



ANTIBODIES FROM LLAMAS CAN HELP TREAT COVID-19 PATIENTS
SEE PAGE 10

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BANGLADESH UPDATE



3,163 New cases in 24hrs



1,90,057 Total cases



2,424 Deaths



1,03,227 Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



577,984 Deaths



13,344,199 Total cases

BANGLADESHI WORKERS Around 2 lakh may have to leave Kuwait

JAMIL MAHMUD and RASHIDUL HASAN

When the coronavirus pandemic is already dealing a heavy blow to the country's overseas job markets, Kuwait has approved a bill that, once passed, may force about two lakh Bangladeshi migrant workers out of the Gulf country.

The bill, submitted by five MPs, calls for an expatriate quota system in Kuwait, one of the major sources of Bangladesh's remittance inflow.

It proposes Bangladeshis must not exceed three percent of Kuwait's total populace, which now stands at about 48 lakh.

Currently, around 3.5 lakh Bangladeshis are employed in different sectors of the oil-rich country. Once the bill is passed and turns into a law, only about 1.5 lakh Bangladeshis will be allowed to stay there.

The bill came after several Kuwaiti MPs said the current ratio of Kuwaiti citizens and foreign workers created "a great imbalance in the country's demography".

Last month, Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah said the Gulf state would like the expat ratio to reduce to 30 percent of the country's populace -- down from 70 percent at present, reported local daily Kuwait Times.

Bangladesh's remittance inflow may take a hit if the bill is passed into law.

Last year, Bangladeshi migrant workers sent more than \$1.5 billion in remittance through authorised channels from Kuwait, which was the fourth highest in terms of remittance into Bangladesh, according to the website of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training.

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Shamsunnahar came to Sonali Bank's Tejgaon branch around 10:00am yesterday to collect her old-age allowance. She submitted all her documents upon reaching there but was found empty-handed even at 1:00pm. As the bank was overloaded with service seekers, many elderly people had to wait for long, agonising hours to receive their allowances. Almost none of them wore a face mask to protect themselves and others from the coronavirus.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Bribes by MP Shahid Kuwait now reviewing visa docs of Bangladeshis

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Kuwait authorities are reviewing the procedures for visa approval for thousands of Bangladeshis between 2014 and 2018 following suspension of an interior ministry official over allegations of bribery involving Bangladeshi lawmaker Shahid Islam Papul.

Maj Gen Mazen Al-Jarrah, assistant undersecretary at Kuwait interior ministry, was suspended on June 30 for allegedly accepting bribes and making financial transactions linked to Shahid's company.

Shahid, a lawmaker from Laxmipur-2 constituency, was arrested in Kuwait on June 6 and sent to jail.

During interrogation, he admitted paying millions of dollars in bribes to some lawmakers and Kuwaiti officials for securing visas and job contracts for his

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SHAJAHAN SIRAJ (1943-2020)

Man who read independence manifesto dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shajahan Siraj, one of the key organisers of Liberation War in 1971, passed away at a hospital in Dhaka yesterday. He was 77.

The veteran politician, who read the manifesto of the country's independence in presence of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and millions of others on March 3, 1971, was suffering from lung cancer.

He breathed his last around 3:30pm while receiving treatment at a city hospital, said Omar Sadat, Siraj's son-in-law.

Siraj was known as one of the "four

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REGENT HOSPITAL SCAM

Minister passes buck to DGHS

Rights body concerned over corruption in health sector

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said he attended a ceremony marking a government deal signing with Regent Hospital at the request of the director general of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

He, however, apparently tried to ease the ongoing rift between his ministry and the DGHS over the issue, as he insisted that there was no disagreement between them.

"The ministry can ask for any explanation from the DGHS. It's a part of government activities," the minister told reporters at his office.

"There could be some misunderstandings for a temporary period, but there is no disruption in the health services for that," he said.

The comments came two days after the ministry asked DGHS DG Prof Abul Kalam Azad to explain his statement that the directorate signed the memorandum of understanding with Regent Hospital on directives from "the higher authorities of the ministry".

Recently, a mobile court sealed off the private hospital's Uttara branch on charges of issuing fake Covid-19 test reports and illegally charging coronavirus patients for treatment, breaching the agreement.

The DG did not submit his explanation till this report was filed last night.

Speaking on the MoU signing ceremony, the minister said, "We went to the DG's office for a meeting. There was an inter-ministerial meeting. There were some secretaries and others.

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Shahed was talking on the phone during raid

Regent MD held in Gazipur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Regent Group chairman Md Shahed's cell phone was switched on when a mobile court raided one of his hospitals in Uttara on July 6.

Shahed was responding phone calls from journalists until the night, though Rab officials by this time had detained eight staffers at the hospital and claimed Shahed was the mastermind of Covid-19 test report forgery.

But after midnight, his cellphone was found switched off and he apparently went into hiding.

Since then he remained traceless for more than a week. He even did not communicate with his

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REMEMBERING LATIFUR RAHMAN

A patriot, a symbol of ethical business

His legacy is that of a torchbearer of free media, discussants tell memorial session

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It took three decades of sacrifice, unimpeachable integrity and firm determination for Latifur Rahman to build a business empire. But his legacy is that of a torchbearer of independent media.

This is how speakers remembered the late business mogul at a virtual memorial session organised by The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo yesterday.

"If you want to create an independent media, in which you are a major investor, then you have to make yourself invulnerable to pressure. Most businesses leave room for leverage," said Rehman Sobhan, chairperson of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"When governments want to put



pressure on newspapers, they do not need to pressurise the editors, they can simply go to the businesses and remind them of some unattended issues of their tax files for example. The independence of newspapers depends on the independence of the businesses financing it.

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OB-GYN Many not helpful, offensive instead

Claim patients on Facebook

ZYMA ISLAM

Over the last 48 hours, young women have been taking to social media to talk about a rare topic -- how women seeking gynaecological help often receive insensitive, traumatising and humiliating "advice" from doctors.

A young woman recently reported on social media a traumatic ordeal at a gynaecologist's office.

What followed was a "coming-out" of women sharing their horrific experiences while seeking medical advice for sexual and reproductive health.

For most women, the visit to the ob-gyn is the first time in their teenage/adult life that any person -- a stranger at that --

would be inspecting a very intimate part of the body. It is an invasive procedure

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Testing booths set up by JKG Healthcare lie abandoned on the premises of Mohakhali's Titumir College for over a month. The organisation has been under investigation for issuing fake Covid-19 certificates. Its chairman and some others are now behind bars.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

JKG LICENCE

DGHS didn't bother to check

MUNTAKIM SAAD

When JKG Health Care got the job of collecting Covid-19 test samples from booths back in April, the Directorate General of Health Services didn't even check its licence.

Two months later -- just a week before the fake test report scam surfaced -- JKG Health Care got a trade licence from Dhaka North City Corporation on June 16 under the business category of health service and consultancy, police probe found.

The DGHS, however, said they gave permission to JKG only for voluntary services -- to set up booths and collect samples from the booths.

It has been found in police investigation that the organisation started collecting samples from homes in exchange for money despite having no trade licence or the permission to do that.

"They [JKG] showed us a South Korea-like model through a video presentation. We gave them training and logistical support. Their job was only to collect samples from booths. We didn't even give them permission to collect samples from home," Prof Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the DGHS, told The Daily Star yesterday.

She said they didn't check the organisation's licence at that time.

JKG Health Care, a sister concern of Oval Group, started its journey in 2015 as a non-profit organisation.

According to the trade licence issued on June 16, the owner of JKG Health Care is Jebunnessa Reema, sister of Ariful Chaudhury, CEO of Oval Group.

"When we were investigating the documents of Oval Group, we found JKG Health Care's trade licence was issued this June," Mahmud Khan, assistant commissioner of DMP (Tejgaon Zone), told The Daily Star.

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Around 2 lakh

FROM PAGE 1

Last year, Bangladesh's top three remittance-sending countries were Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and the United States, shows BMET data.

Like elsewhere, Bangladeshis in Kuwait are already in peril due to the pandemic. Many of them have lost their jobs while many are getting low wages amid the economic crisis brought on by the coronavirus.

According to statistics of Probashi Kalyan Desk set by the expatriates' welfare ministry at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, nearly 4,900 migrant workers returned from Kuwait between April 1 and June 17.

Many of them returned under a general amnesty declared by the Kuwait government.

Remittance from expatriates is one of the main pillars of the Bangladesh economy. About one crore Bangladeshis migrants sent home \$18.35 billion last year.

THE BILL

Amid a slump in oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic, there has been a spike in "anti-expatriates rhetoric" in Kuwait, as the country's lawmakers and government officials called for reducing the number of foreigners.

On July 5, Kuwait Times reported that the draft law was approved by the National Assembly's legal and legislative committee. The committee determined that the bill goes in line with the country's constitution.

On July 2, the committee decided to refer the bill to another committee concerned that would study all legislation on expatriates in the Gulf country with the aim to cut their numbers, reported the daily.

According to the bill, the largest foreign community in Kuwait, the Indians, must not exceed 15 percent of the Kuwaiti populace. If approved, the law would require some 8 lakh Indians to leave the country.

On June 3, Kuwait Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah had said the country was facing a "big challenge" to address discrepancy in the structure of the populace, reported state-run Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

"The ideal population structure is to have Kuwaitis being 70 percent and non-Kuwaitis 30 percent, so we have a big challenge in the future which is to address the discrepancy in population," said the Kuwait PM.

Contacted, Bangladesh Ambassador to Kuwait SM Abul Kalam on Monday said they did not receive any official word from the Kuwaiti government in this regard.

Citing media reports, he said the draft bill has proposed a quota of three percent of Kuwait's total populace for Bangladeshis.

"Kuwait is home to more or less 3.5 lakh Bangladeshis. Majority of them are involved in low-paid jobs, including driving, cleaning, construction and domestic work and domestic help," he told this newspaper over phone.

The ambassador, however, said some Kuwaiti media outlets have recently raised questions about the proposed law's implementation.

He said many low-paid foreign workers, including Bangladeshis, are involved in different jobs and services, and Kuwaitis are largely dependent on such foreign workers.

"The bill has not been passed yet. It will be circulated [to all] once it turns into a law," added the ambassador.

Talking on the issue, Syed Saiful Haque, co-chair of Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants, also said, "As the bill is still at the initial stage, there is chance to observe the development and see what finally comes."

"Let's see what proposal they make in the bill," he told this newspaper over the phone.

Saiful, however, said the bill, once passed, would pose a great challenge to Bangladesh's labour market in the Gulf country.

Shahed

FROM PAGE 1

family after his father died on Friday.

"Different teams are working in the capital and other districts. We are hopeful that we will be able to arrest him soon," said Lt Col Ashique Billah, director of Rab's Legal and Media Wing.

Meanwhile, Rab yesterday arrested Masud Parvez, managing director of Regent Group, from Gazipur's Kapasia area.

Parvez, a close aide of Shahed, was held around 7:00pm, Ashique Billah, director of Rab's legal and media wing, told The Daily Star.

He is the second accused in a case filed by Rab for issuing fake Covid-19 test reports from Regent Hospital, said Ashique.

The Rab official said many people were coming to Rab to share the misdeeds of Shahed.

There has been a rumour since Monday that Shahed is hiding in a bordering area of Moulvibazar and trying to leave the country illegally as the immigration department is on alert to bar his departure.

Police have intensified their activity and started searching vehicles in different areas in the district.

Faruq Ahmed, superintendent of police in Moulvibazar, told our local correspondent that there was no specific information that Shahed was in the district but police were on alert.

Shahed was the prime accused in a case filed by Rab on the charge of issuing fake Covid-19 reports without testing samples and charging patients for the tests treatment, violating an agreement with the government.



Prof Rehman Sobhan



M Anis Ud Dowl



Asaduzzaman Noor



Rokia Afzal Rahman



Hossain Zillur Rahman

A patriot, a symbol of ethical business

FROM PAGE 1

It is one of the achievements of this generation that such a thing is possible in Bangladesh, noted the eminent economist.

"Shamim [Latifur] used to say that this is one of the core parts of my business practices -- that because I own newspapers, I need to keep myself clean. He was giving you [the editors] a degree of protection, by taking on his back what should have gone on your [the editors'] shoulders," he observed.

Rokia Afzal Rahman, chairperson of Mediaworld Ltd, the owning company of The Daily Star, said, "One of the qualities that I admire in him [Latifur] was his decisiveness. He was never a fence-sitter -- he either agreed or disagreed and always with reasons and facts."

"And having chosen his side, he would vigorously defend that position."

Quality services to the clients and customer satisfaction were his obsession. Everything his companies produced must be of the highest standard. Every employee must have the highest level of training -- that was his fundamental commitment, she pointed out.

"For him, paying taxes was a badge of honour -- the higher the more honourable. I remember him as a symbol of ethical business and as a patriot who believed in the future of his country," she mused.

M Anis Ud Dowl, chairman of the Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI), said Latifur was many things to many people.

"To his friends, he was a charming and caring person. To the young, he is a role model. To the beginners in business, his stories of struggle in initial years give them hope. For the established business houses, his policies and principles are an example to follow."

"To those who are in leadership position, his style is worth copying and to those who are already successful in some measures, he inspires them to create a vision that will last beyond them," he added.

Asaduzzaman Noor, a lawmaker and trustee of the Liberation War Museum, said Latifur once told him

that an independent Bangladesh is the greatest asset of the people.

"In all my exchanges with him [Latifur], he never uttered a word about politics, except this one time. He mentioned that people who had opposed Bangladesh in the Liberation War, raped women, killed freedom fighters and general people and later killed Bangabandhu should be punished for their misdeeds," Noor said.

Brac Chairperson Hossain Zillur Rahman termed Latifur a gentleman who had an adverse attitude towards publicity.

The country has lost an ethical businessman, he said.

"He had proved that a person can become successful doing business ethically. Youths can take lessons from his life and imitate his life."

Md Mahbub-ur Rahman, chief executive officer of the HSBC, narrated an incident to illustrate Latifur's sense of ethics.

"In 2005, we were the bankers for Eskayef Pharmaceuticals. We had told him many times to also let us handle their transactions for beverage business. But he said he could not do so because when he was struggling to make it flourish, some local banks came to his aid."

"He said he could not take that business away from them but told me that if they ever expand, I would get a business deal."

Five years later when Transcom expanded its business with the launching of Aquafina in the country, Latifur kept his word, said Mahbub-ur. Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, editor-in-chief of Ekushey TV, remembered Latifur as a pillar of independent media.

"Latifur Rahman is a rare person who had never impeded the independence of his media for his own gain. In all discussions, we are calling him an idol for the younger generation, but may I humbly suggest that other businesspeople also learn from him..."

"Can all our businesspeople say that they will not move about with two passports in their pockets? That they will pay their taxes? Our media world needs more people like Latifur Rahman."

Rupali Chowdhury, managing director of Berger Paints Bangladesh Ltd, said, "He [Latifur] made the choice to remain honest forever. This value is extremely difficult to maintain in Bangladesh."

"We believe that the next generation will maintain these values. We believe that his descendants will carry on his legacy."

AK Azad, president of Newspapers Owners' Association of Bangladesh, spoke about the phone calls Latifur used to get every day on the contents of the newspapers. Latifur used to say that he did not know anything and instructed the callers to talk to the editors, Azad said.

"The person who started his life in 1971 with rented furniture has left behind a legacy, including two independent editors who are unwavering in their positions," he said.

Matiur Rahman, editor of Prothom Alo, said Latifur never discussed the contents of the newspapers during board meetings. "The discussions were always about the business."

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, added, "He used to refer to The Daily Star as 'your newspaper' when talking to me. He has never told me, never once mentioned to me, that 'you wrote this and now I will be affected.'"

Latifur's daughter Simeen Hossain, managing director and chief executive officer of Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd, said there had actually been multiple instances over the years that a certain news report had a negative impact on some of the Transcom Group businesses and that she had gone up to her father expecting solutions. But Latifur responded clinically by saying that the paper was just doing its job and was discharging its duties.

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Sheikh Fazle Fahim said his every discussion and chitchats with Latifur had left him touched one way or the other in a value adding aspect of life.

Rajiv Shaha, managing director of Kumudini, recalled how he always was allowed to speak up during board meetings despite being the youngest.

While others spoke of the strides

made by Latifur in the business world, his cousin and former ambassador to India Tareq Karim remembered him as a child he played with.

"I remember Shamim [Latifur] and I quietly sneaking out to go to see a Tarzan movie in Lion's Cinema in Armanitola. Shamim was allowed to go because he was going with his elder brother, Tareq bhaia," he reminisced.

"Shamim steadfastly refused to complete his studies in England. His parents asked my father to convince him to go for higher studies but Shamim wanted to start his own business. He lived up to his family's expectations and much, much more."

"I as his elder should have gone first," said Karim, breaking down in tears.

"We are all created from dust and ultimately the body must return to the dust, but the soul goes on to the Supreme Being, leaving behind a legacy on earth," he ended.

Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd, said for a businessman, investing in newspapers and television channels in Bangladesh was very risky.

"Nobody can believe that a newspaper and TV channel can operate independently."

Latifur Rahman proved that there is no scope for having influence as owners in independent houses. For allowing the newspapers to run independently, he had to face a lot of suffering but Latifur never hesitated to call a spade a spade," he said.

Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear Ltd, said during his life, Latifur had a firm belief on the potential of Bangladesh.

"He showed us not only the potential of exports but also the huge potential in the local market," Nasim said.

He had shown how to build institutions by blending professionalism and affection.

Zaraif Ayaat Hossain also remembered his grandfather and the legacy of independent media he left behind.

Kutubuddin Ahmed, chairman of the Envoy Group, and Rezwana Choudhury Bannya, celebrated Rabindra Sangeet singer, also paid their respects.

1 lakh recover from Covid-19

33 more die, 3,163 reported infected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As over 4,910 patients recovered yesterday, the number of Covid-19 recoveries in the country crossed the one-lakh-mark, taking the total to 103,227.

This is around 54.31 percent of all confirmed cases.

In the last 24 hours till yesterday, 33 people died of Covid-19, taking the death toll at 2,424, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

During this period, 3,163 positive cases were recorded, taking the number of confirmed cases to 1,90,057, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (admin) of the DGHS said during yesterday's briefing.

In the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, a total of 13,453 samples were tested in 77 labs across the country.

Yesterday's infection rate was 23.51 -- slightly lower than those of the past three consecutive days, which were over 24 percent.

Over the last nine days, the daily infection rate had been showing an increasing trend.

On July 5, the rate was 19.57 percent.

Starting from January 21, 9,66,400 samples were tested for the deadly virus so far.

At yesterday's briefing, Prof Nasima said the death rate was at 1.28 percent -- the same as the previous day.

Of yesterday's deceased, 23 were male and 10 were female.

Of the total deceased, 1,913 were males and 511 were females.

Of those who died yesterday, 13 were from Dhaka division, three from Chattogram, four from Rajshahi, two from Rangpur, five from Sylhet, five from Khulna, and another from Barishal.

Two were aged between 31 and 40, four between 41 and 50, six between 51 and 60, nine between 61 and 70, 11 between 71 and 80, and another was aged between 81 and 90 years.

So far, Dhaka division witnessed the highest Covid-19 deaths -- 1,208 (around 50 percent) -- followed by Chattogram with 626 deaths (slightly over 26 percent).

Six die showing Covid-19 symptoms

STAR REPORT

Six people died after showing Covid-19 symptoms in Cumilla and Faridpur in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

According to the authorities of Cumilla Medical College Hospital, five people breathed their last at the hospital during the period.

The victims were admitted there with fever, cold, and breathing difficulties. They were aged between 50 and 85, said Dr Mojibur Rahman, director of the hospital.

With the five, 218 people have so far died at the hospital. Of them, 182 breathed their last after showing coronavirus symptoms and 36 after being diagnosed with Covid-19 since April.

The hospital authorities said 26 new patients were admitted to the Covid-19 unit in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, and 15 patients were discharged during the period.

There are 124 patients at the unit now. Of them, 55 are coronavirus positive and 69 have symptoms.

In another incident, a 75-year-old man, who was suffering from fever and cold, died at Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

Saiful Rahman, superintendent of the hospital, said the victim of Kuthbari area of Faridpur town was admitted to the hospital on Sunday. He breathed his last around 8:00am yesterday.

His samples were collected for coronavirus test, and he was buried as per the guidelines set by the World Health Organisation, added Saiful.

[Our correspondents in Cumilla and Faridpur contributed to this report]

Kuwait

FROM PAGE 1

company, Marafie Kuwaitia Group. He is the managing director and chief executive officer of the firm.

Over the last several years, he recruited some 20,000 foreign workers, mostly Bangladeshis, and charged them Tk 7 to 9 lakh each. But many of the workers were not given jobs as per the contracts and even had to pay for renewal of work permits.

Seeking anonymity, a Bangladeshi businessman, familiar with recruitment issues in Kuwait, said the latest move may result in deportation of several thousand Bangladeshis.

On Monday, Kuwaiti newspaper Al Qabas reported that all the documents related to Bangladeshis workers, which were signed by Al-Jarrah during his tenure in the citizenship and passports sector between 2014 and 2018, were withdrawn from the residence departments in the six governorates and the Department of Special Services.

The purpose of withdrawal is to review those to find out the number of Bangladeshis allowed by the official to enter the country during his tenure. He had approved thousands of visas, especially those related to Shahid's company, it mentioned quoting sources.

One of the sources also said the Public Prosecution decided to continue the detention of Al-Jarrah and detain a new suspect working as a director of a travel agency.

Minister passes buck to DGHS

FROM PAGE 1

"The DG requested us not to go and said 'you too stay as there will be a contract signing ceremony. It [the deal signing] will be with Regent after lunch. So, we stayed. We were happy that a new hospital came forward to treat Covid-19 patients."

He said, "When private hospitals were hesitating to give treatment [to Covid-19 patients], they came forward and inked the deal. We were happy. And then we left."

The health minister said the events that followed were "unfortunate" and whatever the hospital did was wrong.

"Actions have been taken as per the law," he said, adding that there would have been some records had the ministry given any instructions in this regard."

"Let's see what the DG explains," the minister said.

The DGHS signed the MoU with Regent in March, turning it into a

dedicated Covid-19 hospital, in a ceremony attended by the health minister. The DGHS was aware that the hospital's licence had expired six years ago.

On July 7, a Rab mobile court raided Regent Hospital's Uttara branch and sealed it off.

The court said it found proof that the hospital issued several thousand fake Covid-19 test reports.

Amid widespread criticism, the DGHS on Saturday said it was the higher authorities at the health ministry who asked the directorate to sign the MoU.

Enraged, the ministry issued a show-cause notice to the DG the next day, asking him to explain the comment in three work days.

On another scam involving JKG Hospital, the minister said, "If there is any wrongdoing, the organisation concerned and relevant authorities are responsible for that."

On Sunday, police held 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.

The minister said whenever any organisation is assigned for any task, certain procedures are followed and it is the DGHS that oversees them.

He also said a taskforce would be formed soon to scrutinise the licences of different hospitals and clinics.

"The taskforce will visit [hospitals and clinics] regularly and scrutinise their licences," he added.

After talking to reporters, the minister held meetings with Secretary to Health Services Abdul Mannan and Secretary to Health Education Md Ali Nur separately, among others.

He directed the secretaries to take steps immediately if any unethical practices are done by any hospital or clinic, said meeting sources.

Meanwhile, Ain o Salish Kendra

(ASK) has expressed deep concern over the "rampant corruption, irregularities, and mismanagement" in the health sector.

In a statement yesterday, the rights body criticised the DGHS's approval given to Regent Hospital, saying the hospital used to be a diagnostic centre before it was turned into a hospital.

It said questions arise how the DGHS gave a diagnostic centre the go-ahead to treat Covid-19 patients when Regent Hospital did not have a valid licence.

On the rift between the health ministry and the health directorate, the ASK said it manifested the widening gap between the two government entities.

The rights body said a judicial inquiry was must to stop recurrence of irregularities and corruption in the sector.

It also demanded punitive actions against those involved and their identities are disclosed before the public within five weeks.

Many not helpful, offensive instead

FROM PAGE 1

done with tools, and is hardly a comfortable examination. Disrespectful communication by the doctor can turn an already uncomfortable experience into a traumatic one.

Afsara Bushra, a 20-year-old student, went to visit an ob-gyn at Square Hospital Ltd on July 11, with her mother, as she suffers from vaginismus, a condition where any contact causes the muscle walls to spasm involuntarily, resulting in intense pain. Patients of this condition report pelvic exams to be particularly painful.

Afsara went to the doctor to seek treatment for her painful condition, but claimed that what she got instead was misogynistic misconduct. Her social media post has since then been shared over 7,000 times.

"The doctor kept asking me if I was married and if not then, whether my marriage has been fixed, several times. She said it was so shocking that a girl who isn't even married is so concerned about her sexual health. She said she was happy she didn't die from coronavirus, otherwise she wouldn't have come across such a funny case," claimed Afsara to this correspondent.

"She told me that I should not talk to anyone about my health concerns, and that me even knowing about vaginismus is going to create problems for me in the future. She said that women like me need 'wild husbands' who can rape at an instance because such women never want to give permission for intercourse, since the act is painful for them, and that once raped, everything will be okay," Afsara told The Daily Star.

For a woman with such a painful condition, this suggestion left her traumatised.

Under the Bangladeshi law, marital rape is not considered a crime and Bangladesh is one of the 36 countries in the world where marital rape is still legal.

When contacted for comments, Square Hospitals Ltd circulated a statement by the gynaecologist, where the doctor said "the patient and her mother expressed no dissent during the conversation that took place, nor did they file any complaint afterwards."

The doctor called the claims "baseless" and "intending to discredit her". Square Hospital questioned why the woman did not lodge a complaint with the hospital and took to Facebook instead. The statement is also available on Square Hospital's Facebook page.

Afsara, however, said, "I did not even know about the woman until two days ago and I have no benefit in trying to take down her career. I didn't say anything immediately because I was having anxiety and broke down in a panic attack at her words." Point to note, that the conversation also occurred right after the young woman had undergone an extremely painful pelvic exam.

This one post by Afsara opened the door for other women coming forward to talk about their experiences at the ob-gyn -- and why sexual and reproductive rights is still missing from the conversation of sexual and reproductive health.

Kazi Sumaita Nahar shared on social media about how her sister was

repeatedly harassed by a gynaecologist during a recent visit at a top-tier hospital in the capital.

"My sister had been sensing a lump-like growth inside her genital tract and we wanted to get it checked by a doctor. My sister is 30 and unmarried. The first thing the doctor asked was 'What problem could an unmarried girl have?' Then, when my sister described the symptom, the doctor disbelieved her and exclaimed 'Do you think flesh would hang from the sky down there?' She then proceeded to do a pelvic exam but threatened her by saying 'If I don't find anything you will be in trouble,'" described Sumaita, speaking to this correspondent.

She did find a lump and told Sumaita and her sister it was a miscarried fetus. "We kept insisting that that is not possible, but she was not believing us. My sister had a panic attack and started screaming and crying on the chair. When she calmed down a little, the ob-gyn said there was a possibility it could be a cervical polyp. We just paid and left," narrated Sumaita.

It was a cervical polyp, they discovered during a follow-up visit to another doctor -- but the experience left the woman traumatised. Sumaita and her sister complained to the hospital but are yet to receive any proper apology.

Joining the bandwagon, multiple women who suffer from polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) spoke on social media about how doctors told them that they need to marry and have children, disregarding their own life or career goals, to be healthy.

Women who suffer from PCOS

struggle to get pregnant -- but having children is not an end goal for many women. Meanwhile, single, sexually active women posted about problems of accessing contraceptives or STD check-ups from ob-gyns.

"A doctor wrote on my contraception prescription 'unmarried but sexually active,'" confided a woman to this correspondent. "I had to present that paper to the pharmacist."

On the flipside, married women reported being shamed for wanting to abort pregnancies.

Two women, who also preferred anonymity, reached out to this correspondent to share their experiences trying to get an MR (menstrual regulation) procedure.

"I was seeking a surgical abortion for my pregnancy of eight weeks. The doctor at this chain hospital told me that this is a sin, and that she cannot commit the sin

'Just want to return home'

Stranded in Vietnam, 27 Bangladeshis stick to their demand of repatriation; embassy tells them to go back to work

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh embassy in Hanoi is asking the 27 Bangladeshis stranded there to go back to work in Ho Chi Minh City, but the workers are sticking to their demand of repatriation at the earliest.

Facing abuses and threats by the manpower brokers, these Bangladeshis travelled to Hanoi on July 2 to seek embassy help for repatriation.

They could not be repatriated at the time as their passports were confiscated by their brokers and they did not have airfare.

The embassy, in collaboration with the Vietnamese authorities, sheltered them in hotels.

"Vietnamese police and our embassy are giving us two options -- returning to the factories or going to the detention centre," Shital Chandra Sarker, one of the 27 Bangladeshis, told The Daily Star by phone on Monday.

He said they don't want to go to work because the Chinese agent, with the help of Bangladeshi brokers -- Mostafa, Jabbar, Saiful and Atiq -- has been abusing and extorting them over the last six months.

He said they all paid Tk 3.5 lakh to Tk 4 lakh to go to Vietnam where they were promised \$500 or more basic monthly salary, but once they arrived in between January and February, their passports were confiscated by the brokers.

They were not provided any regular jobs but supplied to different factories and paid \$100 to \$150 a month when they had work.

"We were also not provided decent meals or accommodation. We gave money to our brokers to send home as we did not have options to go to the money exchange, but they stole that money," Shital said.

Brokers also threatened to kidnap those who spoke out.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



This teenager spends her days crafting little bouquets and necklaces out of flowers and selling them around Dhaka University, with her loyal companion, a pet rabbit, right beside her. This photo was taken yesterday when the duo was hard at work, getting roses ready for sale.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

METRO RAIL PROJECT

24 Thai engineers to be brought in by charter flight

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The metro rail authority has taken a number of initiatives to bring back foreign engineers and consultants to speed up the construction work of country's first metro rail project amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

One of the initiatives is to bring back 24 Thai engineers in a charter flight, as regular flights between Bangladesh and Thailand has remained suspended, officials said.

Besides, Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), which is implementing the project, also wrote to the Foreign Ministry to give special waiver for Japanese nationals involved in metro project so that they can return to Bangladesh, they said.

The development came as the authorities are trying to accelerate the construction work, which remained halted for more than two months after the government declared a national holiday in late March to contain spread of Covid-19 in the country.

The project -- formally known as Mass Rapid Transit-6 or MRT-6 -- is being implemented to build an elevated mail line from capital's Uttara Third Phase to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Shahidul Alam wins CPJ's Int'l Press Freedom Award

UNB, Dhaka

Prominent Bangladeshi photojournalist Shahidul Alam has been awarded the 2020 International Press Freedom Award alongside three others from Iran, Nigeria and Russia.

The awardees were announced by the Committee to Protect Journalists. "All four have been arrested or faced criminal prosecution in reprisal for their reporting," said a report on the committee's website.

Alam is a renowned photojournalist and founder of Pathshala Media Institute and Drik picture library.

In August 2018, Alam was detained after posting a video to social media about student protests in Dhaka. He spent 102 days behind bars, and said he was beaten in custody, before being freed in November 2018.

The other awardees are: Mohammad Mosaed (Iran), a freelance economic reporter; Dapo Olorunoyi (Nigeria), co-founder, CEO and publisher of the Nigerian newspaper Premium Times, and Svetlana Prokopyeva (Russia), a



SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

First death anniversary of Ershad marked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party yesterday observed the first death anniversary of its founder HM Ershad through various programmes maintaining social distance and health directives in wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

JP Chairman and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament GM Quader, along with central JP leaders placed wreaths at the grave of former President Ershad on his Pally Nibas compound at 11am.

Along with the central and local leaders, Quader observed a minute of silence and offered prayers seeking divine blessings for his departed soul.

Later, they participated in a discussion on the life, works and politics.

4 CASES AGAINST 'CASINO BROTHERS' Charge sheet likely next week: CID

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They owned 20 houses, 128 apartments and 25 acres of land in Dhaka and its nearby areas.

Besides, they have 91 bank accounts, where around Tk 208 crore have been deposited so far and the current balance is around Tk 19 crore.

Following several months of investigation, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has found these property and cash details of "casino brothers" -- Enamul Haque Enu and Rupun Bhuiyan.

CID officials said the brothers got involved in gambling at the club with help of gold trader Joy Gopal Sarker, general secretary of Motijheel Wanderers Club.

Terming Gopal a casino ringleader, Imtiaz Ahmed, deputy inspector general of CID, said they arrested him recently.

Talking to reporters at the CID office yesterday, DIG Imtiaz said, "We have almost completed investigation of four money laundering cases out of five and are hopeful to submit charge sheet of these cases next week."

In reply to a query, DIG Imtiaz said they are bringing charges against 51 people in these cases. CID officials said the brothers in 2014 became acquainted with Joy Gopal and started a casino in the club.

Warnings fall on deaf ears

DSCC to set up cattle markets in city

HELEMIUL ALAM

National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 on Friday suggested not to set up cattle markets in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Chattogram cities as a preventive measure against the pandemic.

Ignoring that, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has given approval to set up five such markets in the capital.

According to DSCC officials, they did not receive any official order to not set up makeshift markets, and therefore, did not refrain from doing so, disregarding the suggestion.

"If the government gives orders to not set up markets, we will follow instructions," said DSCC Chief Executive Officer Shah Md Emdadul Haque.

He said they had decided to set up 14 markets but have approved five so far. They are yet to decide on the nine other proposed markets, and will do so after issuing re-tender.

Emdadul said DSCC has 75 wards, and if they consider one market for 10 wards, they need at least seven such markets. He

also pointed out that there is a lack of open spaces in DSCC areas.

"Where will people buy cattle if there is no market?" he said. "We will take necessary measures so that traders and customers follow health guidelines properly."

DSCC markets will be at Leather Technology College in Hazariabagh; Postogola cremation ground; Little Friends Club in Gopibagh; Mirpur Section-1 and 2; and near Moitri Sangha in North Shahjahanpur.

Meanwhile, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has also given work order to set up three makeshift markets, while three are already being set up. It, however, decided to arrange them in areas surrounding the city and cancelled some markets, considering the pandemic.

Contacted, DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam said they have already cancelled some markets supposed to be at Bhashantek, Teigaon and Uttara Sector-10, 11 and 12.

He said there was huge pressure to set up markets, but even then, he did not allow markets within the city.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



With no traffic in sight, two bus drivers started a race at Hemayetpur on Dhaka-Aricha highway on Sunday, which ultimately resulted in the vehicles grazing each other and one even being pushed against the divider. It's fortunate that this complete disregard for traffic rules didn't result in a major crash, but unfortunate that such incidents are not uncommon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Plight of non-coronavirus patients escalate in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With most doctors not attending chambers for over three months, patients in Chattogram are being compelled to seek health-related suggestions from staff members at various dispensaries, leading to irrational use of antibiotics which can have adverse health impacts in the long run.

Unless emergency, many are avoiding government hospitals as those are treating Covid-19 patients. Besides, getting admitted to clinics is also quite difficult, they said. Consultants are not visiting the clinics after the outbreak.

Though many physicians started telemedicine services after stopping private practice, it's almost impossible to connect with them over the phone, according to patients.

The lines either stay busy or they remain unavailable, they added.

Amid such circumstances, people are in a way forced to resort to staffers at local dispensaries for their "suggestions".

For example, when 70-year-old Subhash Chowdhury (not his real name) felt sick last week, his family tried to contact consultants over the phone from the numbers provided by Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA).

None answered.

Tarit Chowdhury, son of Subhash, said, "Then I went to a pharmacy near our house in Chawkbazar and described the salesperson about my father's condition. He gave some medicines but my father's condition continued to deteriorate."

"On the third day, he lost consciousness. Desperate, we went to three clinics but none admitted him. They checked his temperature and found it to be normal. They also checked oxygen saturation in his blood through 'pulse oxymetre' and found it to be normal."

Tarit said when he asked why they were not admitting his father, the clinic authorities said he would need to undergo treatment under a consultant but at present none were visiting their clinics.

"We were able to admit him to a private clinic on request from a BMA leader. After tests, it was found that electrolytes (essential minerals) in my father's body were not balanced," he said. "If he had received proper treatment in the primary stage, he would not have to suffer so much."

This correspondent spoke to staff members of a number of dispensaries over the week. Wishing anonymity, they said

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Nurul Islam laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nurul Islam, chairman of Jamuna Group, one of the biggest conglomerates in the country, was laid to eternal rest with state honour in the capital's Banani graveyard yesterday.

The noted businessman was buried at 2:30pm, Mohammad Alamgir Alam, a director of Jamuna Group, told The Daily Star.

Infected with Covid-19 and other complications, Nurul Islam breathed his last at Evercare Hospital on Monday, aged 74.

His namaz-e-janaza was held on the Jamuna Future Park premises.

As a freedom fighter, Nurul was given a guard of honour. Officials and employees of Jamuna Group were among those who attended the janaza following health safety.

Shamim Islam, son of Nurul Islam, recalled his father's contributions to the welfare of the country.

Livestock ministry to take measures to stop smuggling of animals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Fisheries and livestock yesterday decided to take strict steps to stop smuggling of sacrificial animals from India.

The ministry also took initiative to stop smuggling of harmful steroid and hormone-type medicines to ensure sacrificial animals are healthy and safe.

The ministry took the decision following an inter-ministerial meeting held on July 9, which decided on measures to ensure healthy animals during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha at its office yesterday.

The ministry on July 13 issued letters to the Cabinet Division and Public Security Department following the decision, requesting them to take necessary steps in this regard, said a press release.

The Cabinet Division has been asked to take necessary steps so that district administrations in border areas conduct mobile courts to stop smuggling of sacrificial animals and stopping use of fake money. The Public Security Department has been requested to run mobile courts through BGB and Bangladesh Police to stop smuggling of animals before Eid.

The ministry in another letter to the public security department asked them to ensure security of customers and traders and stop harassment relating to online sale.

Lawmaker's son rams police van in port city

He was also involved in 2018 fatal hit-and-run incident in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Shabab Chowdhury, son of lawmaker Ekramul Karim Chowdhury of Noakhali-4 constituency, has rammed a police patrol van with his car in Chattogram city's Lalkhan Bazar area, and locked into an altercation with police personnel.

Though the incident occurred on Saturday night, it came to light on Monday night. Police, however, claimed it was a misunderstanding and the issue was resolved later.

During the incident, the MP's son was driving the car, confirmed Officer-in-Charge Pranab Chowdhury of Khulshi Police Station to The Daily Star. "A patrol team of Khulshi Police Station was returning from Khulshi Baghghona area and Shabab's car rammed the police van in Lalkhan Bazar area in the night. An altercation ensued between him and the on-duty police personnel. The issue was later settled through discussion," said OC Pranab.

In June 2018, Shabab was allegedly involved in a hit and run incident where a man was run over and killed by the luxury SUV that Shabab was driving, near Mohakhali flyover in the capital, according to eyewitness accounts.

After the incident, BRTA officials confirmed that the Audi SUV which had left behind its license plate at the scene of the incident, was registered to Kamrun Nahar Shiuli, wife of lawmaker Ekramul.

However, no charges were brought against Shabab in that incident, after his family reportedly settled the case with monetary compensation.

Shabab could not be contacted for comments, despite repeated attempts.



A large number of people gather every day in front of the Teacher-Student Centre at Dhaka University, to avail a free meal that has been organised by good samaritans. However, many of them seem to have very little regard for social distancing or health guidelines. One can be fined for being without a mask in public, but its enforcement doesn't appear to be too strong. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Plight of

FROM PAGE 3

people come to them for medicine and ask about their suggestions all the time. They recommend medicine for issues like common cold and other related symptoms. But for serious issues, people should always seek experts' consultation, they added.

SM Nazer Hossain, central vice president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), said, "Many are going through such a difficult situation these days. We urge doctors to resume private practice, ensuring all safety measures to protect themselves. They can limit the number of patients too as a cautionary measure."

Contacted, Dr Mahfuzur Rahman, convener of Public Health Rights Protection Committee, Chattogram, said some doctors are seeing patients at their chambers.

"Patients are helpless. That's why they are taking suggestions from salespersons at dispensaries, who are not qualified to do so. Physicians should consider the matter alongside considering their safety," he said.

Wishing anonymity, a former professor of medicine at Chattogram Medical College said over 1,800 doctors have been infected with Covid-19 in the country while treating patients in hospitals and 64 have died.

If doctors start private practice, the number may increase. "Who will treat patients then?" he said.

Dr Faisal Iqbal Chowdhury, general secretary of BMA, Chattogram chapter, said BMA too is urging doctors, especially young ones, to resume private practice.

Chattogram Civil Surgeon Dr Sheikh Fazle Rabbi said, "We can ensure doctors' presence in hospitals but we cannot force them to start private practice."

"We can request doctors to resume practice on a limited scale. I would also urge patients to go to government hospitals for treatment," he said.

24 Thai

FROM PAGE 3

Motijheel at the cost of Tk 20,000 crore. But the fast-track project witnessed only two percent progress in the last three months, with a total of 46.13 percent progress till June, according to project documents.

At the latest meeting of Fast Track Project Monitoring Taskforce last month, Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus, also the head of the taskforce, asked metro rail authorities to take initiatives to bring back foreign engineers and consultants to expedite project work.

"We are now trying to accelerate the works and have taken many initiatives," MAN Siddique, managing director of DMTCL told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said physical work at depot is being carried out under package-2 of MRT-6 project, that has seen 70 percent progress. "Now we need the 24 Thai engineers who were previously involved in the package," he said.

The engineers would be brought by air charter of a contractor firm -- Italian-Thailand Development Public Company Ltd, he said.

"We have written a letter to the foreign ministry via our ministry [road transport and bridges] to allow the special flights. We hope that we will get the permission and bring them back within a week," he added.

Besides, MAN Siddique said they have written another letter on Monday to the foreign ministry to give special waiver to Japanese nationals involved in the project to return to Bangladesh.

Most of the contractors and consultants of the project are from Japan and regular flights to and from Japan are also suspended since mid-March, according to DMTCL sources.

Japan government issued an embargo on its citizens to go and come from Japan and the embargo has not been lifted yet, they said.

"So, it would be difficult to bring Japanese consultants and engineers back," a DMTCL official said wishing not to be named.

The original implementation period of the project was 2012-2024. Following the prime minister's directive, the deadline was first set for December this year and then extended to December 2021.

Shahidul Alam

FROM PAGE 3

regional correspondent for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

CPJ will also confer lawyer Amal Clooney with the Gwen Ifill Press Freedom Award.

"Like brave and committed journalists everywhere, CPJ's honourees set out to report the news without fear or favor for the benefit of their communities, their country, and the world," Joel Simon, CPJ executive director, said in the statement.

The winners will be honoured on November 19, 2020, at CPJ's annual benefit gala.

Due to health and safety restrictions, this year's gala will be held virtually.

Warnings

FROM PAGE 3

DNCC also introduced an online system to purchase cattle, which was inaugurated on Saturday. Using the facility, people will be able to buy cattle online and even get the meat processed, the mayor said.

The mayor said Department of Livestock will ensure health of online cattle by providing health certificates after inspection.

Three more makeshift markets, which are awaiting DNCC's approval, will be at Bosila, Sayeed Nagar in Bhatara and Moineretek.

Gabtolli cattle market will also remain open.

Markets which were approved by DNCC last week will be at Uttara Sector-17 (from Brindaban to BGMEA); near Kawla Shialdanga; and near Dumni Bazar (adjacent to Purbachal Bridge).

Dr Md Shahidullah, president of the national committee on Covid-19, told The Daily Star that if the city corporations arrange cattle markets inside the four cities, rate of infection, which is now stable, will increase after Eid.

The committee suggested not to set up markets in the four cities because 76 percent of Covid-19 cases are from there.

Dr Shahidullah said the graph of infections has been flat for the last month. Infections will start going down in time, assuming the authorities concerned do not set up markets in the areas. He suggested running online markets and strictly maintaining health guidelines.

As Covid-19 is not yet under control, the national committee in its 14th meeting suggested implementing strict control in Dhaka and nearby areas.

NTAC's seven-point suggestion regarding cattle markets include not setting up markets inside towns; setting up in open spaces; not allowing entry to the elderly or sick; having separate entry and exit paths; and sacrificing cattle at fixed location instead of at home, said a release.

Just want

FROM PAGE 3

Brokers also threatened to kidnap those who spoke out.

Desperate, they went to the embassy on July 2. "We don't want to return to the exploitative agent; we just want to go back home," he said.

Contacted, Bangladesh Ambassador to Vietnam Samina Naz said the best option for the migrants now would be to get back to work as the international flights are yet to begin from Vietnam because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

She said the embassy has communicated the issue to the ministries of expatriates' welfare and foreign affairs because all of those 27 Bangladeshis had BMET (Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training) certificates.

"We're waiting for response from Dhaka on cost of repatriation, as well as the operation of international flights from Vietnam," Samina Naz told The Daily Star Monday.

She said cost of accommodation and food for 27 Bangladeshis is \$300 per day. Vietnam police arranged accommodation, but it is not clear who will bear the cost.

The Bangladesh embassy does not have any budget for such expenses, she said.

Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration Programme, said the Overseas Employment and Migration Act 2013 clearly says if the workers go abroad for jobs with the emigration clearances of the BMET, the recruiting agencies that arrange visas will bear the expenses of repatriation of the migrant workers if they are in danger.

"The government should immediately claim money from the recruiting agencies concerned, arrange accommodation and repatriation of the Bangladeshis now stranded there," he said.

Hasan said they have information that at least 80 other Bangladeshis in Vietnam are facing appalling conditions in different camps. They were taken to Vietnam for jobs but were not arranged work permits.

"It's not enough to repatriate them. The government should investigate the case seriously and punish those responsible," he said.

Asked, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad said the ministry has already asked the six recruiting agencies to provide money for repatriating the workers from Vietnam.

A committee headed by a deputy secretary of the expatriates' welfare ministry has also been formed to investigate the case, he said.

Flood washes away roads

FROM PAGE 10

The Dharla was flowing 19 cm above the danger level at Shimulbari point yesterday morning.

In Bogura, water of the Jamuna was flowing 94 cm above the danger level at the Mathurapara point in the Sariakandi upazila yesterday, said WDB officials.

Many families have lost their homesteads in the remote areas of Chaluabari union in Sariakandi upazila due to the flood.

Shawkat Ali, chairman Chaluabari Union Parishad, said around 920 families were now homeless and passing days under open sky with untold sufferings.

In Gaibandha, the Brahmaputra is flowing 103 cm above the danger level at the Fulchari point, while water of the Chaghat River is flowing 77 cm above of the danger level at the Gaibandha point yesterday.

The water will continue to increase today, said Mokhlesur Rahman, executive engineer of the Gaibandha WDB.

In Sunamganj, the Surma was flowing 14 cm above the danger level at Sholghar point yesterday. Flood water has damaged many roads and bridges causing sufferings to people.

Many parts of roads in Doakrabazar, Katakhal, Noagaon, Ujjalpur, Tahirpur, Jamalganj, Dharmapasha and Bishwambharpur areas have been damaged by the flood.

Contacted, Zahirul Islam, executive engineer of the Roads and Highways Department (RHD), said about 50 km

of roads have been damaged. Accurate amount can be estimated after the water recede.

Mahbubur Rahman, executive engineer of the Sunamganj Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), said some 100 km of LGED roads have been damaged. It may need around Tk 100 crores to repair the roads.

In Nilphamari, flood situation in the Teesta basin area is still unchanged though water level in the river slightly dropped.

"The river might swell again with re-start of heavy rainfall," said Rabiul Islam, executive engineer at WDB's Dalia regional office.

"We have been living here for around one week under open sky. We are facing huge crisis of food. But none gave us any food or relief," said Mazom Ali, a flood victim who took shelter at Barni Ghat point in Dimla.

In Sirajganj, flood situation has kept deteriorating as the Jamuna is swelling up rapidly. Over 1.7 lakh people were marooned in five flood affected upazilas.

"Flood in this region may be prolonged, if such rising trend of the Jamuna continues," said Rafikul Islam, sub-divisional engineer of Sirajganj WDB.

In Pabna, water of two major rivers -- the Padma and the Jamuna -- are rising rapidly, posing a threat to inundate nearby localities.

Our Lalmonirhat, Moulvibazar, Bogura, Pabna and Nilphamari correspondents contributed to this report.

Scientists discover tiny dinosaur

FROM PAGE 10

the later, larger reptiles are poorly known as few specimens from near the root of this lineage have been found.

But American and Madagascan researchers who described the new species in a study on Monday said their analysis suggested dinosaurs and pterosaurs "evolved from a miniaturised ancestor"

that lived relatively recently before them.

"There's a general perception of dinosaurs as being giants," said Christian Kammerer, a research curator in palaeontology at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. "But this new animal is very close to the divergence of dinosaurs and pterosaurs, and it's shockingly small."

Millions back

FROM PAGE 10

toll, declaring a total of 144,758 deaths to pass the 144,023 recorded in the United States and Canada.

It now stands second only to Europe, where 202,505 people have died.

After imposing one of the world's strictest lockdowns in late March, India had been steadily easing rules to lessen the huge economic impact.

But infections have continued to soar, passing 900,000 on Monday with almost 24,000 deaths, according to health ministry figures that many experts say underplay the severity of the situation.

Antibodies

FROM PAGE 10

breakthrough on into pre-clinical trials.

The antibodies - known as nanobodies due to their small size - could be engineered to neutralise the coronavirus.

The scientists found that the nanobodies can bind tightly to the spike protein of Sars-CoV-2 - the virus which causes Covid-19 - by blocking it from entering human cells and stopping any infection.

The work was carried out by a team from the Rosalind Franklin Institute, Oxford University, Diamond Light Source and Public Health England.

Special

FROM PAGE 10

African countries.

PAKISTAN RATIFIES

SIMLA

The Pakistan National

Assembly has ratified

the Simla Agreement,

report BBC. The BBC

correspondent in

Islamabad further informs

that the five-day debate

over the Agreement was

quite stormy and the

overwhelming majority

of those who spoke were

against the recognition of

Bangladesh.

TEXTILE MILLS WORK AT

50% CAPACITY

At present the cotton

mills in the country are

operating 50 per cent

below the installed

capacity. Out of 8 lakhs

installed spindles 4 lakhs

are operating in 44 textile

mills in Bangladesh. The

authority attributes the

causes of underutilisation

mainly to the shortage

of spare parts and other

factors. Owing to the

underutilization of the

installed capacity the

overhead costs in the

mills have increased

manifolds.

SOURCES: July 16,

1972 issues of Bangladesh

Observer, Dainik Bangla and

Dainik Ittefaq.

Handcuffed

FROM PAGE 10

recognition, he could not be identified immediately, said police.

Dulal Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Anwara Police Station, told The Daily Star that on information, police recovered the body from Borar Char area in the Sangu river around 12:30am.

The victim was wearing an off-white full-sleeved shirt and black shorts. His right hand was handcuffed, said the OCs.

The left part of the cuffs was missing. His throat was slit, and small injury marks was spotted on his back, the police officer added.

On the back of the handcuffs, PATENT 153174-891152 CHICAGO is engraved, while THE SMITS HANDCUFFS SPRINO FIELD MASS was on the other side, said police sources.

During the recovery, superintendent of Chattogram police and senior police officials were present on the spot, said the sources.

OC Dulal said the body was dumped into the Sangu or into the sea after murder.

The victim might have been killed around 10-12 days ago, he said, adding that police started investigating the incident.

Inspector (investigation) SM Didarul Islam Sikdar of the police station filed a case in this connection.

The body was sent to Chittagong Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

CID looking for cohorts of Azam Khan

FROM PAGE 10

arrive in Dubai, Azam and his two brothers -- Nazim Uddin and Ershad -- sexually abused them and then forced them into sex work.

A high official at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday claimed to have got these findings about the syndicate that is involved in the trafficking of thousands of Bangladeshi girls to Dubai.

"We got the details after several victims informed us about the process," the officer, who is involved in the investigation, told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

The CID on Sunday arrested Azam, Alamin, and another associate Anwar Hossain Moyna. They are now in jail.

Investigators said they got identities of at least seven more close associates of Azam, who owns four hotels in Dubai. They used to "manage" the girls through different brokers across the country.

Asked about it, Imtiaz Ahmed, deputy inspector general of CID, said they have information that these culprits were hiding inside the country and that they were conducting drives to arrest them.

Asked about Azam's brothers, he said they were in Dubai, but the CID was preparing documents to seek help from the Interpol to arrest them.

Meanwhile, the victims, who were confined to Azam's hotels in Dubai and forced into sex work, have started returning home through the

assistance of Bangladesh embassy in the United Arab Emirates.

On Saturday, five victims came to Bangladesh from Dubai, said DIG Imtiaz, adding that the CID already communicated with the victims to record their statements.

The CID official said two victims already gave confessional statements against Azam.

A 20-year-old victim filed a case with Lalbagh Police Station on July 2. She told police that she did not receive any payment during her stay in Dubai.

"We have found around 15 cases registered across the country against Azam, but we believe that some more cases might have been filed," Imtiaz said, adding that they were looking for the victims and case details.

Ecneec gives go ahead to 2 projects

FROM PAGE 10

while a database of a digital map for 470 upazilas will be prepared. The map will be prepared according to Revisional Survey.

A total of 2,465 officers and staffers will be given training on digital land survey at home and abroad.

The project cost is estimated to be Tk 1,212.5486 crore, and it will end June 2025. Except the three hill districts, the project will cover the whole country.

The second project titled "Land Management Automation" aims to bring dynamism and increase transparency in services, create interoperable land database, and provide land-related services online.

The project is scheduled to end June 2025, and its costs are Tk 1,197.0318 crore.

At an online briefing after the meeting, Planning Minister MA Mannan said people would get land mutation, lease, and tax payment facilities online without hassle after completion of the projects.

It will bring transparency in revenue collection, he added.

About 5,247 land offices will be connected online to provide services to people.

Meanwhile, to improve infrastructure and the drainage system of 18 new wards of Dhaka North City Corporation, the Ecneec yesterday

okayed another project involving Tk 4,025.62 crore.

The project, which is to end December 2022, is taken up to develop 182.78km road network, 28.51km canal, and establish 233.97km drainage system.

A total of 12,218 LED streetlights will also be set up under the project.

Besides, the government approved another Tk 1,081.7603 crore project to repair streets and drainage of DNCC areas.

Mannan said they placed eight projects of five ministries before the meeting and all the projects got approved.

The total cost of the projects is Tk 10,102.03 crore.

AL runners victorious in Bogura-1

FROM PAGE 10

polls -- Shahin Chakladar from the AL and Habibur Rahman Habib from the JP.

Shahin bagged 124,003 votes while his opponent Habibiur Rahman Habib got only 1,678 votes, said Bazrul Rahman, election officer of Keshabpur upazila.

Returning officers of these constituencies announced the unofficial results last night. According to the results, 149,431 votes were cast out of 3.30 lakh voters in Bogura while in Jashore 129,067 votes were cast out of 2.04 lakh.

The turnout was only 45.57 percent in Bogura while 63.57 percent in Jashore.

The voting began at 9:00am and continued until 5:00pm without any

break.

There were 122 polling centres in Bogura-1 and 79 in Jashore-6.

Bogura-1 and Jashore-6 constituencies fell vacant following the deaths of ruling party lawmakers Abdul Mannan and Ismat Ara Sadique respectively.

The EC in February announced that by-elections to the two constituencies will be held on March 29. But they postponed the polls on March 21, considering the coronavirus situation.

On July 4, the EC said that elections to the two constituencies will be held on July 14.

Our Bogura correspondent Mostafa Shabuj found very poor turnout in the polling centres, but polls results say a good number of votes were cast.

CLOSURE OF TEA GARDEN ROADS

Notice is hereby given that all private roads and paths passing through the lands belonging to the Tea Estates owned by the under-noted Companies will remain closed to the public from **23rd to 25th July 2020** both days inclusive. Passes may however, be obtained on application to the Manager of the estate concerned.

- Lungla, Shumshemugger, Karimpore, Etah, Hingajea and Pallakandi Tea Estates owned by The Lungla (Sylhet) Tea Company Limited.
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- Chandpore Tea Estate owned by The Chandpore Tea Company Limited.
- Mazdehee Tea Estate owned by The Mazdehee Tea Company Limited.
- Luskerpore, Silloah and Rajkie Tea Estates owned by Surmah Valley Tea Company Limited.
- Chaklapunji Tea Estate owned by Eastland Camellia Limited.


(IMRAN AHMED)
MANAGING DIRECTOR
DUNCAN BROTHERS (BANGLADESH) LIMITED
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D-89



SAF MADANJEET SINGH SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDY IN UNESCO-MADAJEET SINGH CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

SAF-Bangladesh Chapter is inviting applications from Bangladeshi nationals for the award of scholarships by South Asia Foundation for pursuing the following Degree

Name of degree and institution	Duration	Minimum qualification
Master of Laws (LLM) at the University of Asia Pacific, Dhaka at UNESCO Madanjeet Singh South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies (UMSAILS). http://uap-bd.edu/lhr/	1 year	Have completed a graduation in Law (with a minimum CGPA of 3 out of 4 or equivalent). Be fluent in English (both in writing and speaking).

Interested candidates are requested



'Lord Ram is Nepali not Indian'

NDTV ONLINE

Ayodhya, the ancient city believed by millions of Hindus to be the birthplace of Lord Ram, is actually a small village near Kathmandu, Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli said Monday.

Speaking at a cultural programme at his residence, Oli then accused India of cultural oppression and encroachment, and said Nepal's contribution to science had been undervalued.

"We still believe we gave Sita to Prince Ram but we gave the prince too, from Ayodhya, not India. Ayodhya is a village a little west (of) Birgunj (a district in Nepal that is around 135 km from capital Kathmandu)," he said.

According to news agency ANI, which quoted Nepalese media sources, Oli also said: "Real Ayodhya lies in Nepal, not in India. Lord Ram is Nepali not Indian".

Ayodhya is a town in Uttar Pradesh, around 135 km from state capital Lucknow.

The Nepal PM's remarks come amid a row between the two countries over overlapping territorial claims. Last month the Nepal parliament voted, unanimously, to pass a constitutional amendment to update the country's map including the disputed lands irking New Delhi.

US rejects China's 'maritime empire'

Pompeo declares Beijing's claims in South China Sea 'unlawful'

REUTERS, Washington /Beijing

The United States has rejected China's claims to offshore resources in most of the South China Sea, drawing criticism from China which said the US position raised tension in the region, highlighting an increasingly testy relationship.

China has offered no coherent legal basis for its ambitions in the South China Sea and for years has been using intimidation against other Southeast Asian coastal states, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement on Monday.

"We are making clear: Beijing's claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea are completely unlawful, as is its campaign of bullying to control them," said Pompeo, a prominent China hawk within the Trump administration.

The United States has long opposed China's expansive territorial claims on the South China Sea, sending warships regularly through the strategic waterway to demonstrate freedom of navigation there. Monday's comments reflect a harsher tone.

"The world will not allow Beijing to treat the South China Sea as its maritime empire," Pompeo said.



The US statement supports a ruling four years ago under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that invalidated most of China's claims for maritime rights in the South China Sea.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian condemned the US rejection of China's claim.

"It intentionally stirs up controversy over maritime sovereignty claims, destroys regional peace and stability and is an irresponsible act," he said at a regular briefing.

"The US has repeatedly sent large fleets of sophisticated military planes and ships to the South China Sea ... The US is the troublemaker and destroyer of regional peace and stability."

China claims 90% of the potentially energy-rich South China Sea, but Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also lay claim to parts of it.

About \$3 trillion worth of trade passes through the waterway each year. China has built bases atop atolls in the region but says its intentions are peaceful.

Analysts said it would be important to see if other countries adopted the US stance and what, if anything, Washington might do to reinforce its position and prevent Beijing from creating "facts on the water" to buttress its claims.

The relationship between the United States and China has grown increasingly tense recently over various issues including China's handling of the novel coronavirus and its tightened grip on Hong Kong.

China routinely outlines the scope of its claims in the South China Sea with reference to a so-called nine-dash line on its maps that encompasses about nine-tenths of the 3.5-million-square-kilometer waters.



French elite acrobatic flying team "Patrouille de France" (PAF) performs a flying display of the French national flag over the Louvre pyramid designed by Chinese architect Ioh Ming Pei, during annual Bastille Day military ceremony on the Place de la Concorde in Paris, yesterday. France yesterday held a reduced version of its traditional Bastille Day parade this year due to safety measures over the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) pandemic.

PHOTO: AFP

Canada PM apologizes for 'mistake' amid charity uproar

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologized on Monday for taking part in a Cabinet decision to use a charity he and his family have worked with to administer a \$900 million (\$663.4 million) student grant program. Trudeau, 48, is facing a third investigation for conflict of interest in a little over three years after his government tapped WE Charity Canada on June 25 to manage the program. The charity backed out about a week after the contract was announced. WE Charity disclosed last week that from 2016-2020 it paid honoraria to Trudeau's mother, Margaret, amounting to C\$250,000 for speaking at some 28 events, while his brother, Alexandre, received about C\$32,000. Trudeau and his wife, Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, have regularly participated in WE Charity events.

Hagia Sophia's 'Christian icons aren't obstacles to prayers'

Turkey's Hagia Sophia could open to visitors outside prayer times and its Christian icons will remain, religious officials said yesterday, after a court ruling paved the way for it to become a mosque. The sixth-century Istanbul landmark's museum status -- in place since 1934 -- was revoked on Friday and control was handed to the religious authority, Diyanet. Hagia Sophia spent almost 1,000 years as a cathedral before being converted into a mosque in 1453 and later a museum. Diyanet said in a statement on Tuesday that Christian icons in Hagia Sophia were "not an obstacle to the validity of the prayers". "The icons should be curtained and shaded through appropriate means during prayer times," it said.

Weinstein accusers call \$18.9m NY settlement a 'cruel hoax'

Six women who claim they were sexually abused by Harvey Weinstein urged a US judge on Monday to reject an \$18.9 million settlement with the disgraced movie producer, the board of his former studio and other accusers. The settlement announced on June 30 would end litigation by New York Attorney General Letitia James and separate class-action litigation, and permit accusers to claim \$7,500 to \$750,000 each. But in a Manhattan federal court filing, the six women said accusers would receive just \$11.2 million after deducting legal fees and costs, with typical awards of just \$10,000 to \$20,000, while shielding the defendants' insurers from big payouts. Weinstein, 68, is serving a 23-year prison term following his Feb 24 conviction for sexually assaulting a former production assistant and raping a onetime aspiring actress. He is appealing, and still faces rape and sexual assault charges in Los Angeles.

SOURCE: AFP

'There is a Trump effect'

UN expert accuses White House of mounting 'onslaught' against global press freedom

REUTERS, Geneva

The UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression on Monday accused the White House of mounting an "onslaught" against the media and referred to a negative "Trump effect" on global press freedom.

In his last official press briefing before his six-year tenure ends later this month, David Kaye said in a series of forthright comments that he hoped "attacks" on US journalists would end when President Donald Trump leaves office.

"Clearly the signature issue over the past four years now has been the way in which this particular president addresses the media: The way he denigrates the media, denigrates freedom of expression," he told journalists in Geneva. Kaye specified that the so-called onslaught consisted



of criticism of reporters and spreading "disinformation," as well as partnerships with conservative media organisations.

When Kaye was asked about the impact of that on press freedom around the world, the special rapporteur said: "There clearly is a Trump effect, a very negative one," adding that the Trump administration has created a global culture of permissiveness.

Kaye also raised broad concerns about government crackdowns that has worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic in a trend he described as "very disturbing" and contributing to the spread of the disease.

"Unfortunately often under the guise of trying to restrict disinformation, governments have resorted to old tools of clamping down on the free flow of information," he said, without naming specific countries.

DGHS didn't bother to check

FROM PAGE 1

Almost a similar thing happened to Regent Hospital, which allegedly issued several thousand fake Covid-19 test reports. The DGHS had reached a deal with Regent for Covid-19 treatment though its licence expired in 2014 and was never renewed.

TEST REPORT SCAM One month after the coronavirus hit the country in March, JKG got the approval from DGHS on April 6 and started collecting samples for free through their 44 kiosks installed in Dhaka, Narayanganj and other places.

However, the scam surfaced on June 24 after Tejgaon police arrested five employees of Oval Group, including CEO Ariful, over their alleged involvement in issuing fake Covid-19 test reports.

Police said although JKG Health Care had no permission to collect Covid-19 test samples from people's homes, they would do so through their two platforms -- Booking BD and Health Care.

For such home service, they used to charge Tk 5,000 for locals and USD 100 for foreigners.

After investigation, police found all the test results for samples collected from homes were fake.

DGHS EXPLANATION The DGHS, in an explanation letter on July 11, said it gave permission to JKG Health Care to set up booths and collect Covid-19 test samples as its coordinator Ariful Chaudhury came to DGHS saying that his organisation can do it -- like in South Korea -- to help the government deal with the Covid-19 crisis.

The DGHS letter clarified that it gave permission to JKG Health Care based on previous event management experience of the Oval Group, including a health ministry event.

It mentioned that Ariful Chaudhury is the CEO of Oval Group, an event management company which had organised a health ministry event -- Health Services Week -- in 2018 as well as managed several events of the Bangladesh Medical Association.

It also referred to the fact that the government would not have to give any money for this collection arrangement.

"As it was needed to increase collection of Covid-19 sample and also there were previous experiences with Oval Group, so the health ministry or DGHS thought it right to give the permission," the letter stated, adding that the DGHS had no idea that JKG could cheat.

STATUS OF INVESTIGATION Investigators said lobbying government high-ups, Ariful's wife Dr Sabrina Arif Chaudhury managed to get JKG the job of collecting Covid-19 test samples after showing it to be a non-profit organisation.

Her influence also brought the firm several government contracts, including those of the health ministry, after she was married to Ariful in 2015, they said.

Sabrina, a suspended registrar (cardiac surgery) at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD), was detained on Sunday. Meanwhile, the investigation charge

of the case over the scam has been handed over to the Detective Branch on Monday night. The Tejgaon division of the branch is now probing it.

The DB has sought seven-day remand for Oval Group CEO Ariful, and JKG chief coordinator Sayed Chowdhury, who is the husband of JKG's owner Jebunnessa Reema, again to cross-check Sabrina's claim and interrogate them further about the fake test report scam, DB and court sources said.

The remand hearing will be held today.

Police said they found messages from Sabrina's mobile phone where she referred to herself as the chairman of JKG.

Besides, some documents, the website of an event management firm connected to JKG, and Sabrina's LinkedIn profile, mention her as the chairman of Oval Group, which was established in 2008.

But on Monday, the first day of her remand, she was still denying that she held any post at JKG.

Man who read independence

FROM PAGE 1

caliphs" -- Shajahan Siraj, ASM Abdur Rob, Abdul Kuddus Makhon and Nur-e-Alam Siddique -- of Liberation War. He was also the commander of Bangladesh Liberation Force.

In independent Bangladesh, Siraj played the role of minister for environment and forest between 2001 and 2006. He was also a former vice president of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

He left behind his wife Rabeya Siraj, daughter barrister Sarwat Siraj, son Rajiv Siraj and a number of relatives, followers and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Born in Tangail on March 1, 1943, Siraj entered into the political arena through the movement against Hamidur Rahman Education Commission in 1962. He was a student of Sadat College of Karatia in Tangail at that time.

He was elected as the VP of the college twice in 1964-65 and 1966-67. He participated in the 1969 mass upsurge movement and became the general secretary of undivided Chhatra League in 1970-1972.

Siraj was one of the key figures of Swadhin Bangla Biplabi Parishad, a secret organisation that was formed by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1962 with an aim to liberate the country from Pakistan.

The then Pakistan government on March 2 placed curfew in Dhaka but students of Chhatra Sangram Patishad, led by vice president ASM Abdur Rob and general secretary Shahjahan Siraj, held a massive rally. They then hoisted a flag of Bangladesh.

Saluting the flag, they all expressed their solidarity with the liberation movement. After the country got independence, he played a role to form Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and was the acting general secretary and then president.

Siraj was elected lawmaker from Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal thrice from Tangail-4. He joined the BNP in 1995 and got elected from the same constituency that year.

When he was environment minister, some good initiatives were taken including banning of polythene and withdrawal of two-stroke scooters from Dhaka.

During the army backed caretaker government in 2007, Siraj was arrested for corruption charges and he was convicted. The BNP expresses deep condolences saying the nation has lost a great leader.

His body will be taken to his constituency of Tangail Kalihati. The first Namaj-e-Janaza will be held at Kalihati college ground. His another Janaja will be held at Gulshan Society mosque. He will be buried at Banani graveyard after Isha prayer.

Meanwhile, President M Abdul Hamid yesterday expressed profound shock and sorrow at the death of the veteran freedom fighter and former minister.

In a condolence message, the President recalled with due respect his outstanding contribution to Bangladesh's politics and the country's Liberation War in 1971.

The head of the state prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed profound sympathy to the bereaved family, reported BSS.

Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain and General Secretary Reza Kibria expresses deep condolence and said Siraj had a significant role after Liberation War.

Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League President Bangabir Kader Siddiqui expresses his deep condolence too.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Bank (বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক) regarding a tender for the procurement of a vehicle. It includes details about the tender number (বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-৫৭/২০২০), the date (তারিখ: ১৩/০৭/২০২০), and the location (ঢাকা). The advertisement lists various terms and conditions for the tender, including the type of vehicle, the budget, and the deadline for submission. It also mentions the bank's website (www.bb.org.bd) and the tendering process.

Advertisement for the Dhaka South City Corporation (ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন) regarding a tender for the construction of a parking area (কার পার্কিং ইজারা পুনঃ বিজ্ঞপ্তি). It includes details about the tender number (স্মারক নং-৪৬,২০৭.০০০.১৩.০২.২০১.২০২০), the location (কার পার্কিং ইজারা পুনঃ বিজ্ঞপ্তি), and the deadline for submission (১৩/০৭/২০২০). The advertisement lists various terms and conditions for the tender, including the type of parking area, the budget, and the deadline for submission. It also mentions the corporation's website (www.dscscc.gov.bd) and the tendering process.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA WEDNESDAY JULY 15, 2020, ASHAR 31, 1427 BS

Don't let sex traffickers off the hook

Poor conviction rate responsible for the persistence in sex crimes

POLICE have reportedly arrested three men in connection with the trafficking of young women to Dubai and forcing them into prostitution. The news was disclosed by the Criminal Investigation Department of police on Monday, when it released details of the operation of an organised sex trafficking gang and those arrested, including one suspected to be the group's "kingpin". Some of the details that have emerged are disturbing. The traffickers would target girls aged mostly between 18 and 20 and exploit their vulnerability by promising them well-paid jobs in hotels. The victims were paid a month's salary up front, as "advance salary", and no fee was charged for their travel. Once they reached Dubai, they were first given jobs as receptionists or waitresses at one of the hotels owned by the group leader and later forced to work at dance clubs and subsequently as sex workers. They were beaten and tortured with electric shocks if they refused.

These details give us an insight into how transnational sex trafficking gangs work. They usually target poor young women from impoverished backgrounds who are desperate to make a living and use loopholes in the systems of both host countries and destination countries to continue their operations. The gang in question has allegedly been active for eight years and sent hundreds of women from Bangladesh. How could they elude detection for so long? Police often claim, as they also did after the recent bust, that the cross-border nature of these crimes makes them difficult to contain. But the truth is, a transnational criminal operation cannot thrive without a strong local base. Dismantling this base is vital. According to the latest United States Trafficking in Persons report, more than 4,000 trafficking cases were still awaiting investigation or prosecution at the end of last year in Bangladesh, and the conviction rate stood at just 1.7 percent in 2019. So no amount of rhetoric can absolve the failure and bureaucratic inadequacy of the criminal justice system and the local administration to bring the criminals to justice. The authorities, if they really mean to curb this crime, should also ramp up their efforts with the collaboration of destination countries and international organisations working on sex trafficking.

The most urgent task right now is to rescue the victims. We have had little progress in this regard and it is disconcerting that they continue to suffer thanks to lack of initiatives to bring them home safely. An important way to ensure this doesn't happen is to raise awareness among these impressionable young women, so that they don't fall prey to the promises of local "brokers" and agencies employed to lure them. Without raising awareness and strengthening local crime detection and prevention systems, as well as making our foreign missions and embassies sufficiently responsive, we cannot fight this crime with any success.

WHO chief's blunt and dire warning

Which way are we heading?

WHO Director General Tedros Ghebreyesus has some very bad news for us, cautioning the world that the coronavirus pandemic may get even worse if countries around the globe, and that includes most countries, fail to adhere to strict healthcare precautions. And he has statistics to back his ominous forecast. As of July 14 afternoon, there have been 13,259,473 confirmed cases of Covid-19, and 576,028 deaths.

We wonder where we are going in this regard. Admittedly, in Bangladesh the death rate has plateaued, but the number of infected cases has increased manifold as more and more people are getting tested. And we are nowhere near attaining the optimum number of tests. And when the WHO chief refers to adhering to proper precautions it may be a good idea for our planners to look at the global statistics. The two most affected countries are the US and Brazil. Of the 230,000 cases, 80 percent were from these two countries. And they have set the worst example of fighting the pandemic by disregarding the advice of health experts and failing to enforce safety measures. And that shows in the numbers. Of 230,000 new cases on Sunday, 80 percent were from 10 nations, and 50 percent from just two countries.

It is time to take a stock in Bangladesh for several reasons. Firstly, we ought to determine whether the loopholes we had to start with have been adequately plugged. Secondly, whether our current modality of work is effective or not, and thirdly, to determine the remedial measures that we should adopt to combat the pandemic. These include adopting examples of best practices of combating the virus in other countries and replicating successful containment strategies in certain areas within the country and taking timely, prudent steps, especially during the upcoming Eid.

But amidst this very sensitive situation, we are dismayed to see the line ministry and its most important department, the Ministry of Health and DGHS, at loggerheads, with no one taking responsibility of the horrendous scandal of fake Covid-19 tests by hospitals that has risked lives and pulled back our efforts to fight the pandemic. That everything is not well with either is clear, but instead of pulling up their socks, we see them going at each other. That is not only unexpected but also undesirable, and will frustrate the ongoing fight against Covid-19.

We feel that the Prime Minister's direct intervention is needed here, since there is a need to clean up the mess that both the ministry and DGHS are in and ensure that our fight against the virus is in efficient and good hands, which currently it is not.



TASMIYAH T RAHMAN

THIS year, the World Youth Skills Day takes place at a challenging time, when the need for skills is higher than ever. The UN has declared this year's theme to be "Skills for a Resilient Youth"—a very timely

topic amidst the lockdown of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, worldwide. As Bangladesh went into lockdown on March 26, all classes were cancelled, residential training was postponed and students were asked to go back home. We are now four months into the crisis and while the markets have opened in limited capacity, movements are becoming normal, and people are requested to maintain safety; education institutions remain closed until September 2020, as per the government directive.

Since the lockdown, there have been many innovations around online classes. However, as we move towards tackling this crisis, in the "new normal", TVET students in Bangladesh will face challenges in accessing digital devices and connectivity given that they mostly come from disadvantaged backgrounds. While we aim towards moving for a "blended learning" approach—which is, simply put, a "blend" of both online and face-to-face classes—it is of utmost importance that we move fast, keeping in mind the following points.

Online classes: not an option for hands-on-training

In order to immediately address the crisis, the Bangladesh government started teaching through television for technical and madrasa students on April 19, so that students can make up for some of the losses due to closure of the educational institutions. However, according to the rapid survey done by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), educational activities of more than 3.5 crore primary and secondary level students are being hampered. Assessments through these platforms remain a challenge.

Urban schools and universities have opted for taking online classes via Google Meet, Zoom and even Facebook live, and various online platforms continue to offer free online classes like 10 minute school, Shikbok Batayon, Repto etc. However, hands-on training—which is about 80 percent for technical courses like electrical house wiring, plumbing, refrigeration and air condition repairing, motorcycle mechanic and tailoring, among others—remain closed.

During lockdown, about 732 students (11 percent women and girls) were reached for a quick survey in BRAC's Skills Development Institute and 54 percent showed an interest in online training. However, amongst the existing students, 37 percent said that they would prefer to wait and receive hands-on training when the Covid-19 crisis was over for

courses like Electrical Installation and Maintenance (EIM) and graphics design. Students feared that if they were taught the whole course online, they would not have a chance to do the practical tutorials.

Towards a blended approach: Ensuring connectivity and safety
For Bangladesh, the future of TVET may be through a blended approach. Theoretical training, soft skills modules and Covid-19 response courses can be taught online. A major task here will be to have online content for all TVET courses along with appropriate training of trainers.

According to BTRC, the number of mobile internet users rose by 9 percent year-on-year to 9.5 crore in March

or financial assistance to buy the correct device. This may not be sustainable in the long run, thus, a financial mechanism can be established where parents may get a loan to buy devices for their children with low or no interest rates. This could be done through local microfinance institutions. Special data packages can also be offered to students.

When the classes reopen, classrooms and hands-on-training spaces will have to maintain social distance following appropriate guidelines. There needs to be hand-washing facilities and students need to receive protective gear. It is evident that people are not following the rules as much as they should, and it is even more rare in rural communities. Thus, steps have to be taken to remind the students

as they remain outside government support packages. Many disadvantaged youth who drop out of general education end up working in the informal economy. The Covid-19 crisis may push more students out of school, who would also opt for TVET education for an immediate job to support families. The new normal has also pushed formal economy employees like RMG workers out of jobs, and re-skilling them with new and agile methods is necessary.

As such, it is clear that the future looks uncertain—so does job markets, current skills and scope of work. Instead of being frustrated, the key is to focus on harnessing a mindset of being resilient and agile in learning. Our parents worked in one job all their lives, while we have



PHOTO: COLLECTED

this year. This is confirmed by BRAC's survey of 732 learners, which showed that almost 79 percent have access to devices in Dhaka. However, this number is far less when we look at the rural training approaches through informal apprenticeship. A survey done on 9,000 rural learners shows that only 13.25 percent of learners have access to devices and the number is as low as 5 percent for women and girls.

Ensuring quality TVET education only through online means, given the population, can be a long term goal for Bangladesh. Initially, urban and semi urban students can come under the blended approach while rural youth would still receive training through face to face classes.

The issue of connectivity remains a challenge. Students would have to be given a basic laptop, iPad or a device,

to follow these protocols. Visual aids like large posters in classes may be helpful to remind both teachers and students. In case any student feels ill, he/she should be given leave and also be referred to community clinics. Parents would have to sensitised and be onboard for this approach to work for students.

A resilient mindset: for "new normal" employment

Employment opportunities are also shrinking in certain sectors but growing in others. Sectors like healthcare will definitely need hundreds and thousands of technicians, nurses and caregivers. Various digital skills, coding skills and ICT enabled services for small and macro enterprises have a large potential, along with urban needs like home delivery and logistics support. Re-building micro and small enterprises, especially in the informal economy, needs to be looked

worked in five, but our children may have to work in 15 jobs. One may end up doing multiple jobs to maintain family expenses. An RMG employee may work in a factory during the day and be a community healthcare technician in the evening for a community clinic. Here, soft skills training such as how to "cope" with multiple jobs, maintain work life balance, good communications and negotiation skills will be needed.

One important point to consider is that we often think that parents are the best career advisors but in today's digital world, we might let the youth decide what they want to do while we help them to develop a "resilient mind", because their world will be very different from ours. The Covid-19 crisis, if nothing else, has shown us that.

Tasmiyah T Rahman is the Current in Charge of the Skills Development Programme at BRAC.

Regent and JKG scams: Is this the face of a new normal in healthcare?



MEER AHSAN HABIB

INSTALLED on the boundary wall of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) located at the ever-busy Gulshan-Mohakhali Link road, the illuminating electric signboard reads "Healthcare

will leap several steps forward in the Mujib Year". Sadly, the very good initiative of the government has turned out to be nothing but mere propaganda by the health bosses. Much ado about nothing and a big fuss over a trifle—corruption and nepotism have taken over healthcare.

Thanks to the pandemic, we now know just how unprepared our health sector is in dealing with it. Over these years, we thought it was a crisis of lack of adequate funding to serve the people. But that is not the case; rather, we have been made a victim of a nexus of corruption. For some in this sector, Covid-19 has emerged as an opportunity to make quick money.

A few months back, when Covid-19 had just made its entry into Bangladesh, doctors started complaining about the poor quality of personal protective equipment. The health bosses then silenced these complaints by issuing several directives. It did not end there, as we now know the names of JKG Health Care and Regent Hospital that were providing fake Covid-19 test reports at a high price. Regent went further by charging a high price for Covid-19 treatment, which the hospital should have done free of cost and be reimbursed from the government later. Instead, it did both.

The law enforcing agencies deserve a big thanks for unearthing the worst-ever health scandal in the history of Bangladesh. But how did all this happen? In both cases, the masterminds were

able to establish strong connections with government high-ups. The usual blame game is on, but can these officials deny their responsibility? They cannot, and there must be an independent and impartial enquiry into this scandal.

Interestingly, both scandals have similar patterns involving almost the same individuals. The culprits of JKG Health Care and Regent Hospital first established close contact with the influentials. They even made some friends within the media

Government Titumir College premises into a personal entertainment place that led to an altercation between the college employees and JKG volunteers.

Sadly, JKG with the help of a section of media was able to portray this incident as an attack on JKG. This was just the tip of the iceberg that led to the unravelling of the biggest ever scam in the name of providing free Covid-19 testing. Surprisingly, some lawmakers even certified JKG Healthcare as a renowned

never have been able to carry out their operations. While these organisations got blanket approvals, we see a picture of how indigenous Covid-19 testing solution face bureaucratic bottlenecks. Any indigenous invention may have some initial flaws, but that does not necessarily mean it cannot be improved. Instead of quick cooperation from the health and drug bosses of the country, Gonoshasthya Kendra's rapid testing kit faced unfathomable blocks. Had the authorities concerned taken the kit seriously, it could have been improved further and the government could have extended Covid-19 testing to a much larger scale. On the other hand, mushrooming organisations have been able to do healthcare-related business during Covid-19.

Nowadays, we often hear the term "new normal", which refers to the coping strategy in the post-Covid-19 era. Will this be the new normal healthcare in the post-Covid-19 era in Bangladesh? Hopefully not. But these two scandals are not isolated incidents; scams like these have long been feeding on the healthcare system. The DGHS seems to have finally woken up a bit as it cancelled Covid-19 testing approvals awarded to five different hospitals on various grounds. But neither the health ministry nor the DGHS can avoid their share of responsibilities in the blunder, and engaging in a blame game is futile. Those who are responsible for this must be brought to justice.

While government hospitals have performed admirably with limited resources, they have stuck out as "isolated islands" of care in an era when care perhaps should be better distributed. The government may consider a complete overhaul of the healthcare sector and ensure that the people, the disadvantaged and the vulnerable in particular, have access to an efficient healthcare system.

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This influence perhaps helped him to get Covid-19 treatment approval, although the hospital had no valid license. News reports have revealed a track record of fraud by the Regent Hospital boss for years. So how did he manage to cover up all these unscrupulous activities for years? What was the source of his power?

who very sadly, forgot their journalistic ethics and enabled them, knowingly or unknowingly, in building the cheating syndicate. When all was set, they started preying on the common people.

Was it very difficult to find out the truth? Apart from organising healthcare expo, JKG had no prior experience on public health, let alone managing such a large level of public healthcare operations. Its alleged chairman is a cardiac surgeon who transformed herself very quickly into a public health expert and trained several hundred fake volunteers. Like the Regent boss, the JKG chairman had a very strong social media presence portraying her connection with government high-ups. This organisation opened its YouTube channel on January 6 and updated its domain jkghealthcare.com on April 8, 2020. They allegedly turned the

organisation. Even without having any healthcare-related experience, JKG managed to get the approval for collecting Covid-19 samples—thanks to the connections the owners had.

When it comes to the Regent Hospital scandal, we see the same pattern. The Regent boss also seems to have made good connections with political, administrative and media professionals. This influence perhaps helped him to get Covid-19 treatment approval, although the hospital had no valid license. News reports have revealed a track record of fraud by the Regent Hospital boss for years. So how did he manage to cover up all these unscrupulous activities for years? What was the source of his power?

It is evident that without having the support of influential quarters, JKG Health Care and Regent Hospital would

CLIMATE CHANGE

Turning Bangladesh into the learning capital of the world



POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

THE adverse impacts of human induced climate change are already occurring around the world, including in Bangladesh. It is incumbent on all countries to gear up their ability to be better prepared for the

impacts before they occur through enhancing adaptive capacity, and to also be prepared to deal with the loss and damage after the impacts occur.

There are certain aspects of enhancing adaptive capacity that are most relevant for vulnerable developing countries such as Bangladesh, where finances and technology are major constraints.

The first thing to focus on is the social assets that exist in each country and the development of a National Adaptation Plan (NAP), which the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has mandated all countries to do.

In the case of Bangladesh, we have already taken our own national efforts to prepare the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) over a decade ago, followed by setting up a Climate Change Trust Fund to support hundreds of activities by government ministries and agencies over the last ten years. We have thus gone up a very steep learning curve, as adaptation to climate change is a learning-by-doing process. This learning is now being distilled into the revised BCCSAP, which will take us to 2030. The government is also embarking on its official UNFCCC and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported NAP, so there will be ample opportunity for Bangladesh to build on its prior experience and prepare a path breaking NAP that other

vulnerable developing countries can learn from.

One of the key lessons that we have learned over the last decade is that we need to make an initial investment in enhancing the understanding of climate change impacts in all sectors of society. After that, we need to ramp up investment in enhancing the capacity of each group of stakeholders on what their specific roles and actions need to be, as there is no one size fits all approach for everyone.

In Bangladesh, we have made significant progress in enhancing the understanding of the entire population on the impacts of climate change, and we are rapidly making progress on learning what needs to be done by different institutions and groups. In this scenario, there are a few key institutions and groups that have evolved and become better equipped to tackle climate change impacts going forward.

The first sector is obviously the government, which includes the main ministries such as Environment, Agriculture, Water, Disaster Management, Education, as well as Planning and Finance. It also includes local governments in both rural and urban sectors, as well as the legislature. The important transition that all these ministries and stakeholders have been able to make is to understand how they need to tackle climate change and incorporate it into their usual practices. This is illustrated by the fact that the Ministry of Finance has for the last three years prepared a climate change budget in each national budget. This year, it allocated nearly eight percent of the national budget to tackling climate change in 25 ministries.

Another example is the way that climate change will now be integrated or mainstreamed into all the ministries in the Eighth Five Year Plan now under preparation. Similarly, the National Parliament has adopted a resolution to declare a planetary

emergency, which is the first parliament in the world to do so.

These are good illustrations of how the different branches of national and local government have learned, and then put into practice their learnings, on how to tackle climate change.

A similar learning-by-doing curve has also been achieved in the non-governmental sector, with many NGOs, big and small, having received funds from the Climate

improve actions through a national network or platform of researchers and universities in each country, rather than depending on fly-in and fly-out international consultants to do workshops. In Bangladesh, the Gobeshona initiative has brought together over 50 universities and research institutions, who have their own monthly meetings to share knowledge and a major annual national conference every January, where we take stock of where we are and make decisions

television, radio and newspapers, in Bangla as well as English, are all able to understand the issues and communicate them in an effective manner. The media in Bangladesh has indeed risen to this challenge in a very significant way.

A good example of this is the fact that Bangladesh has perhaps the most effective cyclone warning and evacuation system in the world, where nearly three million people living in the coastal zones in Bangladesh know how to track the cyclone and take shelter when needed.

Going forward on this excellent foundation of awareness of the climate change problem and knowledge of solutions, we need to focus next on two aspects. The first is to invest heavily in the understanding of climate change and what to do about it in all our educational institutions, starting with universities and then into colleges, high schools and even primary schools. This does not require a major new financial investment, but rather an investment in enhancing the teaching abilities of our teachers. This investment will give us major dividends and make the country more resilient by turning the next generation into climate change leaders.

The second opportunity is for Bangladesh to reach out to other vulnerable developing countries, such as the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), as well as to countries in the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), in order to share our experiences in a South-South modality. Indeed, we can also share our experiences in a South-North modality with developed countries as well.

Over the next decade, through our coordinated efforts, Bangladesh can emerge as the learning capital of the world on how to tackle climate change and make the country more resilient.

Saleemul Huq is the Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development at the Independent University Bangladesh.



PHOTO: STAR

Change Trust Fund as well as other sources. They have gained a great deal of experience in supporting local communities in different climate vulnerable zones around the country. As a result, Bangladesh has become a globally recognised leader on community based adaptation.

A major aspect of building national capacity to tackle climate change is to ensure that there is the ability to capture the experiential learning and use it to revise and

on next steps. This is a national learning exercise. In fact, the Gobeshona conference has now become an international event for all vulnerable developing countries to come and learn from Bangladesh.

The final, and indeed most important, stakeholders are the ordinary citizens of the country, who all need to understand the problems and also know what to do to tackle them. This involves having an effective media strategy where the journalists working in

Can tourism in Cox's Bazar survive the Covid-19 effect?



ZAHRA CHOWDHURY

COX'S Bazar, the longest sea beach in the world, lies terribly still and vacant. At Laboni Beach, the most popular tourist attraction, in the absence of the crowds, you can hear the wild waves crashing against the shore for a change,

and the magnificent sunsets are perfectly visible to the eye. But the seaside restaurants are no longer serving and hotels guests are no longer building sandcastles, paragliding, surfing or playing volleyball. Local fishermen who go out to sea with their wooden fishing boats are nowhere to be seen.

With the onslaught of Covid-19 weighing on its economy, tourism in Cox's Bazar has witnessed a headlong decline in both domestic and foreign tourist visits after being categorised as a red zone by the government.

According to Pacific Asia Travel Association's (PATA) Bangladesh chapter, till June 2020, the world will face a loss of USD 97.05 billion in the tourism sector alone. The Tour Operator Association of Bangladesh (TOAB), a platform of 678 tour operators, analysed their losses from January to March and estimated that the tourism industry alone may lose up to Tk 6,000 crore this year—from January to December—if the situation does not improve. And this is a relatively optimistic scenario—PATA Bangladesh has predicted that overall, the Bangladesh tourism sector will incur a loss of approximately Tk 9,705 crore till June 2020 due to the pandemic. So what does this mean for all the entities connected to the tourism industry—the transportation systems, airlines, hospitality workers, bus companies, cruise ships and accommodation facilities like hotels, motels and home stays, as well as other tourism service providers like travel agencies or tour operators?

With Cox's Bazar's number of domestic

tourists steadily increasing, newer tourist spots being discovered and overseas tourists trickling in to go to our largely overlooked country, the tourism and hotel industry has thrived for more than half a century. For example, according to Census and Economic Information Center (CEIC) data, Bangladesh's tourism revenue reached USD 357 million in December 2018, compared with USD 348 million in the previous year. According to news reports, with the

by 70 percent. On March 13, the World Travel and Tourism Council said that up to 50 million jobs in the travel and tourism sector are at risk due to the global health crisis. Cox's Bazar was probably the first case that demonstrated the impact of the disease on tourism, as this district's economy is largely dependant on its tourism sector. Against this backdrop, tour operators have invariably come to the conclusion that the sudden outbreak of Covid-19 has plunged

spend in the host community and of course, the money made in tourism is injected into the host community's economy. However, as this contribution is not yet perceived by Bangladeshi policymakers, the budgetary allocation is not being made in the manner expected.

"We have requested the government and the Bangladesh Bank to support us while we attempt to contain the coronavirus impact, especially during peak season, but so far, no concrete actions have been taken. Without government support, it is impossible to survive," said NM Karim, chairman of Ocean Paradise Hotel and Resort in Cox's Bazar, when asked about the government's recovery incentive package. In addition to this, hotel staff from the Sayeman Hotel in Cox's Bazar have mentioned that their (hotels) only source of income at the moment is from development and aid workers who are working with Rohingya refugees and staying at their hotel, but even the number of the development workers from abroad have reduced due to the rapid transmission of Covid-19 in the region.

Those within the industry are therefore profoundly skeptical about how much money will trickle down for the survival of the tourism industry, despite the government's declaration of a bailout programme of about Tk 73,000 crore in five separate loan-scheme incentive packages to various sectors.

Given such uncertainty, it seems that any type of policy development and execution is highly unpredictable. Futile attempts at reopening the tourism industry are already taking place. For instance, the Bangladesh Tourism Corporation (BPC) has decided to offer non-seasonal discounts in hotels and motels located in Cox's Bazar and Kuakata that are under its control. What seems to be lost in Bangladesh's business-as-usual approach to the pandemic is that our best chance to fight the virus is still a properly enforced lockdown, zonal or national. Domestic tourists in Cox's Bazar amount

to 70 to 80 percent of its overall tourism and considering the rapid increase in local Covid-19 cases, they are still not going to be lured there by the 50 percent discounts (well, at least I hope not). Hence, proper planning and policy guidelines are needed from the government.

Most tourism industry insiders in Cox's Bazar, including NM Karim, expressed the need for tax waivers for at least two to three years for the industry to bounce back. This includes tax rebates for resort owners and hoteliers; exemptions of double taxation on food and beverage industries and exemptions of ferry and bridge tolls for tourist-carrying vehicles. Interest free deferred bank loans for investment in tourism parks, resorts, picnic spots, etc may also be offered. In the longer term, more focus should be given to domestic tourism as part of the development phase. NM Karim further added, "considering the longevity of this health crisis, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in line with the Ministry of Health guidelines, such as the one published by Ocean Paradise, can be useful for the hospitality sector. Once local tourists see that safety precautions are being maintained, they may be encouraged to visit Cox's Bazar again."

It is indeed unfortunate that such an unforeseen adversity has befallen the tourism sector of Bangladesh, especially since in recent years, it has come to be regarded as a, although marginal, driver for national economic development. However, all hope should not be lost, since the industry itself is a resilient one. However, the Cox's Bazar tourism sector needs an extra dose of resilience through effective budgetary allocations. As expected, almost all business sectors are facing an array of complexities created by the coronavirus crisis. To overcome this situation, the entire tourism industry and the policymakers should go through a proper planning process to restart their activities.

Zahra Chowdhury is a graduate of the University of Manchester, UK.



STAR FILE PHOTO

government's announcement of Cox's Bazar as a Covid-19 red zone, daily transactions of Tk 25 to 30 crore are no longer taking place. But the hotels still have to pay staff salaries and maintenance costs.

The cancellation of domestic and foreign flights has contributed to this crisis. At the same time, travel visas for tourists from all countries have been suspended for the time being. According to a report in this daily, Mohibul Haque, senior secretary of the civil aviation and tourism ministry, said the number of domestic tourists have fallen

the tourism sector of Bangladesh into its worst-ever evolving challenge, and the sector requires an immediate recovery incentive package.

Tourism has a multiplier effect on society, even though the result isn't necessarily measurable. Its extensive contributions must be justified by successful developments in communities. This includes increased skilled and unskilled employment in the community, such as food vendors, souvenir sellers and retailers. Tourism also leads to an increased standard of living because tourists

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



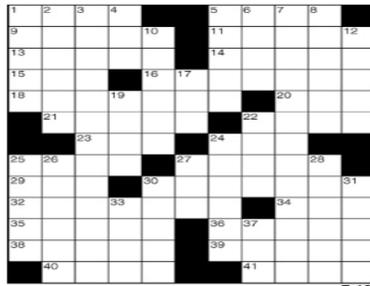
July 15, 1965
Close-up pictures of Mars provided by Mariner 4

Mariner 4, an uncrewed space probe launched by NASA in 1964, flew by Mars and returned close-up pictures of its surface on this day in 1965, the pictures proving that the planet's rumoured canals were actually illusions.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ACROSS | 27 Light circlers | 5 Person with promise |
| 1 Mexican region | 29 Mimic collections | 6 Oil org. |
| 5 Meadow group | 30 Serving | 7 Behaved |
| 9 Sapphire Kin | 32 Softens | 8 Jacket part |
| 11 Milky gems | 34 Auction buy | 10 Hubble and Moses |
| 13 Identified | 35 Wilson of the Beach Boys | 12 Car type |
| 14 Scuffle | 36 Baling need | 17 Old auto |
| 15 Mont Blanc, for one | 38 Yellow-gray | 19 April forecast |
| 16 In ruins | 39 Muscular power | 22 Puts away |
| 18 More suspicious | 40 Spots | 24 Isn't modest |
| 20 Juan Peron's wife | 41 Hardy heroine | 25 Door parts |
| 21 Hersey's "A Bell for—" | | 26 Verdi works |
| 22 Perfect place | DOWN | 27 Kitten cry |
| 23 Third word of "America" | 1 Hackneyed | 28 Go pieces |
| 24 Diamond club | 2 Flowery shrub | 30 Theater awards |
| 25 Paul's collaborator | 3 Didn't wait one's turn | 31 Frets |
| | 4 Live and breathe | 33 Store in the hold |
| | | 37 Humorist |

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

S A G A T A G U P
T W E R P A T O N S
R A T E D F O R D S
A R I J E T P O R T
W E T B A R G E L
P O P E U T E S
D I N S O L O
E N S N E T P A Y
P E T F O O D I C E
A T A L L O B A M A
R A G E D N I N E R
T R E E S

BETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott



PREMIER LEAGUE

Star Sports Select 1
Man City v Bournemouth
Live from 11:00pm
Arsenal v Liverpool
Live from 1:15am (Thursday)

Star Sports Select 2

Newcastle v Tottenham
Live from 11:00pm
SERIE A
Ten 2
AC Milan v Parma

Live from 11:30pm

Sassuolo v Juventus
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)
Ten 1
Udinese v Lazio
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)



The athletics track at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, the premier sporting venue of the country, has developed massive cracks over the years. Installed in 2006 at a cost of Tk 10 crore, the track bore the brunt of a number of entertainment shows that were staged at this venue, leaving their indelible marks. Although the National Sports Council patched up the cracks four years ago, they opened up again, forcing the last national athletics meet to be shifted to Chattogram. A new track is supposed to be installed under a Tk 100cr mega-project for the whole venue, but it is uncertain when work on the project will start.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BCB takes first step towards resumption

SPORTS REPORTER



There seemed to be a major development towards the resumption of cricket in Bangladesh yesterday as the BCB took a first step by allowing interested cricketers across the country to avail the board's training facilities.

Cricket in Bangladesh has been halted since mid-March due to the coronavirus outbreak, with the BCB even discouraging cricketers from training outside their homes given the environment in the country.

Although the board's stance on that topic remains unchanged, there were a few cricketers practising individually of their own accord. So, the BCB decided to provide individual facilities to interested players.

"There are a few cricketers who have been training individually using other facilities here and there so we decided to provide the BCB's own facilities to the cricketers who are interested in individual training not just in Dhaka, but across the country by taking safety precautions," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

"However, we haven't found a significant number of cricketers who are actually willing to practise at the moment considering their

safety. We have spoken to the majority of the prominent cricketers, but the board is still discouraging cricketers [from training outdoors] and following government instructions. The board has urged cricketers to stay at home as we have provided gym equipment to those interested in working on their fitness from home."

The BCB's medical department have asked for a list of players who are interested to practise individually. They will be provided with training protocols from the BCB by Saturday before resuming practice.

Recently, Mushfiqur Rahim was seen practising individually at a ground near his home while a few others such as Mohammad Saifuddin and Taskin Ahmed were also seen training outdoors.

The BCB are also in talks with Sri Lanka Cricket over a tour of the High Performance squad in September this year. Chief selector Minhajul Abedin said they have finalised the squad, but that everything would depend on the government's green light.

"Our HP team programme takes place every year and this is one of those tours. We are in a very primary and premature discussion with the Sri Lankan board. However, a lot will depend on the situation and whether it is in our favour as we are in a primary stage at the moment."

Ramos irked by lack of focus

REUTERS, Granada

Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos criticised his side for falling into the trap of complacency in Monday's 2-1 win at Granada in La Liga as they were left desperate for the final whistle after strolling into a two-goal lead in the opening 16 minutes.

Zinedine Zidane's side relaxed after goals from Ferland Mendy and Karim Benzema had got them off to a dream start and they nearly paid for it as Granada peppered their area in the second half after Darwin Machis pulled a goal back.

"Without realising it, we made the mistake of letting our guard down after getting a scoreline which we would have been very happy with," Ramos said.

"It wasn't good enough and today you can't beat anyone unless you are fully focused for 90 minutes. We won the first half and lost the second and although we got the victory we did things we should never do, like conceding a cheap goal."

Lifting the new normal's burden

ANISUR RAHMAN

While athletes from the majority of disciplines are eagerly waiting for the situation to improve so they can get back to formal training, weightlifters across the country are paving the way as they returned to full-fledged training despite the increasing number of COVID-19 cases.

According to the Bangladesh Weightlifting Federation's (BWF) statistics, 198 weightlifters, including 53 females, from 16 clubs have resumed training at their respective training centers in 13 districts: Gazipur, Mymensingh, Khulna, Bagerhat, Kishoreganj, Kushtia, Dinajpur, Naogaon, Rajshahi, Meherpur, Narail, Pirojpur and Dhaka. Five services teams have started training with their respective national players.

The Youth and Sports Ministry last week sought permission from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to resume training for non-contact disciplines, but the BWF did not wait for that approval given the nature of the discipline, which inevitably maintains social distance.

Like other disciplines, weightlifters also spent idle time while maintaining fitness at home during the lockdown following the coronavirus outbreak, but they did not waste any time after the government opened everything up on a limited scale on May 30.

"We even practiced unofficially sometimes during the shutdown because our target is to win a gold medal from the national championships," Azharul Islam, the founder of Azhar Academy in Kishoreganj, told The Daily Star, adding that local administration had been helping tremendously.

"As we could not conduct training uninterrupted during the shutdown, we started training on May 30 to shake off the rust as we have 15 weightlifters, including seven females, who are eligible for the national championships," said discus-thrower Azharul, who is still competing, before adding that his academy's Marzia Akter

Ikra represented Bangladesh in the Youth Championships in Uzbekistan in 2015.

"There are even less participants now but we are conducting training maintaining social distancing with four to five weightlifters in a single session," said Mohammad Sohel, coach of Modern Bodybuilding Club in Dinajpur.

Mymensingh's Muslim Institute and Weightlifting Club coach and former national player, Biddut Kumar Roy, who also coaches Bangladesh Ansar and takes care of Ansar players at the grassroots level, said: "We kept training halted for the first month of the shutdown and afterwards, we resumed with

the participation of budding players -- five male and four female weightlifters, only two of whom had participated in the national championships last year."

However, renowned coach Moazzem Hossain has kept training closed at the Moazzem Weightlifting Club in Meherpur to curb the spread of the virus and is thinking of resuming after Eid-ul-Adha.

"As a precautionary measure, I have kept the club closed. But the weightlifters are doing physical exercises at home while a couple of players are training with instruments. I am thinking whether to resume training after Eid-ul-adha," said Moazzem, whose clubs has produced a total of 244 medals, including 92 golds, in the junior and senior championships since 1980.

The BWF has come forward as well by providing equipment to clubs and service teams. It is also planning to hold online competitions in August or September to recognise the clubs' efforts.

BWF vice-president Mohyuddin Ahmed said that the federation was providing equipment to clubs who have their own places to conduct training with the aim of spreading weightlifting across the country. He added that the federation gymnasium is open and that national players can avail the facilities if they want.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Weightlifters at the Azhar Academy in Kishoreganj and the Muslim Institute and Weightlifting Club in Mymensingh continue training.



Buttler safe but Denly faces axe

AFP, London



England are set to keep faith with Jos Buttler despite defeat to West Indies in the first Test of a three-match series, but time may be up for Joe Denly.

Captain Joe Root is set to return for the second Test starting on Thursday at Old Trafford after missing the four-wicket defeat in Southampton to attend the birth of his second child.

The England selectors have big decisions to make after again losing the game with the bat rather than the ball despite the controversial omission of Stuart Broad.

An under-par 204 in the first innings and the loss of five wickets for 30 runs on the fourth evening set the platform for the tourists to take first blood.

Denly and Buttler were involved in both passages and find themselves increasingly under pressure for their places -- the former being squeezed by Root's return and Zak Crawley's fine 76 on Saturday, the latter from Surrey gloveman Ben Foakes.

SHORT CORNER

Massive surprise for Akinfenwa

Wycombe Wanderers striker Adebayo Akinfenwa has received a congratulatory message from Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp after his side sealed promotion to the Championship.

Wanderers beat Oxford United 2-1 in the League One playoff final at Wembley Stadium on Monday to secure their place in the English second-tier for the first time.

The 38-year-old Akinfenwa joked



in his post-match interview that Klopp, who guided Liverpool to the Premier League title this season, could "hit me up on WhatsApp" to celebrate their successes together.

"Hello big man, congratulations," Klopp says in a video posted by Akinfenwa on Twitter.

"I'm pretty sure your whole life at least a Championship player and now finally, you are there. Well done. Great, great victory. Even in these strange times, I hope you celebrate appropriately." -- REUTERS

Castro chooses camping over Glory

Perth Glory captain and star midfielder Diego Castro has opted out of the remainder of the A-League

season, citing an "unacceptable health risk" as Australia battles fresh outbreaks of COVID-19, and gone touring in a campervan with his family.

The 38-year-old Spaniard declined to join his teammates in a New South Wales hub ahead of Friday's restart of the A-League which was shut down in March, the Glory said on Tuesday. A-League broadcaster Fox Sports reported that Castro was touring Western Australia state in a campervan with his family and had not been in contact with the club for some time.

The loss of playmaker Castro is a huge blow for Glory, who sit fifth in the league with six regular season matches before the playoffs. -- REUTERS

No caddie, no problem for Warren

Marc Warren captured his first

European Tour title in six years on Sunday with a one-shot victory in the Austrian Open despite playing without his caddie who failed to pass a coronavirus test in time.

The Scotsman birdied two of the last four holes for his first title since 2014, when he triumphed in Denmark.

However, victory was achieved despite having to carry his own bags over the four rounds after his caddie failed to meet coronavirus protocols and was barred from the event at the Diamond Country Club.

"Carrying my bag this week probably helped tone it down a little, just going out and playing and seeing what happens. The result couldn't have been any better," said the champion.

"Hopefully this is the one and only time, no matter what I say, I do enjoy the caddie's company." -- AFP



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Ref: eGP/Goods/JSC-2020 Foil Pack_White Printing/002

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the following procurements:

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Tender description	Publication date and time	Closing date and time
1	478693	e-GP/Goods/JSC-2020 Foil Pack_White Printing/002	1: Aluminium Foil paper envelope outer size 9.1 inch X 12 inch make by 100 micron 5 foil paper per set 12 aluminium foil 9 LLDPE 75 other 04 3 side Security sealing by heat machine minimum 10mm one side open outside and inner side silver color without any print. Quantity-10000 Ten Thousand pcs. 2: Aluminium Foil paper envelope outer size 16.5 inch X 12 inch make by 100 micron 5 foil paper per set 12 aluminium foil 9 LLDPE 75 other 04 3 side Security sealing by heat machine minimum 10mm one side open outside and inner side silver color without any print. Quantity - 50000 Fifty Thousand pcs. 3. Supply of White Printing Paper. Size 27 inch x 34 inch - 40 Pound Paper and 65 GSM. Quantity 1500 Reams. 4. Supply of White Printing Paper. Size 26 inch x 40 inch - 46 Pound Paper and 65 GSM. Quantity 2700 Reams.	15-07-2020	08-08-2020

For detailed information please visit the following link.
<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>
This is online tenders, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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SHAH CEMENT

Flood washes away roads, embankments

14 rivers flow above danger level; forecast grim

STAR REPORT

Many embankments, roads and homesteads have been damaged in many districts of the country due to flood, causing immense sufferings to people.

Water of the Brahmaputra, the Jamuna, the Padma and the Meghna may further rise, according to a bulletin of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC).

Some 14 rivers across the country were flowing above danger marks, said the bulletin.

Around 30 villages in Sadar upazila have been flooded freshly as around 400 meters of Dharla's alternative dyke collapsed in Kurigram.

"Our entire union has been submerged after the dyke collapsed," said Omar Farooq, chairman of Holokhana Union Parishad in the upazila.

He also alleged that the dyke collapsed due to negligence of Water Development Board (WDB).

However, Ariful Islam, executive engineer of Kurigram WDB, said locals cut the dyke indiscriminately. It had made the dyke vulnerable and collapse.

The Dharla was flowing 100 cm above the danger level at Dharla River Bridge point in Kurigram Sadar upazila and the Brahmaputra was flowing 85 cm above the danger level at Chilmari point.

In Lalmonirhat, eight villages at Gaddimari union in Hatibandha upazila have been flooded by the Teesta as around 100 meters river-side road damaged.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Since floodwaters broke the Sunamganj-Tahirpur road, motorcyclists have been forced to carry their vehicles on boats to cross the area. Inset, the road in front of the police super's office in Sunamganj got inundated after the area was hit by flash floods triggered by heavy rain and upstream water.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

AL runners victorious in Bogura-1, Jashore-6

STAR REPORT

Awami League candidates Shahdhara Mannan and Shahin Chakladar have respectively won the by-polls to Bogura-1 and Jashore-6 constituencies amid low voter turnout due to flood and the coronavirus outbreak.

In Bogura-1 (Sonatala and Sariakandi upazilas), five candidates, including AL candidate Mannan and JP candidate Moksedul Alam, took part in the by-election.

Mannan bagged 145,295 and her nearest contender independent candidate Md Yasir Rahamatullah Intaz got 1,563 votes. Jatiya Party candidate Moksedul Alam received 1,251 votes.

In Jashore-6 (Keshabpur), only two candidates contested for the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

SEX TRADE RACKET CID looking for cohorts of Azam Khan

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Alamin Hossain alias Diamond used to call himself a dance teacher and had been running a so-called dance academy in the capital's Mirpur for the last eight years.

He had some female staffers who were assigned to bring young and underprivileged girls to the academy for "dance practice". Once the girls were in, Alamin would offer them jobs abroad with lucrative pay scheme.

Those who would fall into this trap were taken to meet Azam Khan, the ringleader of the sex-trafficking racket that police recently busted, for "final selection".

After getting confirmation from Azam, his accomplices would manage passports and other documents to send the girls to Dubai.

When the girls would

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Scientists discover tiny dinosaur ancestor



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A pocket-sized, insect-eating reptile that lived 237 million years ago was an ancestor of giant dinosaurs that went on to dominate the world, newly studied fossils suggest.

Kongonaphon kely, whose scientific name means "tiny bug slayer," stood at just 10cm (4ins) tall and 40cm (16ins) long. It inhabited a floodplain region of what is now southwestern Madagascar during the Triassic period, according to scientists who unveiled the species this week.

A long-legged and possibly bipedal predator, the Kongonaphon was a member of a group called Ornithodira, which evolved into dinosaurs and their flying cousins pterosaurs. The origins of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

DIGITAL LAND SURVEY Ecneec gives go ahead to 2 projects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To reduce public sufferings and ensure transparency, the government is going to get the land-related services of the whole country, except the three hill districts, automated.

People are likely to get the services from mid-2025.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) yesterday approved two projects involving around Tk 2,410 crore in this regard.

The Ecneec meeting, presided over by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was held via video conference.

Under the project titled "Increase Capacity of Department of Land Records and Surveys to Conduct Digital Land Survey", the land of Barguna and Patuakhali will be surveyed digitally,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Special envoys to arab countries

July 15, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

ALLOWANCES FOR DEPENDENTS OF STRANDED BANGLAHEES

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today issues an order that the dependants of the civilians and member of the armed forces now detained in Pakistan should be paid subsistence allowance by the government. The subsistence allowance will be to the extent of one-third of their pay, subject to a minimum of Tk 100 and maximum of Tk 400.

TWO SPECIAL ENVOYS APPOINTED

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad announces today that two special emissaries of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will very soon visit

Arab and African countries to establish direct contacts and project Bangladesh's cause to these countries. The special emissaries will also create opinion in those countries for the repatriation of Bangalees stranded in Pakistan. Iqbal Athar, a former Pakistani non-Bangalee Ambassador in Sweden who resigned after the army crackdown in Bangladesh protesting against the genocide will be the prime minister's special envoy to the Arab countries. MH Ahmed, an officer on special duty in Bangladesh Foreign Office and former Pakistani Ambassador to Lebanon, will visit the



SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Handcuffed body found in Chattogram

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police found a man's handcuffed body in Chattogram's Anwara upazila early yesterday.

As the victim's face, aged between 25 and 30, is decomposed beyond

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PRAYER TIMING JULY 15

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-15	12-45	5-00	6-54	8-15
JAMAAT 4-50	1-15	5-15	6-58	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Police and the members of leftist alliance Pragatishil Shangathan face off at Zero Point near the health ministry yesterday. The left activists had gone there to lay siege to the ministry building to protest the corruption in the healthcare system, which is being increasingly exposed in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

CORONAVIRUS TREATMENT Antibodies from llamas can help

AGENCIES

UK researchers are celebrating a breakthrough in efforts to develop an effective coronavirus treatment based upon the immune response of llamas.

Antibodies derived from llamas have been found to block coronavirus from entering human cells, in a study published in Nature Structural & Molecular Biology on Monday.

Laboratory tests have shown the antibodies can fight the coronavirus - and scientists hope to be able to push the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Millions back into lockdown

India's tech hub, other towns re-impose curbs, California rolls back reopening plans

AGENCIES

Cities and states on several continents re-imposed restrictions as new coronavirus infections spread like wildfire.

India's IT hub Bangalore went into a new week-long lockdown yesterday, while new economic figures from Singapore to Britain revealed the shocking extent of the damage wreaked by the global pandemic.

California drastically rolled back its reopening plans on Monday and ordered all indoor restaurants, bars and cinemas to close again as cases soared across America's richest and most populous state.

Latin America on Monday recorded the world's second-highest death

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Congratulations

Iftekharul Islam
Vice-Chairman
Uttara Bank Limited

Mr. Iftekharul Islam, the Managing Director of Aftab Group, a young entrepreneur and industrialist, has been elected the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of **Uttara Bank Limited**, Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee and Chairman of the Risk Management Committee.

Mr. Iftekharul Islam is also the Chairman of Uttara Bank Securities Limited (Brokerage House), a subsidiary company of **Uttara Bank Limited** & UB Capital and Investment Limited a Merchant Bank which is also a subsidiary company of Uttara Bank.

He is also a member of the Executive Committee and General Body of the Bank Owners Association "Bangladesh Association of Banks". We heartily congratulate him for his success.

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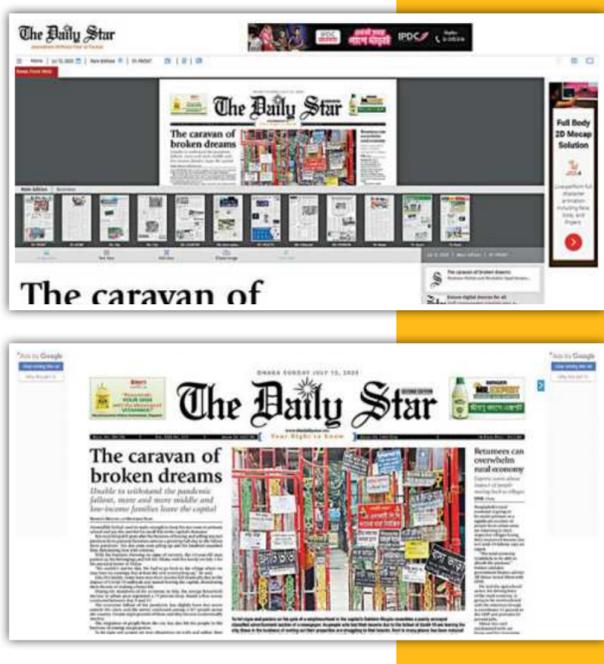
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