel rents and other charges," Miraj told The Daily Star.



An improvised vehicle, colloquially called Nosimon or Korimon, is seen plying Dhaka-Aricha highway at Hemayetput area, carrying a heap of sacks. Movement of such slow-moving vehicles on highways is illegal and can be dangerous for other drivers. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার	
পরিচালকের কার্যালয়	
সিলেট এম এ জি ওসমানী মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতাল, সিলেট	
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি	
১	মহানদর/বিভাগ
২	সম্প্রদায়/স্বত্বাধিকারীর নাম
৩	অর্থায়নের উৎস
৪	আবেদনকৃত দরপত্রের শর্তাবলি ও তারিখ
৫	দরপত্রের নাম/বাজারের বিবরণ
৬	সম্প্রদায় স্বত্বাধিকারীর জেলা
৭	ক্রয় বক্রিসা
৮	দরপত্রদাতাদের যোগ্যতা
৯	দরপত্র তফসিলের মূল্য (অবেদনকৃতমূল্য)
১০	দরপত্রের বাসনা
১১	দরপত্র অফিসীয় নিয়ন্ত্রণ, দর প্রকাশ প্রবেশকারী প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতাদের নাম ও ঠিকানা
১২	দরপত্র অফিসীয় নিয়ন্ত্রণের স্থান
১৩	দরপত্র অফিসীয় নিয়ন্ত্রণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়
১৪	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখের নাম ও ঠিকানা
১৫	দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ ও সময়
১৬	দরপত্র বাজার খোলার তারিখ ও সময়
১৭	বিশেষ নিয়ন্ত্রণ



The Madhumati river has devoured a 90-metre portion of the road from Kamarkhali Bazar to Bir Shrestho Munshi Abdur Rouf Library and Memorial Museum at Gandakhali in Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

# Road communication cut as river devours area in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

The Madhumati river devoured a 90-metre-long portion of the road stretching from Kamarkhali Bazar to Bir Shrestho Shaheed Lance Naik Munshi Abdur Rouf Library and Memorial Museum at Gandakhali in Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur in the district a week ago.

Faridpur Water Development Board (WDB) authorities are dumping geo sandbags to prevent the erosion but the locals have raised questions about the work quality.

A large number of people from 20 villages using the seven-km-long road to reach different destinations including the upazila and district headquarters are facing untold sufferings as the road has become almost unfit for vehicular movement.

Visiting the area, this correspondent found 12 workers dumping geo sandbags in the river erosion area. At least six homesteads and a number of trees are now under threat of erosion by the Madhumati.

A large number of people from 20 villages, who use the seven-km-long road to reach different destinations including the upazila and district headquarters, are facing untold sufferings

Mintu Mollah, 34, a resident of Gandakhali village, said, "The river caused erosion in the area on several occasions during the last 15 years. It has been observed that when the erosion starts in the rainy season, the WDB men throw sandbags in the name of preventing erosion. But within a few days it was washed away."

Rickshaw-van puller Enamul Khan, 30, of Nawrapare village, said, "When the rainy season comes, they do name-only protection work. If any puller becomes a little careless, he can fall into the river."

Sahera Begum, 49, a housewife of Gandakhali village, whose house is only eight to nine metres away from the river, said, "We are passing days in fear erosion by the river. We may even die if the river suddenly devours our house at night."

According to the WDB sources, the protection work is being done in the 90-metre portion at the cost of Tk 59 lakh and 65 thousand, using bamboo and geo sandbags.

Sultan Mahamud, executive engineer of WDB in Faridpur, said, "We are dumping geo sandbags to prevent river erosion for the time being. We are developing a project for permanent protection work on the 11-km-long area from Kamarkhali to Bhatiapara. If the project is implemented, this problem will be solved."

# Char people build bamboo bridge on self-help basis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

People in a remote char area voluntarily have built a bamboo bridge on a canal of the Teesta river to ease communication between Harinchara Majherchar in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila and the mainland in Haragachh area of Rangpur's Kawnia upazila.

In May this year, char people in Khuniyagachh union of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila have joined hands for construction of the 200-metre-long bridge on the river canal in the union.

As a makeshift arrangement, a bamboo bridge on the river canal has been made for the first time to ease people's longstanding sufferings, said locals, adding that it finally has brought smile to people in the remote area.

Bazlur Rahman, 65, a farmer of Harinchara Majherchar in the union, said they have been urging the local public representatives for years to build a bridge on the canal to mitigate their longstanding sufferings but nobody did pay heed to the matter.

Finding no other way, they have voluntarily built the bamboo bridge on the canal of the Teesta river to ease their communication, he said, adding that the

char people are now very happy to get the bridge.

They now can easily carry their agriculture produces after the bamboo bridge was built, said farmers in the char area, adding that earlier they had to suffer a lot for not having any bridge there.

The bamboo bridge was built at a cost of Tk 2 lakh, said the growers.

Char people collected donation and gave their inputs to build the bridge, said another farmer Abdul Awal, 48, of the same char area, adding that they willingly came forward to supply bamboo, wire and nails to build the bridge.

The char people also willingly provided financial support to build the bamboo bridge, he said, adding that agriculture work has now gained momentum in the char area after the bridge was built.

Especially during the monsoon, the char people suffer much as they have to cross the canal of the river by dingy amid risk, said Abdul Awal, adding that it is really a hard task to build the bridge on self-help basis but finally it happened and local residents are now very happy.

The char people have also urged the authorities concerned to build a permanent bridge on the canal.



Char people in Khuniyagachh union of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila build the bamboo bridge on a canal of the Teesta river on self-help basis to ease their communication.

PHOTO: STAR

# Paddy residue collection brings joy for them amid Covid-19

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Around 1,000 ultra-poor women are engaged in collecting paddy residues from the Boro fields submerged in rainwater under Ujirpur upazila of the district. These women are doing the job to support their families in the crisis time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A local agriculture officer said in the Bengali month of Baishakh and Jyestha, farmers in the low-lying area harvested ripe Boro paddy from thousands of acres of land. Plants grow again from roots of the harvested paddy submerged in rainwater during monsoon. These women then collect paddy residues from the submerged fields within a month as the general farmers usually do not collect such ripe paddy.

During a recent visit to Satla village in Ujirpur, this correspondent found that two women - Shova Bain, 30, and Kalpana Bain, 35, of the area - were collecting paddy residues from a harvested Boro field amid joy. The paddy land has literally turned into beel as rainwater submerged it.

More than 50 women in the village were found collecting the paddy residues from the land submerged under two to three feet rainwater.

Kalpana Bain said every day she harvested around 30 to 40 kg of ripe paddy on one bigha of submerged land from morning to noon during the rainy season and later put on the ground for drying in the sun.

Kalpana further said her husband is a marginal farmer. His income has decreased drastically due to coronavirus outbreak. In this situation,



Two women collect paddy residues from a submerged Boro field at Satla village in Barishal's Ujirpur upazila. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

she is helping her husband to run the family by collecting the paddy.

She also added that they usually make chira out of the paddy and eat it every morning.

According to the local farmers, when thousands of acres of land in Satla union were submerged in rainwater, a group of low-income people collect paddy residues from the submerged harvested Boro fields.

Each person can collect about one maund of paddy from one bigha of submerged land every day, they said, adding that but this year a huge number of poor people are engaged in collecting paddy residues as the

pandemic coronavirus has brought woe for them.

Upazila Agriculture Officer Zakir Hossain said such paddy is grown in the low-lying area following the harvest of Boro paddy. In Ujirpur, over 5,000 hectares of land have turned into beel during the rainy season and especially women are engaged in collecting paddy residues from the submerged land this time.

Md Aftabuddin, additional director of Department of Agriculture Extension in Barishal, said 1.25 lakh hectares of land in Barishal region have been brought under Boro cultivation this year.



Local people, family members and relatives form a human chain in front of Pabna Technical School and College in the town yesterday, demanding proper investigation and justice for the killing of Md Tanjib Sheikh, 30, of Ramchandrapur village, in a 'shootout' with cops on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
 গোপতর, গোপ নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (আইইডিসিআর)  
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 আরক নং-আইইডিসিআর/আওআর/গাজ্ব/পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্ন কর্মী(সুইপার/ক্লিনার নিয়োগ)/২০২০-২০২১/৬৯২ তারিখ ১২.০৭.২০২০খ্রি

### আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে জনবল সরবরাহের দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গোপতর, গোপ নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (আইইডিসিআর), মহাখালী, ঢাকা অফিসে ২০২০-২১ অর্থ বছরে রাজ্য খাতে আওতা অর্থ প্রাপ্তি স্বাপেক্ষে "পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্নতা (সেভে নং ৩২১১১০২)" খাতে আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্নতা কর্মী নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে প্রকৃত জনবল সরবরাহকারীদের নিম্নে হতে আগ্রহী/২০২০ হতে জুন/২০২১ পর্যন্ত সময়ের জন্য শীলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে।

১) মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ/সংস্থা	১	যাত্রা ও পরিবহন বঙ্গদেশ মন্ত্রণালয়, যাত্রা সেবা বিভাগ।
২) সন্থা/সম্মানক সন্থার নাম ও ঠিকানা	১	গোপতর, গোপ নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (আইইডিসিআর), মহাখালী, ঢাকা।
৩) দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির সূত্র ও তারিখ	১	আরক নং-আইইডিসিআর/আওআর/গাজ্ব/পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্ন কর্মী(সুইপার/ক্লিনার নিয়োগ)/২০২০-২০২১/৬৯২ তারিখ ১২.০৭.২০২০খ্রি
৪) দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	১	১৩.০৭.২০২০খ্রি
৫) দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	১	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি।
৬) অর্থের উৎস	১	রাজ্য বাজেট (জিএবি)।
৭) দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য	১	প্রতি সেট ৭৫০/- টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য)।
৮) দরপত্রের সিডিউল সম্বন্ধে পদ্ধতি	১	পরিচালক, গোপতর, গোপ নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (আইইডিসিআর), মহাখালী, ঢাকা-১২১২ এর কার্যকর কোড-১-২৭১১-০০০০-২-৩৬৬ খাতে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক/বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের অধীনস্থ বে কোন তরফি ব্যাংক ড্রাইভার চালানের মাধ্যমে জমানদপূর্বক চালানের সুকন্সি দাখিল করে আর কার্যালয়ের ক্যাশিয়ারের নিকট হতে ২৯.০৭.২০২০খ্রি তারিখ পর্যন্ত সকল কার্যবিবরণে অফিস চালকালীন সময়ে সিডিউল ক্রয় করা যাবে।
৯) দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ, স্থান ও সময়	১	৩০.০৭.২০২০খ্রি তারিখ সকাল ৯.০০ ঘটিকা হতে দুপুর ২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত পরিচালক, আইইডিসিআর এর অফিস কক্ষ এবং আরও কর্মকর্তার অফিস কক্ষ, বনানী থানা, বনানী, ঢাকা।
১০) দরপত্রাদানের যোগ্যতা ও দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিলযোগ্য কাগজপত্রের বিবরণ	১	দরদাতাকে নিম্নোক্ত কাগজপত্রাদির ছায়াছবি ১ম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত করে পুনরুৎপন্ন দরপত্র সিডিউলের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে ক) ৫০,০০০/- (পঞ্চাশ হাজার) টাকার পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট (সেরতযোগ্য) জামানত হিসেবে জমা দিতে হবে, খ) দরপত্রের সাথে জনবল সরবরাহকারী হিসেবে হলদে নম্বর ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, গ) আয়কর পরিশোধ সনদ, ঘ) সিডিউল আউটসোর্সিং সনদ, ঙ) অর্থিক স্বচ্ছলতার সনদপত্র। এছাড়া অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী সিডিউলে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে।
১১) দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	১	সভাকক্ষ, গোপতর, গোপ নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (আইইডিসিআর), মহাখালী, ঢাকা-১২১২।
১২) দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	১	৩০.০৭.২০২০খ্রি তারিখ বিকাল ২.৩০ ঘটিকা। উপস্থিত, দরদাতা প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রতিনিধিদের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) দরপত্র উন্মুক্ত কমিটি (টেন্ডার) কর্তৃক দরপত্র খোলা হবে। ঐ দিন যদি সরকারি ছুটি হয়, তাহলে পরবর্তী কার্যবিবরণে একই সময়ে দরপত্র খোলা হবে।

১০) দরপত্র/সিডিউল বিবরণ				
পত্রের নাম ও বিবরণ	মোট পত্র সংখ্যা	বয়স	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা	অভিজ্ঞতা ও অন্যান্য যোগ্যতা
পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্নতা কর্মী (সুইপার/ক্লিনার)	৯ (নয়) জন	সর্বনিম্ন ১৮ (আঠারো) হতে অধিক ৩০ (যেই) বছর	৮ম শ্রেণী পাস বা সমমানের প্রাথমিক উত্তীর্ণ	সরকারি/বেসরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানে অনুরূপ কাজে অভিজ্ঞ প্রার্থীকে আগ্রহিকার দেয়া হবে

১৪) অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী

- সরকার কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত সর্ব সাক্ষ্য বেতন ১৭,৬১০/- X ৯ = ১,৫৮,৪৯০/- (মাসিক বেতন)।
- আয়কর/ভ্যাট সরকারি বিধি মোতাবেক।
- সার্ভিস চার্জ (সরকারি বিধি অনুযায়ী ৫% এর নিচে নহে)।
- সফল দরদাতা প্রতিষ্ঠানের কার্যালয় প্রাপ্তি ও (দিন) কর্মসূচির মধ্যে যথাসময়ে জনবল সরবরাহ করা হবে, মর্মে ৩০০/- (তিনশত) টাকার নন-জুটিসিয়াল স্ট্যাম্পের চুক্তিদারা স্বাক্ষরকর্তা পরিচালক, আইইডিসিআর বরাবরে দাখিল করতে হবে।
- দরপত্রের সাথে মেট্র পত্রের অতিরিক্ত ২০% সহ (মেট্র ১১ জন) পরিচ্ছন্নতা কর্মীর জীবন বৃত্তান্ত (ছবি সহ), শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা সনদ, নাগরিকত্ব সনদ, স্থায়ী ও বর্তমান ঠিকানা, জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র সত্যায়িত করে দাখিল করতে হবে।
- দরপত্রের সকল কার্যক্রম "The Public Procurement Act-2008" ও "The Public Procurement Regulations-2008" এবং "আউটসোর্সিং (Outsourcing) প্রক্রিয়া সনদমালা, ২০১৮" এর বিধি মোতাবেক পরিচালিত হবে।
- ক্রটিপূর্ণ/অসম্পূর্ণ দরপত্র সন্যাসের বাতিল বদিয়া গণ্য হইবে।
- কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ছাড়াই যে কোন বা সকল দরপত্র পূর্ণ/আংশিক গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন।

১৫) চুক্তিপত্র সম্পাদন

সফল দরপত্রদাতাকে পুঁজিত দর কার্যক্রমকৃত মূল্যের বিপরীতে ১০% পারফরমেন্স সিকিউরিটি/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট, কার্যক্রম প্রাপ্তি ৭ (সাত) দিনের মধ্যে নিম্নোক্তকারী বরাবরে জমা দিতে হবে।

অধ্যাপক ডায় মীরজাদী সেন্সিটা ক্রোয়া  
 পরিচালক  
 ফোন নম্বর ০২-৯৮৪২২৭০  
 জিডি-১১২০

## HAGIA SOPHIA

## 5 THINGS TO KNOW

A top Turkish court has ruled that the Byzantine-era Hagia Sophia, which has served as a museum in Istanbul since 1935, would be handed over to Turkey's religious affairs directorate and reopened for Muslim worship. Here are five things to know about the Hagia Sophia:

## WHAT IS THE HAGIA SOPHIA?

The edifice was first built as an Orthodox Christian church between 532 and 537 AD under emperor Justinian I and is considered the most important Byzantine structure. After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (now Istanbul) in 1453, it was converted into a mosque before being opened as a museum in 1935 after the secular modern Turkish republic was established in 1923. It was added to the list of UNESCO world heritage sites in 1985.

## WHAT IS ITS OFFICIAL STATUS NOW?

Following Friday's decision, it reverts from being a museum to being a mosque. The Council of State, Turkey's highest administrative court, unanimously cancelled a 1934 cabinet decision and said Hagia Sophia was registered as a mosque in its property deeds. Until now it has been the principal tourist attraction in Turkey, hosting millions of tourists every year -- 3.8 million visitors in 2019.

## WHAT WOULD IT CHANGE FOR VISITORS?

Tourists could still visit the Hagia Sophia, just as they are able to see the Blue Mosque nearby. But the example of the Hagia Sophia of Trabzon in northern Turkey, opened to Muslim worship in 2013, may give pause for thought.

## WHY DID THIS BECOME AN ISSUE NOW?



There was a long legal process leading up to Friday's ruling. The Constitutional Court in September 2018 turned down a plea by an independent heritage association to open the building up for Muslim worshipping. The main opposition secular Republican People's Party (CHP) has accused the government of using the issue to distract voters from economic woes and other issues following the coronavirus pandemic. "Erdogan appears to be responding to a drop in voter support, which is likely a fallout from Turkey's COVID-19-induced economic downturn," said Erdemir. As early as 1994 when he was running for mayor of Istanbul, Erdogan promised to open the building to Muslim worshippers.

## WHAT IS THE INT'L COMMUNITY'S POSITION?

The landmark ruling has already inflamed tensions not just with the West and Turkey's historic foe Greece, but also Russia, with which Erdogan has forged an increasingly close partnership in recent years. Greece branded the move an "open provocation to the civilised world", while the Russian Orthodox Church said Turkey had ignored "millions of Christians" with its move.

SOURCE: AFP



Animal rights and environmental activists hold signs as they stand inside a fountain after members of the Animal Rebellion group poured red dye into the water, on Trafalgar Square in London, Britain, on Saturday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## HAGIA SOPHIA DECISION

## Erdogan rejects global criticism

AGENCIES

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has rejected international condemnation over the decision to change the status of Istanbul's landmark Hagia Sophia from a museum to a mosque, saying it represented his country's will to use its "sovereign rights".

In the past, he has repeatedly called for the stunning building to be renamed as a mosque and in 2018, he recited a verse from the Quran at Hagia Sophia.

"Those who do not take a step against Islamophobia in their own countries ... attack Turkey's will to use its sovereign rights," Erdogan said at a ceremony he attended via video-conference on Saturday.

The colossal Hagia Sophia was built 1,500 years ago as an Orthodox Christian cathedral and was converted into a mosque after the Ottomans conquered Constantinople, now Istanbul, in 1453. The secular Turkish government decided in 1934 to make it a museum.

Erdogan on Friday formally converted the building back into a mosque and declared it open for Muslim worship,

hours after a high court annulled the 1934 decision turning it into a museum. He said Muslim prayers would begin at the UNESCO World Heritage Site on July 24.

The president went ahead with the plan despite appeals from Nato ally the United States and from Russia, with which Ankara has forged close relations in recent years.

Greece swiftly condemned the move as a provocation, France deplored it while the US also expressed disappointment.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko on Saturday said Moscow regretted the decision.

"The cathedral is on Turkey's territory, but it is without question everybody's heritage," he told the Interfax news agency.

Pope Francis yesterday said he was "very distressed" over Turkey's decision to convert the Byzantine-era monument Hagia Sophia back into a mosque.

"My thoughts go to Istanbul. I'm thinking about Hagia Sophia. I am very distressed," the pope said in the Vatican's first reaction to a decision that has drawn international criticism.

The World Council of Churches wrote

to Erdogan expressing "grief and dismay" over the move and urged him to reverse his decision.

But Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, Ankara director of the German Marshall Fund, told AFP the move would win hearts and minds at home as most Turks "would favour such a decision for religious or nationalist sentiments."

"This is a debate president Erdogan cannot lose and the opposition cannot win. As a matter of fact, this issue also has the potential to disunite the opposition parties."

On Saturday, police had put up barriers around Hagia Sophia.

On Friday, Erdogan gave assurances that Hagia Sophia would be open to all visitors, including non-Muslims.

"The Hagia Sophia's doors will remain open to visitors from all around the world," his press aide Fahrettin Altun tweeted on Saturday.

"People of all religious denominations are welcome and encouraged to visit it - just as they have been able to visit other mosques, including the Blue Mosque."

## DEATH BY DRONE

## Can states justify targeted killings?

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

In a move that caused a ripple effect across the Middle East, Iranian General Qassem Soleimani was killed in a US drone strike near Baghdad's international airport on January 3. On that day, the Pentagon announced the attack was carried out "at the direction of the president".

Iran retaliated with a ballistic missile attack targeting American troops in Iraq on January 7.

In a new report examining the legality of armed drones and the Soleimani killing in particular, Agnes Callamard, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial and arbitrary killings, said the US raid that killed Soleimani was "unlawful".

Callamard presented her report at the Human Rights Council in Geneva on Thursday. The United States, which is not a member after quitting the council in 2018, rejected the report saying it gave "a pass to terrorists".

In Callamard's view, the consequences of targeted killings by armed drones have been neglected by states. Her report said the world is at a "critical time and a possible tipping point" when it comes to the use of unmanned aerial vehicles.

A "second drone age" has now emerged, she wrote, with states employing ever more advanced technology.

One of the greatest concerns with the increased use of armed drones noted in the report is the number of civilian casualties it causes. The attack on Soleimani, for example, resulted in far more casualties than the direct targets.

Soleimani was killed along with eight others including Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces.

Previous UN special rapporteurs on extrajudicial killings



have lamented the lack of clarity among states about their obligations regarding drone warfare and the absence of accountability.

Experts agree drones are not necessarily illegal, but it remains unclear under which circumstances their use violates international law.

Under Article 51 of the UN Charter, the use of deadly force is allowed in two scenarios: When it is authorised by the UN Security Council (UNSC) and when a country acts in self-defence.

Callamard has emphasised the test for "anticipatory self-defence" is very narrow: It must be a necessity that is "instant, overwhelming, and leaving no choice of means and no moment of deliberation". This standard, she stated in a tweet issued right after Soleimani's killing, "is unlikely to be met".

Callamard's report calls for greater accountability for targeted killings, as well as greater regulation of the weapons used.

The report recommends UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres set up an international fact-finding mission to investigate targeted killings by drones.

Callamard also called on states to robustly investigate allegations of harm to civilians during such attacks and to release their findings.



This file photo shows a US Air Force pilot takes off in his Air Force F-35A aircraft from Hill Air Force Base, Utah. The US State Department said on Thursday it had approved the possible sale of 105 Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets to Japan at an estimated cost of \$23 billion.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## The Asia-Pacific arms race has taken an ominous turn

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Within days of each other, two key United States allies - Australia and Japan - announced their intentions to boost defence spending and adopt a more aggressive military posture. Rising tensions in the Asia-Pacific region account for what is being called a "game-changer" in the way the two countries think about protecting themselves from China's rapid military expansion.

Australia's announcement in late June that it would boost defence spending over the next decade by 40 percent caught most observers by surprise. Australia is a key partner in the region for the US and cooperation between the two countries remains central to Australia's new strategic thinking.

But, an increasingly erratic foreign policy under the Trump administration has made its allies nervous about the US's long-term commitments in the region. China's increased assertiveness in the South China Sea, near Taiwan and on the border with India has made many analysts concerned that China is lowering the threshold for military action, making war more likely.

With this in mind, Australia has been steadily modernising its military, ordering advanced, super-quiet French submarines, received its first batch of American stealth jets and boosted its advanced naval vessels.

In February, the US agreed to the sale of advanced, stealthy long-range anti-ship missiles, able to strike high-value targets and sink them at a range of 370km, triple the range of Australia's current Harpoon

missile. Hypersonic missile technology is also being researched, with weapons able to attack their targets with very little warning time due to the extreme speeds at which the missiles travel.

It is not the only country that wants this flexibility. Japan has always relied on its ally the US to protect it from potential aggressors while maintaining its post-World War II pacifist constitution. This trust has slowly been eroded and Japan now looks to develop its own first-strike capability, a game-changer for the country's military posture.

In an increasingly volatile region, Japan's military budget is set to rise for the eighth straight year to \$48bn as it steadily seeks to rearm itself, revamping its air force, buying in US stealthy F35s and early-warning aircraft. Concerned not just by China's rise but by a North Korea that has threatened to start testing its long-range missiles again, Japan now wants to give itself the option to hit targets hundreds of kilometres away should it need to.

Moreover, China's rapid buildup of bases, naval forces and long-range air force in the South China Sea and beyond has unnerved its neighbours, who now seek closer defence ties with each other. Australia and India signed a naval and logistical cooperation defence pact in June.

Japan seeks to strengthen ties with India, Australia and other Asean states and is pushing plans for further cooperation in an effort to form an alliance that is able, with the US help, to counter any potential aggression from China.



## TB vaccine may limit Covid deaths

REUTERS

A tuberculosis vaccine routinely given to children in countries with high rates of that bacterial disease might be helping to reduce deaths from COVID-19, researchers reported in the scientific journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The researchers found that countries with higher rates of Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccinations for tuberculosis had lower mortality rates. A good example was Germany, which had different vaccine plans before East Germany and West Germany were unified. COVID-19 mortality rates among senior citizens are nearly three times higher in western Germany than in eastern Germany, where more older people received the vaccine as infants, they found.

## NEW US VISA POLICY FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS

## 180 colleges, univs join lawsuit opposing move

UNB

A total of 180 educational institutions in the United States joined a lawsuit opposing the new visa policy for international students by the Trump administration, according to a report from Xinhua.

An amicus brief document was filed with the Massachusetts federal district court and released to the public on Friday in this regard.

The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced a new visa policy for international students and this move prompted Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to launch a legal action against it.

The 22-page document issued by the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration representing 180 higher education institutions showed a nationwide support for rescinding the guidance, the report said.

"ICE's new policy serves only to severely disrupt international students' educational attainment, and our country is worse off for it," said Miriam Feldblum, executive director of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration in a statement posted on the group's official website. "This quasi-international student ban represents another unfortunate assault by the administration against immigrants and higher education," she added.

The ICE announced on Monday that students currently in the United States on F-1 and M-1 visas must depart the country or take other measures, such as transferring to a school with in-person instruction to remain in lawful status, if their schools' classes are entirely online in the fall semester.

The measure also stipulated that those in violation would risk "immigration consequences, including, but not limited to, the initiation of removal proceedings."

## Lives will be lost

## Aid agencies warn as UN buckles under Russia, China pressure to cut aid access to Syria

AGENCIES

A UN Security Council resolution that leaves only one of two border crossings open for aid deliveries from Turkey into rebel-held northwestern Syria will cost lives and intensify the suffering of 1.3 million people living there, aid agencies said.

Western states had pressed for aid access to continue through two crossings at the Turkish border, but Russia, President Bashar al-Assad's main ally in his war against, and China vetoed a last-ditch effort on Friday to keep both open.

The UNSC on Saturday approved aid deliveries to Syria through one border crossing from Turkey, a day after its authorization for the six-year-long humanitarian operation ended, leaving millions of Syrian civilians in limbo.

"In northwest Syria, where a vital cross-border lifeline has been closed ... it will be harder to reach an estimated 1.3 million people dependent on food and medicine delivered by the UN cross-border," aid agencies operating in Syria said in a joint statement.

"Many will now not receive the help they need. Lives will be lost. Suffering will intensify."

"With the first case of COVID-19 confirmed in Idlib, an area with a severely weakened health infrastructure, this is a devastating blow," the



statement added.

In a separate statement, Physicians for Human Rights said the resolution had shut down "direct routes to hundreds of thousands of displaced Syrians in dire need of food and medicine".

Russia and China have argued that the northwest can be reached from within Syria, meaning via government-held territory, and that aid deliveries from Turkey violate Syria's sovereignty. "This issue should not be politicized," deputy Russian UN envoy Dmitry Polyanskiy said after the vote.

Louis Charbonneau, UN director at Human Rights Watch, said: "Council members buckled and gave Moscow what it wanted - a further drastic reduction of cross-border aid to desperate Syrians who rely on it for survival."



## Iran says misaligned radar led to Ukrainian jet downing

Iran said that the misalignment of an air defence unit's radar system was the key "human error" that led to the accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane in January. "A failure occurred due to a human error in following the procedure" for aligning the radar, causing a "107-degree error" in the system, the Iranian Civil Aviation Organisation (CAO) said in a report late Saturday. This error "initiated a hazard chain" that saw further errors committed in the minutes before the plane was shot down, said the CAO document, presented as a "factual report" and not as the final report on the accident investigation. Flight 752, a Ukraine International Airlines jetliner, was struck by two missiles and crashed shortly after taking off from Tehran's main airport on January 8, killing all 176 people on board.

## Polarised Poles vote

Poles yesterday voted in a knife-edge presidential run-off between a populist incumbent closely allied with US President Donald Trump and a europhile liberal keen to mend fences with Brussels. The stakes are high for Poland's right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party government, which has relied on incumbent President Andrzej Duda to push through judicial reforms that have set Warsaw on a collision course with the EU over democratic standards just three decades after communism's demise. Duda is locked in a tight race with Warsaw mayor Rafal Trzaskowski of the opposition Civic Platform (PO) and final opinion polls showed an almost even split between the two.

## China raises flood alert to second highest level

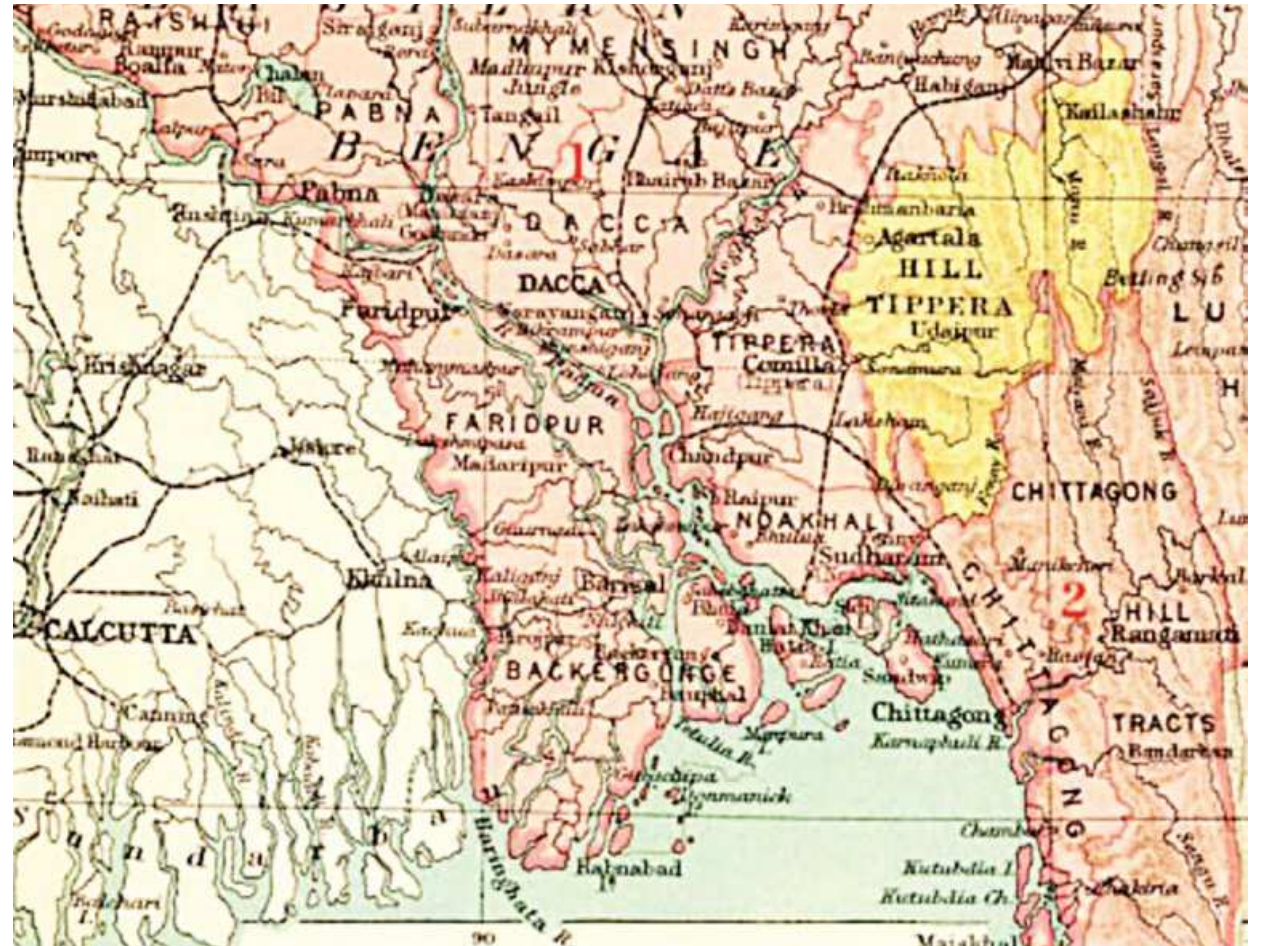
China yesterday raised its flood response alert to the second highest grade as downpours continued to batter regions along the Yangtze River, with the eastern provinces of Jiangsu and Jiangxi among the worst hit, state media reported. Regional flooding in the Poyang county of Jiangxi has made water levels of China's Lake Poyang, its biggest freshwater lake, surge to above 22.52 meters, a historical high and well above the alert level of 19.50 metres. By Saturday evening, provincial military authorities had dispatched thousands of soldiers to help bolster nearly 9 km (6 miles) of the lake's banks to prevent them from bursting, state television said. According to data from the Ministry of Water Resources, 212 rivers have since early July exceeded alerting levels including 19 of them rising to historical highs.

SOURCE: REUTERS, AFP



COURTESY: BANGLADESH ON RECORD.

A Hindu village in a clearing, the Sundarbans, 1843. Sketch by Frederic Peter Layard (1818-1891).



Backergunge District in a 1909 Eastern Bengal map of The Imperial Gazetteer of India.

# THE BENGAL CYCLONE OF 1876

## The Empire on Trial

AZIZUL RASEL

Benjamin Kingsbury's *An Imperial Disaster: The Bengal Cyclone of 1876* (Hurst & Company, London, 2018) is a stimulating intervention in the history of disaster in British India. The book is a nuanced study of the cyclone of 1876, which ravaged the coastal region of the Bengal delta killing around 200,000 people and led to an epidemic afterward. It is perhaps the first monograph that solely deals with a particular cyclone disaster. The author vividly delineates the micro details of the cyclone of 1876.

The author challenges the very discourse of "disaster". The disaster, viz. cyclone, hurricane, or flood, is generally perceived as "natural" and beyond "human control or responsibility". The author questions the parochial understanding of disaster and asserts that disaster is not merely "natural", but deeply interrelated with human actions.



Devastation in the aftermath of the cyclone that hit the coastal region of Bangladesh, then East Pakistan, Nov. 1970. According to the World Meteorological Organization, the cyclone killed more than 300,000 people.



PHOTO: AP / HARRY KOUNDAKJIAN

Dhaka had to contend with because of the impact of British Industrial Revolution and lustful colonial economic policies, but world-famous thinker Karl Marx, who had never been to India, also noted the significant decline of the population of Dhaka, a lesser-known peripheral textile-producing city in the early modern times in the eastern part of India, by 1838. Both James Taylor and Marx noted that the population of Dhaka sharply dropped from 200,000 in 1800 to 68,000 in 1838.

Kingsbury's underlying purpose is to tell this widely-known history to demonstrate how all these events showed the urban population to the remotest parts of coastal Bengal. From the early nineteenth century, the colonial state made ravenous attempts to expand the tillage in the newly reclaimed area in the coastal fringe of Bengal and thus settled the impoverished people in the danger-prone area.

The book is divided into six chapters with a short epilogue drawn from a poem of a Bengali writer. In the first chapter, 'The Estuary', the author delineates the physical geography of the coastal area worst affected by the cyclone. The coastal areas of the eastern part of the Bengal delta were once populated but became desolate from late sixteenth century due to natural disasters and joint raids of Portuguese and Arakanese renegades. After the Mughal victory over the joint forces of the Portuguese and the Arakanese, these lands gradually became populated.

However, it was after the British Industrial Revolution and Permanent Settlement that migration to distant and dangerous chars expedited. After the Permanent Settlement the colonial regime initiated policies for resumption of newly formed chars in the coastal area. To boost revenue, the government brought these newly formed lands under cultivation and attracted impoverished peasants into these dangerous tracts. The hapless cultivators - finding no other way - migrated to this coastal fringe devoid of basic needs and safety. Exploring hitherto unused lower-level district and settlement reports and also drawing insights from literary sources, Kingsbury dissects this large-scale internal migration. The colonial government well perceived

the danger of living in these distant and insular islands, which is reflected in the reports of lower-level officers. However, to increase the revenue of the government, the colonial policymakers remained mute about these concerns.

In the second chapter, 'The Forest', the author discusses the long process of how forested lands, Sundarbans in particular, were gradually brought under cultivation. Some scholars demonstrated that the clearing of forests was initiated with the penetration of Islam in Bengal. The Mughals patronised the cutting of forests as the empire had a great opportunity to enhance its revenue from the agrarian hinterland. However, it was during the British Raj when the colonial government took aggressive development policies to bring forested land under tillage. The colonial rule had envisaged its great revenue prospects in this forested land.

Kingsbury meticulously explained this process of deforestation. The government initiative left the newly settled tenants unprotected. He showed that the vegetation in the Sundarbans played an important role to reduce the intensity of cyclones and storm-waves. Kingsbury showed that the headlong clearing of the forest aggravated the loss of life and property of the wretched peasants who had no other option but to settle reluctantly on the shore. He demonstrated how the higher-ups of the government refused the field-level officers' suggestion to make embankments and take protective measures for the people at whose expense they made so much money.

The third and fourth chapters, titled 'The Cyclone' and 'The Response', are perhaps the two most important chapters in the book. In the third chapter, the author provides a vivid and detailed description of the cyclone that hit the people living in the coastal fringes of the Bay of Bengal. The worst cyclone in the history of Bengal hit the coastal people of the Bengal Delta on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1876. The isolated island and areas of the estuary and settlements on the margins of Sundarbans were the worst affected. Kingsbury provides a painstaking and heartrending story of the casualty. In some places the cyclone killed two-thirds of the population, almost all domestic animals, destroyed

homesteads and crops. The creeks and rivers, miles after miles, were filled with human corpses. The salty water destroyed the crops in the island. There was a lack of drinking water and food. People were dying from starvation after the cyclone.

The government response, as the author showed, was scant and insignificant compared to the needs of the people. There was no urgent cyclone response, except in the case of Barishal, where the collector of the district



Benjamin Kingsbury. He is a historian and writer based in New Zealand.

Ebenezer Barton was extraordinarily active in the initial phase of relief response. After hearing about the dire situation from subordinate officers, he arranged as much relief as he could locally. The amount of relief Barton sent was surely scant and many people on the coastal fringe were still starving and suffering from a lack of drinking water. Barton wrote to his higher officer in Dhaka, Frederick Peacock, that the situation of his district was dire and asked for an immediate relief of 50,000 maunds of rice, 12,000 maunds of dal, and 1,000 maunds of salt. He also sought another Rs 100,000 for reconstruction of roads, embankments, and tanks. However, the government was not ready to meet even one-third of his demand. Moreover, Barton was reprimanded by his higher-ups for "recklessly wasting" government money. In the other part of the estuary, however, the district collector responded along the line of government policy. Reginald

Porch, the collector of Noakhali, found little necessity for relief and thought that people could overcome the loss. His was the attitude that the government should have minimum relief intervention. Sir Richard Temple, the lieutenant-governor of Bengal Presidency, held similar views that government relief measures should be as small as possible.

In the fifth chapter, 'The Epidemic', Kingsbury showed that the government's inaction and indolent attitude after the disaster invited a cholera epidemic in the estuary. The epidemic further killed thousands of people and made people more impoverished. The marginal and impoverished people were denied basic medical support. The author convincingly showed that the empire treated and viewed these people simply as a revenue machine.

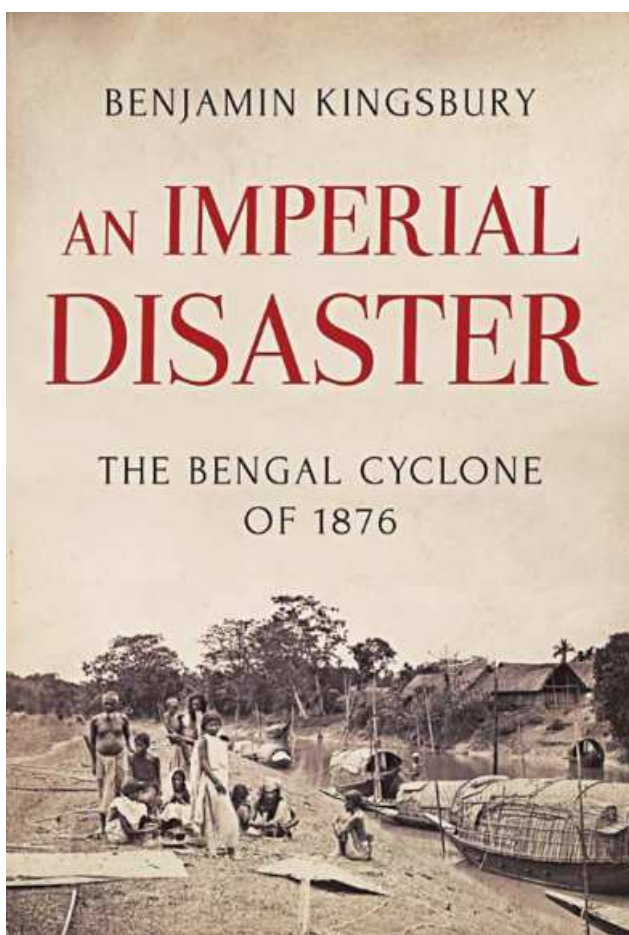
Had the situation and government attitude changed after the cyclone and epidemic? Kingsbury noted, the colonial government didn't learn from those disasters or didn't want to learn. The population decreased in the estuary after the cyclone and subsequent epidemic. Many peasants left the coastal fringe, but many could not as they had nowhere to go. The government also took the initiative to bring new tenants and again patronised forest clearing and settled the cultivators in dangerous areas without any protection.

Benjamin Kingsbury's study of the 1876 cyclone teaches us about the dangers of ruthless clearing of forests. However, this aggressive development policy has not changed even in postcolonial South Asia, Bangladesh in particular. Ignoring the protests from the environmentalist groups, the government in Bangladesh has taken an aggressive development policy in the Sundarbans.

Kingsbury's *An Imperial Disaster* is a meticulous empirical study of the cyclone of 1876. The author used a great deal of rare and unrevealed documents to show how the empire was responsible for the large death toll and the massive loss of livelihoods. It was the empire and its ravenous policies which made this disaster the worst in the history of Bengal. This study could have been more attractive, if the author had organically engaged with the theories of colonialism and imperialism, orientalism, liberalism and enlightenment.

Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, examines the attitude of the colonisers. He wrote, "Colonial world is a Manichean world... As if to illustrate the totalitarian nature of colonial exploitation, the colonialist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of animal... The colonial world is a compartmentalized world... The colonized world is a world divided into two". Nevertheless, this micro-study of the cyclone of 1876 appends valuable contribution to the historiography of ecology, disaster, and empire in South Asia.

Azizul Rasel is a historian. He teaches at University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh.



Kingsbury's monograph is a subtle analysis of the indelible impact of colonial rule even on the people living at the insular part of the Bengal delta.

Kingsbury begins with a known story of how concurring events of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, colonisation of Bengal, colonial policies, and uneven competition from the British textiles industry systematically ravaged one of the principal sectors of Bengal's economy. Not only had the British surgeon James Taylor, then residing in Dhaka, noted the difficult times the denizens of

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA MONDAY JULY 13, 2020, ASHAR 29, 1427 BS

## The urban middle and low-income groups' distress

*The social safety net programme should take them into reckoning*

It was inevitable. And we had predicted this outcome since the very seminal stages of the outbreak of the pandemic and of the country's going into lockdown. And so had the experts who also suggested that the economic fallout would perhaps outlast the pandemic and the consequence would be far reaching. This inevitability has been faced by all the countries—rich and poor—big and small, affected by the virus. But for developing countries like Bangladesh, the consequences are being felt more immediately.

The number of poor has doubled since the outbreak, and the hardest hit have been the middle and low income groups and those participating in the countries informal economy, nearly forty percent of our population. According to a Brac survey conducted between May 9 and 13, during the shutdown of the economy in May, the average household income in urban areas registered a 79 percent drop. Another study conducted by the PPRC and Brac's Institute of Governance and Development in April found that 77 percent of the formerly non-poor group had slid below the poverty line. Government help has been abjectly inadequate. It was not only due to inadequate resources but also because of some structural weakness and systemic flaws.

The consequence of this fallout, which has divested these people of their income, has not only thrust a large segment of people in the category of poor, we are also witnessing large-scale outflow from the urban to the rural areas. The migration has the potential of the rural economy being adversely affected, as much as affecting the rental business in the cities on which a good number of people depend.

One of the shortcomings has been that the urban poor, many of them belonging to the informal sector and now jobless, have not been considered in the social safety net programme, which should be done immediately. Incentives in cash and kind should include the poor and the vulnerable non-poor who are not generally in that category but are now so due to the loss of income during the pandemic.

## Bridges on the brink of falling down

*Why the neglect in repairing such vital infrastructure?*

A bridge on the Dhaleswar river at Charabari in Tangail Sadar upazila is on the verge of breaking down as earth from one of its approach roads has become displaced due to heavy rain and strong currents in the river. Hundreds of vehicles, including heavy ones, and thousands of people move over the bridge which connects five unions of the char areas in the western part of the district. But it is not just the rains that make such bridges vulnerable but other illegal activities like sand lifting as well as a general lethargy about maintenance of such vital infrastructure.

According to a report in this paper, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) constructed the bridge in 2006 for developing road communication between the district headquarters and the char area. But floods and heavy rains have since then damaged the western side approach several times. And each time instead of repairing the bridge the authorities took temporary measures such as throwing sandbags. Locals alleged, moreover, that during the dry season a section of influential people with political clout have continuously extracted sand from the river illegally for the last few years making the soil weak and leading to the damage.

So should we be blaming only the natural causes—heavy rains, flooding or change in the river course—for the state of this vital river? How could sand be illegally extracted for years without the knowledge of the authorities? Why would only temporary measures be taken when proper repair and maintenance could have kept the bridge strong enough to withstand the heavy rains and flooding as most bridges are supposed to do? The local administration is saying that they have already informed the Water Development Board (WDB) and LGED and told them to take immediate steps to protect the bridge. So what happened during all the years in between?

These are questions that the government should be asking the LGED and other bodies responsible for maintenance and repair of bridges. This paper has run innumerable reports on bridges in dilapidated condition and posing grave risks to those travelling over it. Last December we had reported on the ramshackle state of two rail bridges in Gaibandha connecting Dhaka with the northern districts that are around 200 years old. The derelict state of these bridges highlight the neglect and apathy towards maintenance of bridges in general. While the rains may give an excuse for the inability to repair these bridges they cannot absolve the responsible authorities from their utter negligence in regular repair and maintenance for which funds are supposed to be routinely allocated.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### We shall overcome this pandemic

The most advanced countries in the world have been rendered helpless by the coronavirus pandemic. Even though the future looks bleak, we must not give up hope. It is very difficult to deal with a threat that is invisible. But we must still continue to try and overcome it.

I would like to salute all those fearless people on the frontline, including doctors and nurses who are placing their lives in danger to save those who are infected. In their endeavour, many of them have died, but many more are still fighting hard, which provides a beacon of hope during the ongoing crisis. May the Almighty protect and bless us all.

Nur Jahan, Chatogram

# Ensuring food security for all



FAHMIDA KHATUN

**MACRO MIRROR**  
BANGLADESH has made remarkable growth in agriculture since independence. This is both in terms of growth in yield and output of cereal production. Food production in Bangladesh has kept its pace with its population growth. Despite population growth over time, the country has attained food self-sufficiency at the aggregate level and increased calorie availability. On average, access to food has also improved. This has been due to the Green Revolution experienced by the country during the past decades. Along with growth, food consumption pattern has also changed.

The recently launched 2020 Global Food Policy Report of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) indicates that per capita consumption of cereals has declined while that of meat, eggs, fish, fruits, vegetables and milk has increased across South Asia. In case of Bangladesh, one of the reasons for improvement in its nutritional status, reduction in child stunting, underweight and wasting is the diversity in diet. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF reveals that chronic malnutrition which is measured by stunting levels declined to 28 percent in 2019 from 42 percent in 2013.

The other change in the agriculture sector is the expansion of the food processing sector. This has also been a source of employment. With further technological upgradation food processing can be further increased. This has the potential to improve food availability. Despite paucity of real time and authentic data it can be said that the agriculture sector has been an important catalyst for poverty reduction through employment generation and food consumption. The value chains created within the sector such as through poultry and fishery sub-sectors have also helped the poor to improve their condition.

Of course, food self-sufficiency does not mean food security and food availability for all. It does not also mean food equity and food inclusivity. Bangladesh still lags behind in the Global Food Security Index. In 2019 Bangladesh was ranked 83rd position out of 113 countries in the Global Food Security Index. Bangladesh's ranking is the lowest among the South Asian countries. At a

more disaggregated level, it is observed that in case of food affordability and availability Bangladesh's scores have been good. However, the index on quality and safety of food has been moderate, indicating the need for improvement.

As the world suffers from the coronavirus pandemic—the biggest crisis of the century—the need to build inclusive food systems has become more important than ever before. This is to ensure that marginalised and vulnerable people enjoy the benefits of an inclusive food system. It is also related to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2 which urge upon ending poverty and achieving zero hunger, respectively.

However, it is almost clear now that the consequences of corona outbreak will

crop. In the meantime, the government has also planned to import rice. While this is a good initiative to stay prepared for the bad time, it should be done in a realistic manner based on the actual need. Because, if more rice is imported than what is required, farmers will not get due prices for their own production. This will disincentivise them from producing more in the next season. We should not lose sight of the contributions of the farmers and giving them their due prices while planning for imports.

The other concern during the ongoing corona crisis is distributing food to the poor and also bringing food to the market so that people can purchase them at an affordable price. Therefore, marketing and other logistical arrangements have to be in place to make food available.



PHOTO: STAR

be prolonged for several more months. Therefore, it has been predicted by various organisations and experts that corona crisis will lead to the hardest global recession so far. The socio-economic achievements which have been made during the last several decades are thus at risk of being reversed due to the impact of Covid-19. Therefore, as countries are taking various initiatives to revive their economies, they are also planning for adequate food availability.

Coronavirus pandemic has affected the agricultural production and supply system in many countries. However, despite such crisis, Bangladeshi farmers have given the country a good harvest of Boro. Of course, cyclone "Amphan" has affected the sector substantially. The government has put emphasis on Aman and Aus

During crisis, it is common that the opportunists stock food and create an artificial crisis in the market. On the other hand, farmers have to sell their produce immediately after the harvest since they have to live their lives and also give wages to labourers. They neither have savings to survive for a few days nor any storage to keep their harvest. Due to such distress sale of their produce, they do not get the right price. If the government provides them support during this interim period, they can sell their harvest at a better price after a certain period.

To ensure food security, policymakers need to take proactive measures towards equitable distribution of food. It has been obvious that in order to reverse the coronavirus-led unemployment and poverty the government will have

## How three economic impacts of Covid-19 could spell danger for Bangladesh



ERESH OMAR JAMAL

**THE OVERTON WINDOW**  
IN mid-June, the IMF in a country focus report on Bangladesh said that the economic impact of Covid-19 has most notably been felt in three main areas: a fall in remittances; a decline in RMG exports; and a drop

in domestic economic activities. Stories of how Bangladeshi migrant workers have had their lives turned upside down by the pandemic have regularly made the news of late. Thousands have lost their jobs and many have been deported. Yet, defying expectations and in contrast to most other economic indicators that are in free fall, remittance somehow hit an all-time high of USD 18.2 billion in the recently concluded fiscal year.

This was somewhat baffling as there was absolutely no good reason for remittance to suddenly go up in June. The only logical explanation, according to experts, is that people are sending whatever money they had saved up abroad as they are being forced to leave their host countries and return to Bangladesh. Once this rush of money subsides and more and more people return home, remittance, a major pillar of our economy, could suffer severely.

Garment exports fell 18.12 percent year-on-year to USD 27.94 billion in FY2019-20. As it accounts for 84 percent of our total national exports, overall exports also fell 25.99 percent short of its annual target of USD 45.50 billion. This is another example of why we should have diversified our exports basket long ago, as experts suggested for decades. Nevertheless, since we are in the position we are in, it is essential that we support our garments sector to survive this crisis.

There could be one positive in the numbers. Bangladesh's garments exports to its single largest apparel export destination, the US, declined by 12.50 percent year-on-year to USD 2.32 billion between January and May this year, according to the US Office of Textiles and Apparel data—whereas China's declined by 43.87 percent year-on-year to USD 7.66 billion; India's declined by 23.00 percent to USD 2.79 billion; and Mexico's by 31.32 percent to USD 1.26 billion. Outperforming all those countries takes resilience, and it is possible that our RMG sector does have what it takes to recover

quicker compared to other countries. But that is in the long-run.

Western economies are not expected to recover soon and this is the perfect time to be diversifying our foreign markets. Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, suggests Bangladesh should try and increase its share of the Asian market. China has recently allowed duty-free facility for 97 percent of Bangladeshi products. Bangladeshi shipment (led by garments) to India was more than USD 1 billion last year and crossed that mark to Japan in FY2018-19.

Making our trade policies more efficient is another key to recovery. One challenge in that department is the classic case of anti-export bias. Because we have high import tariffs on products

the pandemic, as the richer segment of society has cut back on hiring part-time cooks, maids, etc. to maintain social distancing with the "unwashed masses". According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 85.1 percent of our workforce are employed in the informal sector, that is more than 50 million people. And it is now estimated that the pandemic has left 80 percent of them unemployed. Therefore, on the one hand, domestic consumption has taken a big hit, while on the other, we have mass unemployment lowering the disposable income of poorer people to near zero, which is then deflating domestic consumption further.

Last month, the World Bank projected in a report that across the Asian region, pandemic mitigation measures will



PHOTO: STAR

we could export, domestic producers prefer to sell their products within the country for higher prices in the absence of competition from foreign sources. This is lowering exports and raising domestic prices. Therefore, the government should set its trade policies in such a way that makes exports and domestic sales equally lucrative.

Because most Bangladeshis are still relatively poor, despite GDP per capita rising in recent years—a lot of it being skewed by the rich getting richer—their consumption beyond necessity goods is still rather limited. And in times of crisis, that rings particularly true. On the other hand, a lot of the consumption of the richer segments of society depends on informally hiring the poorer segments for services—as maids, chauffeurs, etc.

The latter has taken a major hit due to

severely hinder consumption and services activity, while high uncertainty about the pandemic will constrain private investment. None of this is good news for increasing domestic consumption anytime soon. The WB also warned that there is a risk that the pandemic will trigger a long-lasting rise in poverty, especially in low-income countries. And Bangladesh has already started experiencing that.

A study conducted in May by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) found a whopping 16.4 million people sliding below the poverty line due to the pandemic. Around 50 percent of them reported a decline in income, while over 20 percent of people who had monthly earnings of below Tk 15,000 before said that they no longer had any earnings. Among the people

to rely on the domestic economy to a large extent. Agriculture can provide a huge support for bouncing back from economic recession. In the face of corona-led economic struggle, many people are migrating back to their villages so that they can at least survive by being engaged in agriculture or non-farm activities. This reiterates the need for higher investment in agriculture, particularly in commercial agriculture through farm mechanisation and technological adoption. The focus has to be broadened from subsistence agriculture to agricultural trade. Ironically, the allocation for the Ministry of Agriculture remains unutilised, despite there being many areas of investment and innovation.

Indeed, for the agriculture sector, a two-pronged approach should be adopted. On the one hand, technological innovations are necessary to improve productivity and sustainability in the agriculture and rural sectors. On the other hand, food production has to be coupled with policies and strong institutions for procurement, marketing and distribution. The issue of food security and reduction of hunger is not only related to the agriculture sector alone, it is part of broader macroeconomic policy. Broader reforms are needed in case of land policy, pricing policy, subsidy policy and fiscal policy to have a modern agriculture sector.

Food security for the vulnerable people during crisis such as corona pandemic also requires strong social safety net measures. The government of Bangladesh has expanded social safety net programmes in the budget for fiscal year 2020-21. However, since Covid-19 is not going to leave us soon there will be need for further support to the poor so that they do not go hungry.

Internationally, there are calls for not imposing restrictions on food trade. However, past experiences have shown that during economic stress countries resort to protectionism no matter how much we emphasise on international cooperation and mutual responsibility for the global poor. Already, several countries have imposed restrictions on exports of several agricultural products. The spirit of global cooperation gets lost in the urgency of saving their own people. We have experienced such situation in 2008. There is no reason to expect otherwise during the corona pandemic. Therefore, we have to prepare ourselves, both for the short and medium term to ensure food security.

Dr Fahmida Khatun is the Executive Director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

earning less than Tk 11,000 per month, 57 percent said they had no income, 32 percent experienced a decrease in earnings, and only about 11 percent said their income had remained stable. In the same month, a study done by Brac revealed that about 36 percent city dwellers had lost their jobs and 3 percent did not receive salaries despite having jobs. And there is little doubt that things haven't fared any better since then.

Therefore, all three factors the IMF is concerned about are leading to two things: i) mass unemployment; and ii) increased poverty. While relief packages are important to ensure that many of these people do not starve to death, the government has to start preparing to go further.

Creating employment—besides addressing the pandemic from the healthcare side of it—is the biggest need of the hour; maybe not right now, but soon enough. However, formulations of different strategies that can achieve that must begin immediately.

Much has already been said about the "jobless growth" we had been experiencing before the pandemic hit. And there were serious worries about the fact that Bangladesh was failing to create enough jobs for its people. Likewise, many solutions to the problem of joblessness were presented. And they still apply and should be implemented—even more urgently. And if we look close enough, many of those problems are systematic, and will require government reforms.

Unfortunately, the political will for those reforms was previously absent. But now the situation could get to a point where mass unemployment and poverty—due to previous systemic problems and corruption and issues brought forth by the pandemic—could start endangering our entire social structure. That is something the authorities should recognise.

Throughout history, great social upheavals have occurred time and again when unemployment and poverty reached a critical stage. There is no guarantee that this crisis will not push us over the edge. That is why policymakers need to be careful and gather up the political will to make the necessary changes that they were unwilling to make before. As well as make special arrangements for this particular crisis that we are in.

Eresh Omar Jamal is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star. His Twitter handle is: @EreshOmarJamal



# Timeless lessons in the age of coronavirus



CURTIS S CHIN

**M**ORE than 15 years have passed since my first trip to Dhaka—a corporate assignment that would also take me on to Sylhet.

And I would return again in my role on the board of directors of the Asian Development Bank. My next trip, planned pre-coronavirus pandemic, would have been in support of the Asian University for Women in Chittagong.

That and other trips, however, were not to be—at least not in the near-term.

This spring, I was en route from Southeast Asia—where I am based with the Milken Institute—onward to Mississippi and then New York City for memorial services for Harold Burson, the late founder of the public relations firm Burson-Marsteller. It was with Burson's firm, now named BCW Global, that I first travelled to Bangladesh.

Over 30 years, Burson had become a longtime friend and mentor and been rightly described by PRWeek magazine as "the [20th] century's most influential PR figure." When he passed away from complications from a fall, Burson at 98-years-old had seen over the course of his lifetime the start and end of a world war and a polio epidemic.

What wisdom might Burson have shared today with Bangladesh's leaders as well as elsewhere in our globalised world in this unfolding age of the novel coronavirus? Through the decades, Burson and the firm he led would be involved in many of the crises, from pandemics to corporate disasters and blunders, as well as triumphs that would help define the practice of crisis management and crisis preparedness.

It was under Burson that my own international career would begin in the 1990s, taking me to Tokyo, Beijing and Hong Kong and back to New York after September 11, 2001.

In the United States, in the early 2000s, I became part of the US team at Burson-Marsteller that worked with the Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office as it worked to communicate Hong Kong's efforts to battle the deadly spread

of SARS, or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome—a disease linked to the SARS coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2.

According to the World Health Organization, SARS appeared in November 2002 in southern China's Guangdong province, just across the border from Hong Kong.

The first confirmed case of SARS in Hong Kong was in March 2003, and the city would go on to bear the disproportionate brunt of the deaths and economic impact outside of Mainland China.

By June 2003, some 1,750 cases of the virus had been identified in Hong Kong, with nearly 300 people dying of the disease.

By the time the SARS epidemic had ended in July 2003, Mainland China would account for some 5,327, or 66 percent of all reported 8,096 cases, and 349, or 45 percent, of all 774 deaths attributed to the virus, according to the WHO. Hong Kong, then a city of some 6.8 million, would alone account for another 21.7 percent of cases and 299, or 38.6 percent, of all deaths.

Lessons learned during those difficult times have now aided Hong Kong, and also Singapore and Taiwan, in their efforts to face the ongoing pandemic of SARS-CoV-2.

That time, nearly two decades ago, also came back to me as I transited in Tokyo this February and reflected on what I might say or write in remembrance of Harold Burson.

As Covid-19 continues to take its toll on all too many of our elders, let us not forget the wisdom of people like Harold.

Five points I had learned from Burson's example and that I shared at Burson's memorial service at Lincoln Center in New York still very much apply today.

Burson might have passed away, but his timeless wisdom holds true today not just for Bangladesh but for all countries, businesses and individuals as we battle the direct and indirect consequences of the ongoing pandemic.

**Be kind**  
With much of the world's population in some form of "staying at home" or "working from home," tensions driven by close proximity for days on end are likely to raise tempers and the chances for conflict. Certainly be mindful, but

let us also remember the power of kindness.

He might have been a pioneering CEO at a firm with thousands of employees, but Burson made time to offer up a kind word, a hand-written note of thanks or an encouraging email.

"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible," the Dalai Lama is famously said to have shared. And Burson would no doubt have agreed,



PHOTO: BURSON-MARSTELLER VIA FLICKR

Harold Burson with a row of Silver Anvil awards in the New York offices of Burson-Marsteller, the PR firm he helped found, in 1978.

even in these most difficult of times.

**Be humble**  
Corporate titans and presidents—most famously, that other great communicator, Ronald Reagan—took to Burson. Every leader develops his or her style. And for Burson, leadership also meant a steely humbleness.

Think Yoda, more than General Douglas MacArthur. And that is something also that leaders today, including in China where the coronavirus first emerged, might also

take to heart. Past success in battling this latest coronavirus is certainly no predictor of future outcomes, and leaders will want to not declare "mission accomplished" too soon.

**Be accountable**  
In building a global business, Burson was no stranger to success or failure. He knew though that accountability is not a punishment or simply about water under the bridge. Through

Rogers, could well have been attributed to Harold. "It takes a lifetime to build a good reputation, but you can lose it in a minute."

That is echoed in legendary investor Warren Buffett's oft-quoted statement, "It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'd do things differently."

In one minute or five, reputation—like trust—can be lost quickly. And trust, Harold taught me, like a good reputation must be earned over time. And that is true for nations too.

Ongoing doubts over the accuracy of Covid-19 case data from China is due in no small part to longstanding doubts about the accuracy over Chinese economic reports.

**Tell the truth**  
So, how to earn trust in the age of coronavirus? The solution, Burson might have said, could well be quite simple. That is, tell the truth. And more than that, allow others to tell and report the truth.

Those words of wisdom ring particularly true at a time when China has thrown out American reporters from the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and imposed new restrictions on free speech in Hong Kong.

This past February 15th, Burson would have celebrated his 99th birthday. Imagine. Burson was already 64 when I first started working with him way back in 1986, underscoring how each of us too can impact a life at any age.

And as I think about it more, Burson's story is not fully over. He will live on to 100 and beyond through his ideas, his values and through all of us—whether family, friend, client or colleague—if each of us embrace his decency, his humanity, his wisdom.

Be kind. Be humble. Be accountable. Earn trust. Tell the truth.

Those might sound like old-fashion words of wisdom from a century past. The first few months of 2020 and an unfolding pandemic however, tell us they are 20th century lessons that must not be forgotten in the 21st in Bangladesh and elsewhere.

Curtis S Chin, a former US Ambassador to the Asian Development Bank, served as Managing Director, Asia-Pacific for Burson-Marsteller. His Twitter Handle is @CurtisSChin

## Time to put workers first



RMG NOTES

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

**T**HE past two decades have seen the onward march of the corporate social responsibility agenda in the global apparel industry.

"People are our most important asset," brands will tell us at any given opportunity. Every brand—even the laggards—go to great lengths in their annual sustainability reports to speak about the importance of their business partners (suppliers) and how much they value the workers who make their clothing.

We can all argue as much as we like about which brands have been telling the truth on these issues, and which ones have simply been saying these things for PR.

What is certain, however, is that now is the time that these words and promises are being put to the test right across the globe. It's time for brands to match their rhetoric with actions.

One of the main outcomes of the coronavirus crisis is that it is the most vulnerable that have been hit the hardest. Some estimates suggest that nearly half of the global workforce in

the informal sector, totalling 1.6 billion workers, could be in imminent danger of having their livelihoods destroyed. Millions of these people work in the garment sector where margins are very low and where many businesses are often just a couple of cancelled orders away from going out of business.

The world has made great strides in lifting tens of millions of people out of poverty in the past few decades but all of this work risks being undone in just a few chaotic months as vulnerable workers face losing their jobs, a roof over their heads and access to essential healthcare.

We cannot stand idly by and allow this to happen.

In Bangladesh, I can already see the warning signs. Our country has a huge dependence on the RMG industry and many tens of thousands of garment workers are already temporarily laid off and face losing their jobs. Without any other work to fall back on and limited—or no—savings, these workers face destitution.

The important thing to note here is that we simply do not yet understand the scale of the devastation in our industry and its impact on garment workers. Around the world, governments have stepped in during these unprecedented times to provide payments to workers who have been



PHOTO COURTESY: MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

temporarily laid off due lockdowns. For garment workers in Bangladesh, these payments have provided a lifeline, but it is only a temporary one.

The big question on everybody's lips is, what next? What happens when our government has no more money left to give, for that day will come soon; even national governments can go bankrupt.

This is the big worry for me. When we have a clearer picture of what is going on in our industry, when the dust has settled by the end of this summer, how many workers will have no work? How many workers will be facing destitution? Will it be thousands? Tens

of thousands? Hundreds of thousands?

Will it be more? Such a thought is difficult to contemplate at the present time.

I talked about brands right at the start of this article. We cannot expect them to be our saviours but, given all their talk about the importance of people in recent years, they should surely be going to every length possible to reduce overall impacts on vulnerable supply chain workers at the present time.

I have discussed these issues tirelessly over recent months, but the messages cannot be spelled out often

enough. All factories need cashflow and brands should be supporting them with this by paying their invoices in good time. This helps the workers the brands say they care so much about. It also helps if brands pay—in full—for all cancelled and work-in-progress orders. There will be damage to factories by coronavirus, there is no question of that. But brands can play a vital part in reducing this damage, and subsequent impact on workers.

Now is the time when the social responsibly which brands have talked about can come to the fore. We know what a successful business model fast fashion is. But can fast fashion also be a force for the collective good? Popular fashion has lifted many millions out of poverty in clothing supply chains.

But the question is, will the global fashion industry be able to keep them there when this crisis has passed? Big brands need to think very carefully about their next steps. They need to do the right thing and stick by suppliers. What they do in the next three months could have a huge influence on the direction our industry takes over the next decade.

Mostafiz Uddin is the Managing Director of Denim Expert Limited. He is also the Founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE). Email: mostafiz@denimexpert.com

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**NELSON MANDELA**  
(1918-2013)  
President of South Africa.

*I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Sweeping story
- 5 Return to base
- 10 Annoying fellow
- 12 Make amends
- 13 Assessed
- 14 River crossings
- 15 "Exodus" hero
- 16 Major landing site
- 18 Hotel suite feature
- 20 Salon stuff
- 21 Epps of "House"
- 23 Take advantage of
- 24 Church leader
- 26 Western natives
- 28 Commotion
- 29 Song for one

**DOWN**

- 1 Scarecrow fill
- 2 In the know
- 3 "Understand?"
- 4 Verb for you
- 5 Roosevelt's successor
- 6 Resting on
- 7 Deviate from
- 8 Strip
- 9 Mortar's mate
- 11 "A Mind to Murder" author
- 17 Pitching stat
- 19 Jazz style
- 22 Decided, as a case
- 24 Roofing gunk
- 25 Facing the audience
- 27 Youngster
- 28 Leave
- 30 Singer Yoko
- 33 Grand, for one
- 34 High points
- 35 Decade parts
- 37 Hightail it
- 38 Early carmaker
- 42 Shirt protector

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO [dsopinion@gmail.com](mailto:dsopinion@gmail.com).

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

I	D	L	E	S	S	H	O	O	T
D	E	A	L	T	H	I	N	G	E
E	A	R	L	I	R	I	S	E	R
A	R	K	L	I	E	S	E	T	
G	A	P	E	S	R	E	P	L	E
E	X	E	S		D	O	R	M	S
T	E	P	I	D		Y	E	A	H
A	B	S				N	E	A	R
L	A	T	E	C	H	A	R	G	E
P	L	A	N	E	C	H	E	C	K
S	E	N	D	S		H	O	S	T

**BEETLE BAILEY** BY MORT WALKER

YOU GOT A LETTER? FROM MY GIRL BACK HOME. WHY DOESN'T SHE JUST EMAIL? SHE CAN'T PUT PERFUME ON IT.

**BABY BLUES** BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

COME ON GUNS! LET'S GO! I'M TIRED OF GETTING STUCK IN THE BACK SEAT! BUT IT'S SAFER FOR YOU TO RIDE BACK THERE, ZOE. I DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH RIDING BACK HERE... I'M JUST TIRED OF GETTING STUCK! HEY YOU FOUND MY GUM!

## Vikram

FROM PAGE 12

South Asia and homework on the subjects he is dealing with, diplomatic sources said.

Riva Ganguly Das, the 1986 batch IFS officer, is likely to take over as Secretary (East) at the MEA when incumbent Vijai Thakur Singh retires in September.

With Bangladesh being one of the few South Asian countries with which India has had a steady upswing in ties spanning a wide range of sectors, particularly cross-border connectivity, Doraiswami faces the challenge of taking them forward much further at a time when China is expanding its footprints in South Asia.

## Egypt grounds

FROM PAGE 12

kites, Alexandria's governorate said this week on its Facebook page.

Fines imposed for kite-flying in the Mediterranean city can reach up to 1,000 pounds (about \$60).

Egypt's skies have been filled with thousands of colourful paper kites flown by youths from rooftops and on cornices, as the hobby took off during night-time curfews to limit the spread of coronavirus.

But they have also raised complaints, including from an MP.

Khaled Abu Taleb, a member of parliament's Defence and National Security Committee, said last month he wanted the prime minister briefed on the dangers of flying kites because they posed "a national security threat".

The kites might be equipped with surveillance cameras, he said.

Abu Taleb was roundly ridiculed on social media in Egypt, where operating a drone is only authorised with a special permit.

A three-month curfew was lifted in June, even as cases of Covid-19 in Egypt continue to rise, with over 80,000 declared infections and nearly 4,000 deaths to date.

## National

FROM PAGE 12

In future. A new University Ordinance will be declared soon. The new ordinance will ensure that there will be no undue interference by the government in the university affairs, he assures. The minister further says that a new education system would be introduced as the government doesn't want the faulty education system pursued during the Pakistani regime any more.

**AL LEADERS ASKED TO CONDUCT PROBE**

Bangabandhu today directs the secretary of the women's branch of Awami League Sajeda Chowdhury and a few other prominent women Awami League leaders to go to Narsingdi to have an enquiry into the incident in which several persons including some girl students were allegedly manhandled by the police. According to earlier reports the police resorted to indiscriminate lathi charge on a procession brought out by students on July 10 demanding release of a local leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

**SOURCES:** July 14, 1972 issues of *Bangladesh Observer*, *Dainik Bangla* and *Dainik Ittefaq*.

## Some ACs

FROM PAGE 12

Guidance from the Chartered Institution of Building Service Engineers, which Dr Fitzgerald helped draw up, warns that split units that do not have a dedicated source of outside air supply into a room "could be responsible for re-circulating and spreading airborne viral particles into the path of socially distanced users".

The guidance says: "It is recommended that any ventilation or air conditioning system that normally runs with a re-circulation mode should now be set up to run on full outside air where this is possible."

Dr Fitzgerald said that opening a window while operating the unit was the best way to mitigate risk, even though it may go against conventional wisdom and be more expensive.

He said these kinds of wall-mounted units were often installed when people only needed air conditioning for a few days each year.

Harvard environmental health researcher Joseph Gardner Allen says ventilation systems with highly effective filters are a key way of filtering droplets from the air, according to CNN.

A study in China in April linked coronavirus transmission to an air-conditioning unit after a diner at a restaurant in the city of Guangzhou infected nine others.

"We conclude that in this outbreak, droplet transmission was prompted by air-conditioned ventilation. The key factor for infection was the direction of the airflow," researchers from the Guangzhou Center for Disease Control and Prevention said.

More than 12.7 million people have been infected with the virus, and more than 565,000 worldwide have died, of whom more than 134,000 are in the US, where air conditioning is widespread.

Cases have surged in the American south and west, where temperatures are highest.



**National Disaster Response Force personnel carry a sick woman during a rescue operation in a flood affected area in Pithsala of Barpeta district, some 105kms from Guwahati, the capital city of India's northeastern state of Assam yesterday.**

PHOTO: AFP

## Bachchan family hit by virus

FROM PAGE 12

Saturday, when they said they had mild symptoms of Covid-19.

Hospital officials and government health authorities said earlier yesterday that Amitabh and his son were in stable condition.

People in northern and western India were conducting Hindu prayer rituals for the Bachchan family, social media and television footage showed.

Amitabh, 77, was badly hurt in an action scene at movie set in 1982, an incident that triggered tremendous support and love for him across the nation as people prayed for his recovery. At the time one fan was said to have walked backwards from southern Hyderabad city to Mumbai in his honour.

Since then, Amitabh has been operated on several times.

Aishwarya, 46, who often features on "most beautiful" lists, has worked in several Bollywood and Hollywood films. She is a brand ambassador for several multinational companies, including L'Oréal.

Amitabh's wife Jaya, also an actor, has tested negative, said the health minister. Amitabh, a revered celebrity who endorses dozens of Indian and global brands, has a net worth estimated to be over \$100 million, trade analysts say.

The minister later deleted his tweet, but another government official confirmed to Reuters the information was accurate. A spokeswoman for Aishwarya declined to comment.

Top bureaucrats and ministers have been asked to show restraint on tweeting regarding the Bollywood star family, an official in the prime

minister's office told Reuters.

India yesterday registered a record increase in the number of coronavirus cases, taking the total number of affected people in the country to nearly 850,000, the world's third-highest, and prompting authorities to re-impose partial lockdowns in some densely populated areas.

Federal health ministry data showed that more than 27,100 new cases were reported in the previous 24 hours, while the death toll increased to 22,674, after 551 people succumbed in a day.

Amitabh said in a tweet on Saturday night that he had tested positive for the infectious virus. Within minutes, Abhishek, 44, tweeted that he had also tested positive.

Father and son were moved to the Nanavati Hospital in Mumbai despite

showing only mild symptoms and the father-son duo appealed to their millions of fans to stay calm.

Authorities launched a massive sanitising drill at Bachchan's upscale residence in Mumbai, spraying disinfectant in the large compound and on cars parked outside.

Amitabh has been a prominent figure in the fight against the coronavirus, appearing in public service advertisements where, in his trademark baritone, he urges people to wear masks, wash hands frequently and maintain social distance.

India's film industry recently resumed film shoots after a months-long hiatus following the imposition of a nationwide lockdown in late March.

But actors over 65, such as Amitabh, are banned from the sets because of their vulnerability to the virus.

## Rivers swell, sufferings intensify

FROM PAGE 12

In Rangpur, people in three hit farmer of Gobordhan village in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila, said, "Our house and other properties have been submerged. We along with our livestock have taken shelter on roads for survival. We have no food. We are now depending on some dry food provided by some of our relatives," said.

In Sirajganj, the flood situation has deteriorated rapidly posing a threat of long-term flood.

Jamuna may cross the danger level today as the river is swelling up rapidly, said AKM Rafikul Islam, sub-divisional engineer at Sirajganj WDB.

In Sunamganj, people of all the 11 upazilas are in peril as the flash flood hit the region for the second time amid the pandemic.

Fish farmers have incurred a huge loss and farmers would entirely lose their crops if the flood prolongs a few more days.

The Surma river was flowing 42 centimetres at Sunamganj town point yesterday morning.

Johirul Alam, district relief and rehabilitation officer of Sunamganj, said, "We are distributing 336.9 tonnes of rice, Tk 20,18,500 and 3,600 packets of dry foods among the victims. We opened 269 shelter

centres in the district".

In Sylhet, the Surma was flowing at 80cm above the danger level at Kanaighat point yesterday morning, affecting around 48,000 families in five upazilas.

Shofiq Uddin Ahmed, district relief and rehabilitation officer in Sylhet, said, "We've already disbursed 115 tonnes of rice and 900 packets of dry foods among the affected people."

Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Pabna, Dinajpur, Sylhet and Nilphamari contributed to this report.

## No mask no entry

FROM PAGE 12

distancing measures have helped keep the numbers low.

So far, 300 samples, collected at the Hakimpur Upazila Health Complex, were tested in the district headquarters, he told The Daily Star last Wednesday. No new samples were tested as of yesterday.

Only samples of patients, who came to the health facility with coronavirus symptoms, were collected and tested, he added.

The physician said a 16-member Corona Protirodh Committee headed by the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) was formed in May with members from different professional groups in the upazila to monitor the pandemic situation.

Similar committees have been formed at the union levels, said Touhid, who is also the member secretary of the upazila committee.

Early June, the upazila Corona

Protirodh Committee introduced "No Mask, No Entry" regulation which barred people from entering Hakimpur and its public and private establishments without wearing a mask.

Since July 4, the committee introduced "No Mask, No Sale" regulation among the local traders.

Shopkeepers in the upazila headquarters and even in villages, through union parishads have been asked not to sell any item if customers do not wear masks.

If the rule is violated, the committee punishes the traders.

Already several shops have been shut down for selling products to customers wearing no mask.

Fazlur Rahim, president of Hakimpur Dokan Malik Samity (shop owners association), said all their members support the "No Mask, No Sale" policy and are following it.

Only three shop-owners violated the rule and their shops were closed, he added.

Talking to The Daily Star on Wednesday, Hakimpur's UNO Abdur Rafiqul Alam said he has been operating a mobile court regularly since April.

So far, 207 cases have been filed against those who violated Covid-19 restrictions and about Tk 7 lakh has been realised in fine, he added.

Coronavirus cases in Hakimpur, that lies on the India-Bangladesh border, is also low compared to other upazilas adjacent to the border -- Dinajpur Sadar, Biral, Birampur, Chirirbandar and Phulbari.

The UNO said movement of around 500 Indian trucks and helpers, who commute every day through Hakimpur's border with India carrying imported goods, have also been restricted.

"Now, the Indian truckers and

helpers cannot roam easily in the upazila as they did before," he added.

Besides, at nine entry points of the upazila, incoming travellers are questioned. They are asked to go into 14 days of home quarantine if they have coronavirus symptoms or had come in contact with Covid-19 patients.

About social distancing measures, he said in March, April and May, volunteers gave doorstep service to the needy and common people to prohibit any gathering at shops and markets.

Abdur Rafiqul believes Hakimpur can be a model for other places in the country.

"It's a great achievement by Hakimpur's residents. The people behind it deserve acknowledgement", said Abdul Kalam Azad, a senior citizen and President of Dinajpur Chapter Sector Commanders' Forum.

## Tigress found dead in Sundarbans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A seriously injured tigress was found dead near Andharmanik forest camp in the Sundarbans on Friday.

"A front and a hind leg of the tigress were severely injured, probably from a crocodile attack. We collected its organs for autopsy and buried the corpse near our camp after skinning it on Saturday," said Bashir-Al-Mamun, divisional forest officer at Sundarbans West range, Khulna.

The officer who saw the body on Saturday told The Daily Star that the tigress aged between 14 and 15 was seen by officials a few times last week near Andharmanik camp.

"But on Friday, they saw her sitting at the same place for hours. In the afternoon, they saw flies buzzing around it," he said.

"There were injuries on her face, the front right leg was snatched from below the ankle and the left hind leg didn't have four claws. She was unable to hunt and must have become very weak."

A tiger census last year found the number of tigers in Bangladesh part of the Sundarbans was 114. At least two other tigers were found dead following the census.

## Child marriage

FROM PAGE 12

Referring to the United Nations statistics, she said globally more than 5 million girls are at risk of child marriage because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Early marriage affects a young woman's health," she added.

According to the MJF report, 2,896 children and 9,844 women became victims of different forms of violence last month, and 2,171 children and 11,323 women faced similar incidents in May.

Of them, some 1,376 children and 1,956 women experienced torture and violence for the first time in June, said the report.

A total of 12,740 women and children faced violence in June, while the number was 13,494 in May, it said.

Of the women who faced violence in June, a staggering 98 percent or 9,693 experienced domestic violence.

Also, 97 women were sexually harassed, 36 either raped or subjected to attempted rape. Besides, five others were sexually harassed while receiving food or other support.

At home, 4,622 women were tortured mentally, 1,839 physically, and 223 sexually.

Of the child victims, 1,764 faced domestic violence, 292 violence at workplaces, nine were raped and 99 subjected to attempted rape. Besides, 12 others were sexually harassed while receiving food or other support.

Of them, 1,219 were boys and 1,677 girls.

Referring to media reports, MJF said 14 women and 41 children were murdered in June across the country.

The MJF recommended revisiting the national plan of action to end child marriage and taking new plans immediately considering the present Covid-19 crisis, including making required budgetary allocations.

It also suggested launching a strong coordinated effort without any delay under the stewardship of the women and children affairs ministry and starting skill development and empowerment programmes for girl children through distant learning using radio or online platforms.

## Must be taken

FROM PAGE 12

The expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry will set up the dedicated testing centre.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Imran Ahmed and State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam attended the meeting.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen and secretaries of other relevant ministries were connected.

## China releases professor who criticised Xi

Say friends

REUTERS, Beijing

A Beijing law professor who has been an outspoken critic of China's President Xi Jinping and the ruling Communist Party was released yesterday after six days of detention, his friends said.

Xu Zhangrun, a constitutional law professor at the prestigious Tsinghua University, returned home yesterday morning but remained under surveillance and was not free to speak publicly about what happened, one of his friends, who declined to be identified, told Reuters.

Calls to the media departments of the Beijing police and Tsinghua University seeking comment went unanswered yesterday.

Xu, 57, came to prominence in July 2018 for denouncing the removal of the two-term limit for China's leader, which will allow Xi to remain in office beyond his current second term.



Stand-in England captain Ben Stokes looks dejected as Jermaine Blackwood and Roston Chase put West Indies in a strong position to win the first Test at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton yesterday, sharing a 73-run stand for the fourth wicket to steady the visitors' ship after they were reduced to 27 for three on an exciting final day. England pacer Jofra Archer removed Chase to break the partnership but Blackwood remained not out on 65 and the visitors reached tea on 143 for 4, requiring 57 more runs in the final session to take a lead in the series. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Jahanara raring to get back on the field

RAMIN TALUKDER



With sport completely halted and not even training camps spared following the coronavirus outbreak, Bangladesh national team cricketer Jahanara Alam has been trying to maintain her fitness at home like other athletes. But the pacer is eagerly awaiting a return to outdoor practice, especially after being inspired by Mushfiqur Rahim's recent outdoor activities.

"It's different to practice on the field. You can't compare it to working out on a treadmill. It works really well and refreshes you when you do drills on the field. I am a pace bowler and you know how important fitness is for a pace bowler," said Jahanara.

"Mushfiqur bhai's work ethic can serve as an inspiration to any cricketer and I was inspired to do the same when I saw him practising on the lush green, but I have no scope for that."

"The coronavirus suddenly changed everything. I was bored but now I try to be positive. Can you imagine, for the past four months I have been locked at home? Initially, I only did free-hand exercises as I had no gym equipment and as a result, I gained 2kgs," she continued.

Jahanara, however, said she was inspired by Mushfiqur's treadmill exercise and communicated with the wicketkeeper-

batsman to buy the same one. "I purchased some instruments, including a treadmill, and now I am fully focusing on my fitness because it would be unwise to work on fitness instead of skills when we return to cricket. Fitness is a big concern for any pacer, so I have to be fit and Mushfiqur bhai is a great inspiration in this regards," she said.

During the break, Jahanara dedicated as much time as possible to her favourite activities: cooking and eating ice cream.

"I love to cook and I love to eat different food. As an athlete, I need to sacrifice many of my favourite items due to my diet. However, the break afforded me the luxury to eat my favourite ice cream and the quantity was not insignificant," she said with a laugh. "I already started to follow my dieting chart again so there will be no more ice cream more in the near future."

She was confident that fitness would not be an issue for her when cricket returned to Bangladesh.

"Cricket returned to England and many other countries are also planning to resume. As far as I know, the board (Bangladesh Cricket Board) is planning to resume women's cricket through domestic competitions and it will definitely help us in regards to fitness. I am looking forward to starting outdoor practice after the Eid vacation. I always try to stay positive," Jahanara ended.



## Barca cling on to fading title hopes

AGENCIES



Lionel Messi made it 20 assists for the season in Barcelona's stodgy 1-0 win over Real Valladolid on Saturday, even as his team's La Liga challenge appears almost over.

Messi teed up Arturo Vidal's winner at Jose Zorilla to become the first player to provide 20 assists in Spain's top flight since Xavi Hernandez in 2009. Yet even as Barca's turbulent domestic campaign draws to a close, Messi continues to shine.

"It was a very difficult game against a team who know how to play well and did just that today. The hot conditions also complicated things for us but I'm pleased we won," said match-winner Vidal. "We knew that we'd have to work very hard and wouldn't be able to maintain our pace throughout, we know we want to improve but we've kept ourselves in the title race that's the important thing."

The win over Valladolid kept Barca in the title race, although leaders Real can extend



Arturo Vidal is congratulated by Lionel Messi after the Chilean scored the winner against Real Valladolid on Saturday. PHOTO: TWITTER

### PICHICHI PLAYMAKER

Barcelona's Lionel Messi became only the second player to record 20 goals and 20 assists in a single season in Europe's top five leagues in the 21st century. In 2002-03 Arsenal's Thierry Henry scored 24 goals and provided 20 assists in the English Premier League.

Record six-time Ballon d'Or winning Argentine star assisted Arturo Vidal on his first-half strike against Real Valladolid, making him the first player in La Liga history to bag that extraordinary double. With 22 goals in 31 matches, Messi is also on the top of the league's goal-scoring chart.

The 33-year-old forward has now equalled the club record for most assists in a La Liga season set by Xavi Hernandez in 2008-09 and has two more matches to set a new record.

their lead at the top back to four points if they beat Granada on Sunday.

If they beat Granada, Madrid will win La Liga by prevailing at home to Villarreal on Thursday, regardless of Barcelona's results.

Overall, Madrid need only five points from their remaining three matches to secure their third La Liga title in eight years.

"We are doing things that deserve more than where we are," said Barca coach Quique Setien. "To win La Liga, I don't know, because our rival is winning everything."

Luis Suarez started on the bench but replaced Antoine Griezmann at half-time. Later it was revealed that Griezmann is set to miss his side's final two La Liga games after sustaining a thigh injury during the match.

As Barcelona's title challenge has wilted, Setien's position has come under scrutiny too, but he was bold against Valladolid, deploying a 3-5-2 formation, with Nelson Semedo and Jordi Alba as wing-backs and the versatile Sergi Roberto dropping into the back three.

## ONLINE OLYMPIAD A necessary new experience for chess players

SPORTS REPORTER



Following the deferment of the 44th Chess Olympiad by a year, the world governing body of chess, FIDE, has come forward to introduce FIDE Online Olympiad, a team competition where all members will get the opportunity to compete amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

Bangladesh has already sent names of a six-player pool and a reserve team of six players on Saturday, five days before the closing date of entry. The tournament will take place from July 22 and August 30.

Usually each FIDE member sends two teams to Chess Olympiad -- men's and women's, who compete separately while four players compete in each round. But the Online Olympiad will see each country represented by one team of six players -- two senior male players, two senior female players, one U-20 player male player and one U-20 female player. All six players will compete in 15-minute games in each round.

Defending national champion GM Niaz Murshed, third-place finisher GM Reefat Bin Sattar [runner-up GM Abdullah Al Rakib withdrew], national women's champion WIM Rani Hamid, runner-up WIM Sharmin Sultana Shirin, IM Fahad Rahman (U-20) and Ahmed Walijah (U-20) will represent Bangladesh in the tournament.

FM Taibur Rahman, GM Ziaur Rahman, Samiha Shimmi, Nazrana Khan Eva, Tajwar Tahsin Zia and Nowshin Anjum are in the reserve team and they can replace players from the main team.

The Online Olympiad will be played in five stages as the participating teams, split into five divisions from Base to Top, will play in each stage even though some top teams will get byes depending on their ranking. Each division is expected to feature 50 teams from where the top 15 teams will qualify for the next division.

"We still don't know whether we will have to play in base division or play directly in fourth or third division. It will be clear once the entry is completed on July 16," Bangladesh Chess Federation's general secretary Syed Shahabuddin Shamim said yesterday.

Shamim informed that the players will have to play three rounds on three successive days with the qualifying stage starting from July 22.

"We have discussed at the executive committee meeting whether the players can share online chess experience among themselves as some players play online regularly while others have less experience. Besides, some members proposed whether it is possible to bring all six players under a roof to provide better environment with uninterrupted internet facility," Shamim said, adding that they were supposed to sit again yesterday to discuss the issues and select a captain and vice-captain for the team.

## We left the door open, says Klopp

AFP, Liverpool

Jurgen Klopp was frustrated by Liverpool's lack of killer instinct as Burnley became the first visiting side to avoid defeat at Anfield in the Premier League for 18 months in a 1-1 draw on Saturday.

Andy Robertson's first-half header had the champions on course to maintain a perfect home record this season and tally in on a record points tally for the English top flight.

But the Reds were made to pay for a host of missed chances when Jay Rodriguez earned a point to further Burnley's late push for a place in Europe. "We left the door open, we didn't close it. We should have scored two, three, four goals at least," said Klopp, who was also irked by referee David Coote's lenient attitude to Burnley's physical approach. "The ref let all these challenges today happen. When the ball comes in the box, Burnley are always dangerous."

"They stayed completely in the game, they did what they wanted to do. It is frustrating because we should have scored earlier."

Liverpool can still break Manchester City's record points haul of 100 two seasons ago, but will now need to win all three of their remaining matches against Arsenal, Chelsea and Newcastle.

## Cut off their arms, says angry Gasperini

REUTERS, Turin



The only way for players to avoid giving away penalties for handball under current rules is to cut off their arms, angry Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini said after his team drew 2-2 at Juventus.

Gasperini saw his side give away two penalties, both for handball, which allowed Serie A leaders Juventus twice to fight back from behind.

Both handballs were accidental, as first Marten de Roon and then Luis Muriel were struck at point-blank range, but because of the position of their arms, the referee had little

### SERIE A TOP FIVE

Team	M	W	D	L	G/D	Pts
Juventus	32	24	4	4	36	76
Lazio	32	21	5	6	33	68
Atalanta	32	20	7	5	46	67
Inter Milan	31	19	8	4	33	65
Roma	32	16	6	10	16	54

option but to award a spot kick each time.

"Those are the rules, well, at least, in Italy," said Gasperini. "What do we do, cut off the player's arms?"

"That's not the first penalty given like that, there have been so many. Is

the rule interpreted like that in any other league in the world? We need to change the way we interpret the rules."

The draw kept Atalanta third in the table, nine points behind Juventus, with six games each left to play.

"We did really well against the league leaders," he said. "I'm very happy with the performance and very disappointed not to have won." Gasperini said that, even if Atalanta had closed the gap on Juventus to six points, they could not have won the title.

"The Juve title can't get away," he said. "I believe that the Scudetto no longer had history but for us it was a prestigious race and a way to test ourselves for the Champions League quarterfinals where we want to make a good impression."

Atalanta face Paris St Germain in the Champions League quarters, which will take place over one leg in Lisbon in August.



(Clockwise from L) Cristiano Ronaldo got his 27th and 28th goals of the Serie A season with two perfect spot-kicks as Juventus salvaged a point at home against a rampaging Atalanta team, but both decisions by the referee, including the handball from Paulo Dybala's cross, came under heavy scrutiny, especially from Atalanta coach Gianpiero Gasperini.



PHOTO: REUTERS/JUVENTUS

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SHAH CEMENT

# Child marriage marks sharp rise in June

Finds MJF monthly survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Child marriage increased sharply in the country with 462 girls falling victim to such malpractices in June during the coronavirus pandemic, Manusher Jonno Foundation yesterday said in its monthly telesurvey report.

The organisation said the number of child marriage was 170 in May while disclosing findings of the report titled "Violence against Women and Children: Covid-19" at a virtual press conference.

Overall, violence against children went up last month from the month of May, the report showed.

It said 233 and 207 attempted child marriages were averted in May and June respectively due to prompt action.

About the reasons behind the child marriage rise, the organisation pointed to lack of monitoring by the local government authorities amid the pandemic.

Besides, closure of schools, social insecurity, poverty, and neighbours influence prompted guardians to marry off their girl children secretly, MJF said.

The MJF, with support from its partner organisations, conducted a survey in 53 districts for the monthly report of June. Earlier, it published similar reports for the months of April and May.

Presenting the report's findings, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said gender inequality in family along with lack of recognition of woman's contributions and tendency for not respecting her were mainly responsible for increasing domestic violence or violence against women.

She stressed the need for prompt actions against the malpractices.

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A man, taking his child on his shoulders, wades through chest-deep water to move to a safe place in Binbina village of Rangpur's Gangachara yesterday. At least 5,000 villagers of two union parishads are waterlogged due to swelling of the Teesta.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

# Rivers swell, sufferings intensify

STAR REPORT

Sufferings of flood-hit people in the northern and north-eastern regions have intensified as rivers continued to swell.

Many of them have their houses and properties inundated for the second time in less than a month.

In Lalmonirhat and Kurigram, the flood situation deteriorated yesterday as the Brahmaputra, Teesta and Dharla rivers were flowing above the danger level.

Water levels in the rivers are on the rise due to incessant rains in the last few days and onrush of water from upstream hills, said Ariful Islam, executive engineer at Kurigram Water Development Board (WDB).

Shaheda Bewa, 63, a flood victim of Shiberpachhi area under Kurigram Sadar upazila, said, "We are going through untold sufferings. Last month we endured the same sufferings for two weeks."

Sirajul Islam, 55, a flood-SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

# 'NO MASK, NO ENTRY'

How a upazila trying to keep Covid-19 figures under control

KONGKON KARMAKER

Mandatory use of face masks and social distancing have kept the number of Covid-19 cases low in Dinajpur's Hakimpur upazila, compared to the district's 12 other upazilas, local officials say.

From March 10 till yesterday, only 11 people tested positive in Hakimpur, which has a population of about 1.20 lakh.

Till date, eight recovered and none died from Covid-19 in the upazila, according to the northern district's civil surgeon office.

On the other hand, Covid-19 cases in the rest of the district totalled 959 till yesterday.

In Dinajpur Sadar upazila cases were 350, Birampur 107, Chirirbandar upazila 74, Parbatipur 79, Birol 61, Ghoraghat 59, Kaharol 49, Nawabganj 48, Khansama 45, Phulbari 33, Birganj 30 and Bochaganj 24.

Dr Touhid Al Hasan, health and family planning officer of Hakimpur, said several initiatives such as "No Mask, No Entry" and "No Mask, No Sale" as well as social

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

## FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

# National pay commission announced

July 13, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

MUJIB IS THE ONLY HOPE OF THE NATION

NAP Chief Maulana Bhashani says in an emotion-choked voice, "Mujib is the only hope of the nation. I love him. I pray nothing untoward may ever happen to him." The Maulana expresses his affectionate feeling towards the prime minister when Health Minister Abdul Malek pays a visit to him at his Santosh's residence. Talking to the minister the Maulana says, "I served Awami League with Mujib and others for eight years. I wish them all best wishes."

RATIONAL PAY STRUCTURE TO BE EVOLVED

The government today announces 10-member National Pay Commission with Abdur Rab, retired planning secretary of the erstwhile Government of Pakistan, as the chairman. The Commission will comprehensively review the existing pay structure of all the employees working in the public sector except the workers who fall within the purview of the national wage board for workers, and recommend a rational pay structure embracing the entire public sector. The report has to be submitted within six months.

UNIVERSITY ORDINANCE WILL GO

Professor Yusuf Ali, Minister for Education and Cultural Affairs, declares today that the present University Ordinance wouldn't exist

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

COVID-19 CERTIFICATES

# Must be taken from govt approved facilities

Govt asks people willing to travel overseas

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladeshis, willing to go abroad, must obtain coronavirus negative certificates from the government approved testing centres following due process, the government said yesterday.

The decision was made at a virtual inter-ministerial meeting held with Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen in the chair.

It was also suggested posting the Covid-19 test reports to "the websites of institutions concerned" so that the Immigration Department can easily verify those certificates.

Meanwhile, a dedicated Covid-19 testing facility will be developed for Bangladeshis who will go abroad for work.

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# Egypt grounds kites for 'safety', 'nat'l security'



AFP, Cairo

Egyptian police have seized kites from people flying them after a ban by a northern governorate for "safety" reasons and a lawmaker's warning they posed a "national security threat".

Police seized 369 kites in Cairo on Friday, Al-Ahram reported, while Akhbar Al-Youm, another state newspaper, said police confiscated 99 kites and fined five people in the northern region of Alexandria.

The ban was brought in "to ensure the safety of citizens after a number of accidents" involving

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

# INDIAN HC TO DHAKA Vikram likely to succeed Riva Das

STAR REPORT

Senior career diplomat Vikram Doraiswami is likely to be India's new High Commissioner



to Bangladesh, succeeding Riva Ganguly Das.

Doraiswami, a 1992 batch Indian Foreign Service officer who is at present Additional Secretary in-charge of International Organisations and Summits at the Ministry of External Affairs, heads to Dhaka, one of the closest allies of New Delhi.

As Joint Secretary, Doraiswami has handled Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar affairs at the MEA headquarters in the South Block in New Delhi.

A soft-spoken and articulate diplomat, Doraiswami is known for his thorough knowledge of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

# Bachchan family hit by virus

REUTERS, Mumbai

Three generations of Bollywood's Bachchan family were hit by the coronavirus as former Miss World Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and her daughter yesterday joined her father-in-law Amitabh and husband Abhishek in testing positive for the virus that causes Covid-19.

Maharashtra state health minister Rajesh Tope said in a tweet that Aishwarya and her eight-year-old daughter had tested positive for the virus.

It was not clear whether they had been admitted to hospital, as Amitabh, a legendary Indian actor, and Abhishek were on

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Dragon fruits are being stored for sale at Narayanhat of Chattogram's Fatikchhari. This juicy fruit is being cultivated commercially at Halda Tea Valley. Inset, a boy plucks fruits. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

# Some ACs help spread virus

Say UK health experts; advise offices to ventilate rooms with fresh air

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Air conditioning units that re-circulate air in rooms and offices should be turned off or used only with open windows because of the risk of spreading coronavirus, experts advise.

They fear that any Covid-19 droplets in the air could be transmitted more easily to people in the room, even those who are socially distanced.

And they are advising office bosses to ventilate rooms with fresh air whenever possible.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said this week that coronavirus can spread through tiny droplets floating in the air in enclosed spaces, after scientists highlighted the risk.

The UK Health and Safety Executive says the risk of air conditioning spreading coronavirus in the workplace is extremely low "as long as there is an adequate supply of fresh air and ventilation" but adds: "if you use a centralised ventilation system that removes and circulates air to different rooms, it is recommended that you turn off recirculation and use a fresh air supply".

Some air conditioners take in air from outdoors and expel it again, while others, called split units, re-circulate the same air.

Dr Shaun Fitzgerald, a fellow at the Royal Academy of Engineering, told the Telegraph: "The recommended strategy now, if you have one of these split units, is to throw the window open and sacrifice your desire for a cold or cooler environment. If there is a modicum of wind it will move the air around. If you can't open a window, turn the unit off."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



## PRAYER TIMING JULY 13

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

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION