



ZIDANE HAILED AS REAL MADRID WIN 34TH LA LIGA TITLE, MESSI LEFT FRUSTRATED
SEE PAGE 11



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SCHOOL CLOSURE AMID PANDEMIC

Dropout rise a major concern

Govt, edn experts fear thousands of students may drop out of schools; it may also lead to rise in child marriage, child labour

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The ongoing closure of schools due to the coronavirus pandemic is increasing chances that thousands of marginalised students across the country might have to drop out and engage in child labour, warn government documents and educationists.

Among those students, girls are more likely to discontinue studies, which can also lead to child marriages, they said.

Last week, a Save the Children report also warned that almost 10 million children across the world may never return to school after the pandemic.

The report said children in 12 countries are at extremely high risk of dropping out of school forever. In another 28 countries, including Bangladesh, children are at moderate or high risk of dropout. "Girls are at increased exposure to gender-based violence and risk of child marriage," the report added.

There are 1.05 crore students in

secondary schools across the country. Among them, 54 percent are girls. At the primary level, 51 percent of 1.73 crore students are girls.

Speaking on the issue, educationists said checking the dropout and child marriage rates would be a massive task for the government.

They called for some immediate steps, including building awareness on the issue, strengthening monitoring, and ensuring ceaseless stipend programmes, to tackle the situation.

"We all know that the rates of dropout and child marriage will certainly go up in the coronavirus fallout. It will be a challenge for the government to keep the rates at a minimum level," said Campaign for Popular Education (Campe) Executive Director Rasheda K Choudhury.

WARNINGS

The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) finalised its stakeholder engagement

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Sitting in a school van, Md Monir runs his makeshift shop on a road in the capital's Kakrail area. The 50-year-old van driver, who used to transport schoolchildren, has been operating the small business since late March when he lost his source of income following the closure of a nearby school due to the Covid-19 pandemic. He now has a meager daily income of Tk150-200 to support his four-member family.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BANGLADESH UPDATE



3,034

New cases in 24hrs



1,99,357

Total cases



2,547

Deaths



1,08,725

Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE



591,157

Deaths



13,841,890

Total cases

Covid cases close to 2 lakh mark

51 more die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the total number of Covid-19 cases in the country is set to cross 2 lakh milestone today, record shows, it has taken only four weeks to cross the second one lakh mark.

It took over 14 weeks since the detection of first case on March 08 to reach one lakh mark. On June 18, the total of number of coronavirus cases was 102,292.

Between June 18 and July 17, 97,065 more cases were recorded.

During yesterday's briefing Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said the total number of case till yesterday stood at 1,99,357 with newly detected 3,034 cases in 24-hours.

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HEALTH RESEARCH AT UNIVERSITIES

Knowledge UNUTILISED

Fund shortage, under-equipped lab key obstacles

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Hundreds of biological science and technology graduates of the country cannot apply their specialised knowledge in practical settings due to the lack of well-equipped laboratories and funding.

Existing government policies also do not reinforce scientific research on viruses and other pathogens, immunology, vaccine development and biotechnology.

A postgraduate student of Dhaka University's microbiology department, wishing anonymity, said for a research project he wanted to study dengue virus at DU's BSL-2 laboratory, a well-equipped laboratory of the country.

"However, one of my professors said, 'Do you want to kill us all? Our laboratory is not suitable for working with these viruses.' So, I had to abandon that project."

Prof Muhammad Manjurul Karim of DU's microbiology department, said, "The BLS-2 laboratories in the university are not fit for research on highly contagious live

viruses such as Ebola, dengue or Covid-19. For that, we need BSL-3 or 4 laboratories."

He asserted that their curriculum is designed in a way that graduates can both detect a virus and develop vaccines.

"Our extensive courses on virology include structure and replication process of virus, infectious behaviour of virus, host-virus interaction, genetic morphology, mutational behaviour, bio-informatics and genomics."

Though DU's microbiology department can conduct in-silico analysis for vaccine design, they don't have the lab set-up to actually do the task, he added.

According to the University Grants Commission, at least 19 public and four private universities currently offer graduate or postgraduate courses on subjects including biotechnology, genetic engineering, microbiology, biochemistry and molecular biology.

"Most of the contractors, who build the university structures, don't know how to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Boy dies by 'suicide' after cops 'pick up' mother, sister

Sub-inspector closed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenage boy allegedly died by suicide hours after police assaulted and picked up his mother and sister in Agrabad area of Chattogram yesterday.

Police recovered the body of Salman Islam Maruf, 18, hanging from the ceiling at his home in the morning.

Sub-inspector Helal Uddin of Double Mooring Police Station whose team picked up his mother and sister was closed to Dampara Police Line yesterday in connection with the incident.

According to the University Grants Commission, at least 19 public and four private universities currently offer graduate or postgraduate courses on subjects including biotechnology, genetic engineering, microbiology, biochemistry and molecular biology.

Locals said Maruf beat up a young man - who introduced himself as a police informant -

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Three shot dead in clash over supremacy

Another beaten to death by mob after the killings in Khulna city

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Three villagers were killed and seven others injured after a local Awami League leader and his two brothers allegedly opened fire on them at Moshiali village of Atra-Gilatla Eastern Gate area in Khulna city on Thursday night.

The shooting took place around 8:30pm over leadership of a local madrasa management committee.

Attacker Zakaria Sheikh was suspended last night from the committee Khan Zahan Ali Thana Awami League.

Angry locals then beat to death a close associate of Zakaria Sheikh.

The men shot dead were Mohammad Nazrul Islam, 45, Golam Rosul, 30, and Saiful Islam, 27.

Nazrul Islam and Golam Rosul died at the scene while Saiful Islam died at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

The man killed by the mob was Jihad Hossain, 38. He also died at the hospital.

The feuding parties are members of a clan.

Locals said, Zakaria, former co-publicity secretary of Khan Zahan Ali area Awami League, and his brothers detained a villager named Mojibor Sheikh and handed him to police on Thursday evening alleging that the latter possessed illegal firearms.

The incident angered locals and about 50 people then

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PHOTO ON PAGE 12

FAHIM MURDER

His personal assistant arrested

Reports US media

AGENCIES

The personal assistant of Fahim Saleh, co-founder of ride-sharing venture Pathao, was arrested yesterday in the murder of the 33-year-old tech entrepreneur in his Manhattan apartment, New York's news media reported.

Saleh's body was found dismembered and decapitated in his luxury condo on Tuesday, New York police said.

The suspect, identified as Tyrese Devon Haspil, 21, is expected to be charged in the murder, several media outlets reported, including the New York Times, NBC's New York TV station, the New York Daily News and the New York Post.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Prof Emajuddin passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned political scientist and former vice chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed died at a hospital in the capital early yesterday.

The eminent educationist, known as a pro-BNP intellectual, was 87.

He fell sick at midnight and was taken to LabAid Hospital in Dhanmondi where he breathed his last around 7:30am. He had been suffering from complications associated with old-age.

Prof Emajuddin left behind four children and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

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A sample collector takes a nap in a booth at the capital's Mugda General Hospital yesterday as there is nobody around to give samples for Covid-19 testing. Staffers at the hospital said only 15 people collected tokens till noon, although 150 were available for the day. A very few turned up there to give samples in the last few days. Inset, a man sits in the almost empty waiting area before giving samples.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

COVID-19 HOSPITALS

Some may halt services for a lack of patients

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

While the number of infections and deaths from Covid-19 continues to rise in the county, the health directorate mulls over suspending operations of some hospitals dedicated to treating coronavirus patients due to a "lack of patients".

The Directorate General of Health Services has planned to initially suspend operations of some hospitals in the capital and later on outside the city, said sources at DGHS.

An announcement to this end is likely to be made next week.

However, the Covid-19 dedicated hospitals would resume offering services to general patients once they are relieved of their special duties.

Speaking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, a top DGHS official said, "Some of the hospitals either have no patients or have a very few, but their total manpower remains deployed. It is a waste of resources. So we are planning to suspend the activities of some of the Covid-19 dedicated hospitals."

Experts, however, said it was too early for the authorities to make such a plan as neither the rate of infection nor that of death has declined.

They suggested the government take steps to build confidence among the people about getting treatment in hospitals without any hassle.

Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director of disease control at the health ministry, said the government should not suspend the activities of the hospitals. It should motivate patients to go to hospitals which would ultimately cut the number of deaths, he added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Shahed faked his own Covid positive report

His close aide prepared it for him, say investigators

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed admitted that he made a fake certificate to show him Covid-19 positive, investigators said yesterday.

He prepared the certificate through one of his trusted aides. He asked his aide to collect samples from a Covid-19 positive patient first and then prepare a certificate for him using the sample, they added.

Shahed disclosed this during interrogation, said DB officials.

During a remand hearing in a Dhaka court on Thursday, Shahed alias Shahed Karim claimed that he was Covid-19 positive.

Detectives, however, said he staged the drama of being infected with coronavirus so that he could gain sympathy and police did not get close to him for interrogation.

"Shahed did not have any Covid-19 symptoms," Kazi Shafiqul Alam, deputy commissioner of Detective Branch (DB) Uttara division, told The Daily Star yesterday when he was asked about the matter.

Yesterday was the first day of 10-day remand for Shahed. He tried to sneeze after putting tissue papers inside his nose, according to investigation sources.

He revealed his whereabouts and the journey from Dhaka to Satkhira, said investigators.

Shahed told detectives that he first tried to communicate with some influential people he knew after Rab raided Regent Hospital on July 6.

But when he found the situation went beyond his control, he attempted to leave the country through Akhaura border first but failed, said a DB high official, requesting anonymity.

Shahed returned to Dhaka and stayed for a day. He then went to Cox's Bazar and took shelter in a friend's house.

Investigators said Shahed went to his friend's house in Cox's Bazar from Dhaka in a luxury car which had a fake registration plate so that law enforcers could not get details of his owner.

Investigators are now conducting drives to recover the car.

Then Shahed went to Jashore to cross the border, but he failed again. He finally decided to cross the border from his home town in Satkhira, said an official, quoting him as saying.

A Rab team arrested Shahed in Satkhira's Debhata upazila on Wednesday while he was trying to cross a river to flee to India on a boat.

DC Shafiqul said Shahed is giving different types of information during interrogation, but they are trying to get details of his associates, who are involved in his fraudulent business.

"We got some clues and we are now analysing these so that we can take action against the offenders," he added.

Three shot dead

FROM PAGE 1

Sheikh Jahangir Hossain, former chairman of Atr-Gilatla Union Parishad, who was present at the spot, told The Daily Star that the three brothers were very influential in the area and there was no case against them.

Niloy Sheikh, nephew of the victim Nazrul, told The Daily Star that Zakaria and his men were upset after losing the managing committee election of Mashiali Alia Madrasa.

Tasadbar Ali, another relative of Nazrul, said after losing the election, he threatened to kill Nazrul and several others.

Zafarin is an expelled vice-president of Khulna city Chhatra League.

Mollah Jahangir Hossain, deputy commissioner of Khulna Metropolitan Police, said one of Zakaria's associates was arrested in Jessore. Several teams are working to arrest other suspects.

Filing of a case is underway, he added.

Prof Emajuddin passes away

FROM PAGE 1

His first namaz-e-janaza was held at Bajme Kaderia Jame Masjid at Katobon following Jummah prayers and a second one was held at Dhaka University central mosque after Asr prayers. He was buried next to his wife at Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard.

Emajuddin, who taught political sciences at Dhaka University, was awarded the Ekushey Padak in 1992 for his contribution to education. He wrote numerous books on national politics.

He was born in 1933 in Maldaha, West Bengal. His family moved to Chapainawabganj after the partition of India. He started his career as a teacher in Rajshahi College. Upon completion of higher studies abroad, he joined Dhaka University in 1970.

A language movement veteran, Emajuddin served as the 21st vice chancellor of Dhaka University, from 1992-1996. He retired in 1996.

Emajuddin served two terms as pro-vice chancellor before becoming VC.

He became vice-chancellor of the University of Development Alternative in 2002. He also worked with the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.

He was known at home and abroad for his contributions to education and creative writing. He won the Mahakal Krishni Chinta Sangha Gold Medal, National Literary Parliament Gold Medal, and Zia Cultural Gold Medal

On July 7, a mobile court of Rab sealed off Regent Hospital, owned by Shahed, in the capital's Uttara on charges of issuing several thousand fake Covid-19 test certificates and swindling a huge amount of money.

A day later, Inspector Zulhas Mia of Rab-1 filed a case with Uttara Paschim Police Station against Shahed and 16 others.

Lt Col Ashique Billah, director of Rab's legal and media wing, said, "We have already written to the Police Headquarters requesting it to hand us over the charge of investigation in Shahed's case. But it may take some time as it also requires the home ministry's permission."

CHEQUE BOOK, CAR SEIZED
Meanwhile, Rab arrested two people, recovered a cheque book, signed by Shahed, and his private car from their possession in Narsinghapur of Ashulia on Thursday.

The arrestees are Gias Uddin, 61, and Brahmodul Hasan, 40. Gias is the brother-in-law of Regent Group Managing Director Masud Parvez.

The two were hiding in Ashulia area, said Lt Col Ashique.

In another development, Rab yesterday formed an investigating wing at its HQ to provide support to the victims, cheated by Shahed. The victims can give information, file complaints or seek legal support regarding the Regent issue by calling 01777720211 number of the investigating wing, said Sujoy Sarker, senior assistant director of Rab's legal and media wing.

Seoul revokes permits for N Korean defector groups

AFP, Seoul

South Korea yesterday revoked the operation permits of two defector groups for sending anti-North Korea leaflets across the border, officials said, after Pyongyang furiously denounced their activities and blew up a liaison office.

The move is likely to trigger debate over potential infringements on freedom of expression in the democratic South.

The leaflets -- usually attached to hot air balloons or floated in bottles -- criticise North Korean leader Kim Jong Un over human rights abuses and his nuclear ambitions.

But by sending them, the two groups "severely hindered" the government's "efforts for unification", Seoul's unification ministry said in a statement.



A man is running to safety as three buses compete against each other to reach a bus stop on Topkhana Road near the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday. Such rash driving to pick passengers often leads to fatal accidents.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Dropout rise a major concern

FROM PAGE 1

plan on the Covid-19 situation late last month. In the plan, the government body warned of a rise in dropout rates.

An increase in school dropout is most likely to be linked to increased incidences of early marriage, adolescent fertility, and child labour, it said.

The government's "Covid-19 Response Plan for Education Sector" also warned that dropout rates at primary and secondary levels were likely to go up, especially among girls and children from the disadvantaged families.

Following a questionnaire survey, participated by 126 teachers and NGO workers in the education sector, Campe said school dropout will increase as an impact of the Covid-19.

Of the respondents, 84 percent said dropouts will rise in schools, while 80 percent warned of increased absenteeism and irregular attendance at educational institutions. Seventy-one percent said the problem of child labour will aggravate while 58 percent opined there will be a rise in incidents of children marriage.

A BLEAK FUTURE

Although successive government efforts, including providing stipends to students, free distribution of textbooks up to secondary level and other rigorous campaigns, helped check dropout and child marriage rates in recent years, different government and rights group paint a bleak future.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), dropout rate at secondary level was 37.62 percent in 2018. The

dropout rate among girls was 40 percent against 36 percent among their male counterparts.

The overall dropout rate was 61 percent in 2008.

The DPE said dropout rate in primary education was 49.3 percent in 2008, which came down to 17.9 percent last year.

Quoting a survey, officials of the National Institute of Population Research and Training said 65 percent girls got married in 2010 while they were below 18. It decreased to 59 percent last year.

But Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) warns of an increase in child marriages amid the pandemic, which has brought on an economic crisis.

In its latest monthly report, released on July 12, the NGO said 462 girls fell victims to child marriage in June, compared to 170 in May.

The organisation blamed lack of monitoring by local government authorities amid the pandemic for increased child marriage. Closure of schools, social insecurity and poverty are also responsible, it said.

HOW TO TACKLE DROPOUT

The response plan, prepared by the government, proposed strengthening monitoring mechanism and tracking and bringing children back to school to prevent dropout.

It also said re-enrollment campaigns, including participatory community actions and awareness-raising programmes, will be launched.

Rasheda K Choudhury said schools should analyse situations to identify students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out.

Head teachers and other teachers should maintain contact with such vulnerable students, she said.

Rasheda also said financial assistance to students through government stipend programmes should be ceaseless to encourage students to stay in classrooms.

Contacted, Yusuf Ali, project director of Primary Education Stipend Project (third phase), said they cleared all due stipends by May. Students will get money from the current installment this month, he said.

Under the PESIP, about 1.37 crore elementary students get stipends in four installments in a year in January, April, July and October.

Again, forty percent girls and 20 percent boys, who are among the poorest, from among all the enrolled students or secondary level get stipends under the Coordinated Stipend Programme Scheme. A total of 34 lakh beneficiaries are targeted to hand the benefit in two installments.

Farid Ahmed, assistant director of the project, said due to the coronavirus fallout, they were yet to provide stipends to 20 lakh students.

Secondary and Higher Education Secretary Mahub Hossain said they were looking for ways to reduce the dropout rate. "We will finalise a strategy on how to tackle the situation. We will focus on it."

Primary and Mass Education Senior Secretary Akram-Al-Hossain acknowledged that putting brakes on dropout and child marriage would be a great challenge for the government.

"These [rates] will go up as poverty will increase. We've calculated all these. We will take necessary steps," he said.

His personal assistant arrested

FROM PAGE 1

Haspil worked as Saleh's chief of staff at his venture capital firm Adventure Capital -- but also acted as his personal assistant, according to US media reports.

Detectives believe that the motive for the killing stemmed from Saleh having discovered that the assistant had stolen tens of thousands of dollars from him, despite the fact that Saleh had not reported the man and had set up what amounted to a repayment plan for him to return the money, one of the officials told New York Times.

"This was an act of charity that turned into an act of murder," the

sources said.

However, a spokesman for the New York Police Department disputed the report of Haspil's arrest.

"Last I was told, we don't have anyone in custody," police spokesman Sergeant Vincent Marchese said by phone to Reuters. "There is no arrest. I don't know where they're getting the information from."

According to US media reports, Saleh was killed on Monday, with Haspil allegedly first zapping him with a Taser and then fatally stabbing him.

Surveillance video from Saleh's East Houston Street apartment building

shows the businessman and a smartly dressed Haspil riding together in the elevator -- which opens straight out to his apartment -- on Monday afternoon. It was the last time Saleh was seen alive.

The reports also claimed that the killer used his employer's credit card to pay for a car to a Home Depot, on West 23rd Street in Manhattan, to buy cleaning supplies to sanitize the crime scene.

The killer returned to Saleh's apartment the next day to dismember the body and clean up the crime scene, the reports added.

Knowledge unutilised

FROM PAGE 1

the research, thus affecting its overall quality. Budget allocated for research is very low in Bangladeshi universities.

For fiscal 2019-20, the research budget allocated to all the public universities is only Tk 64.40 crore, which is only 1.26 percent of the total non-development budget of more than Tk 5,000 crore.

Dr Firdausi Qadri, emeritus scientist of infectious disease division at icddr, pointed out that maintenance of lab equipment, keeping them certified and accredited is also costly.

The leading experts of infectious disease research in Bangladesh said there are at least three well-equipped virology laboratories in the country now.

Besides, the country has very few trained manpower for maintaining and certifying the biosafety cabinets and equipment, which is important for all the laboratories.

THE WAY FORWARD
Experts think that biological science research can be improved by forming a tripartite relationship between universities, physicians and industries.

DU's Professor Mohammad Manjural said, "Industries such as pharmaceutical companies should support laboratories in the institutes where researchers will work on pathogens, drugs, vaccines, etc which in turn will benefit the industry."

"On the other hand, for clinical trials and to collect study samples, there has to be collaboration between physicians and researchers. It can be done by employing microbiologists, biotechnologists, pharmacists and molecular biologists in the government hospitals and medical institutes."

At present, there is no post for microbiologist, pharmacist or biotechnologists in the government hospitals. Medical institutes have microbiologists posts, filled only

Govt mulls

FROM PAGE 1

"It is true that people do not want to go to hospitals as they think it would be a hassle. The authorities should carry out a campaign so that people gain confidence in hospital management and services," Be-Nazir observed.

According to DGHS data, there are 16 hospitals dedicated for Covid-19 patients in the capital with a total of 6,305 general and 142 ICU beds.

But yesterday's statistics showed that 1,969 patients were undergoing treatment in those hospitals while 4,356 beds were lying vacant. Besides, 35 ICU beds were unoccupied.

There are a total of 14,715 general and 376 ICU beds across the country. But yesterday's data showed that only 4,079 patients were admitted to general beds and 210 to ICU beds.

In the capital, 69.08 percent general beds remained empty. The rate is 72.28 percent for the whole the country.

Sources at the DGHS said analysing the number of admitted patients in the coronavirus dedicated hospitals, it was found that the number was very poor in some hospitals and it was even 'zero' in some others.

The sources also said they found at least five hospitals in capital having a very few Covid-19 patients.

A total of 2,547 people died from novel coronavirus in the country till yesterday. The death rate stood at 1.28 percent.

With a total of 1,99,357 Covid-19 infections, the current infection rate in the country is 22.54 percent.

Bangladesh remains the 17th worst affected country in the world in terms of the number of Covid-19 cases, according to www.worldometers.info.

Prof Muzaherul Huq, former adviser (South-East Asia) to World Health Organization, said it seems that the number of hospitalised patients is low, but the percentages of detection and death are not going down.

"So, I think it is too early to make such a decision. The authorities should wait for a while and increase the number of novel coronavirus testing before making such a decision," he added.

Boy dies

FROM PAGE 1

suspecting him of being a thief near his house on Boro Masjid Lane around 11:30pm on Thursday.

Soon afterwards, SI Helal arrived at the scene in plain clothes to arrest Maruf, they added.

The police official engaged in a tussle with Maruf's mother and sister as they tried to resist the arrest.

At one point, Maruf managed to flee the scene.

Later, a police patrol team picked up the mother and the sister.

DC Faruk claimed that the two were taken to Agrabad Maa O Shishu Hospital for treatment.

After returning home, Maruf must have assumed that police detained his mother and sister for his fault and handed himself, locals said.

"We don't know what happened there -- we formed a probe committee to assess the details of the incident," the DC said.

Meanwhile, locals staged a demonstration demanding justice for Maruf.

Police filed an unnatural death case in this connection and the body was sent to Chattogram Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

A two-member probe body was formed to investigate the incident and asked to submit its report by 5:00pm yesterday. But the report was not submitted as of 8:00pm.

Action would be taken against SI Helal if found guilty, DC Faruk said.

Covid cases

FROM PAGE 1

Not only the cases, the death toll from the deadly infection almost doubled in the last one month.

Dr Nasima said 51 people died of coronavirus infections in 24-hour from Thursday and the death toll stood at 2,547.

On June 18, the death toll was 1,343.

Of the total dead, 2,011 were male and 536 were female. Death toll is higher among the dwellers of mega cities.

According to DGHS, Dhaka has the highest number of deceased that stood at 1,255, followed by Chattogram (655) and Rajshahi (131).

Over 1,900 people who died of Covid-19 infection aged over 50 years.

The total number of recoveries stands at 108,725 which means 88,085 active case right now exist in the country.

Of them, according to DGHS, a total of 4,289 people have been taking treatment at different hospitals.

Rest 73,796 patients are taking treatment at home.

Contacted over phone, Dr Nasima told the correspondent that they are giving treatment to these patients over phone.

"We're giving them telemedicine," she said.

Asked about monitoring movement of this huge population, she said they could not be able to ensure social distance in Dhaka as people violates health guidelines.

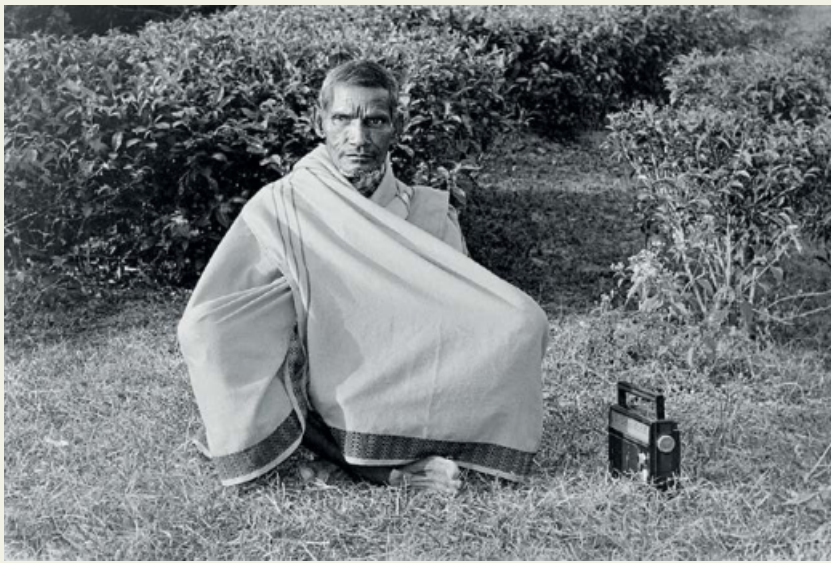
"In rural areas, civil surgeons and local administrations are successfully monitoring movement of patients and in cases they are keeping people in institutional quarantine facilities," she said.

"We're facing trouble to maintain lockdown in areas... As you see people in Wari are not following health guidelines properly," she added.

Bangladesh remains the 17th worst affected country in the world in terms of the number of cases.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Radio Break at a Tea Garden.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Radio Days

The small wooden table sat on one corner of the drawing room. On it was an imposing box the size of a small suitcase. Beige cloth of rough texture covered the top half of its front. Beneath the cloth was the important area: two dials on each side separated by a glass panel with numbers written along its length. When you turned the left dial, a vertical red bar moved horizontally along the panel traversing the numbers. The right dial was a volume control.

That was my first radio, a fixture of the house I grew up in. When war broke out between India and Pakistan in 1965, this radio was the center of nightly gatherings of my extended family. My father operated it every evening so we could hear the news. As he slowly turned the left dial, the red bar traversed the panel and the speaker hummed, crackled and whistled until reaching the frequency of either Radio Pakistan or All India Radio. At that point magic happened: you heard spoken words or music.

This oversized radio was an old engineering design, relying on vacuum tubes that glowed, sometimes overheated and broke down. It was heavy and needed to be plugged into electricity. The tubes were eventually replaced by transistors which were smaller, consumed less energy, and remained cool. In the late 1960s by father bought a lightweight, battery-operated, portable transistor radio and the old vacuum tube radio was soon forgotten.

My coming of age was inextricably tied to the radio. During the Liberation War of 1971, it was a critical link to the world. We spent five of the nine months of war in a remote village in Sylhet, taking shelter at my grandmother's ancestral home. Grateful for the safety of our pastoral refuge, we nonetheless missed modern

amenities. But we did have a radio. After sunset we eagerly waited for news from British Broadcasting Corporation, All India Radio, Voice of America, Radio Moscow, and most importantly, Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendro, the secret radio station of independent Bangladesh. When M.R. Akhter Mukul read *Chorompotro*, a monologue rich in humour and bravado, its tales of the success of our liberation forces and the disasters plaguing the enemy emboldened us and made us laugh during those dark days.

After independence, as a teenager I veered towards music and foreign stations on the radio. One day I was listening to shortwave when I heard a new term: "DXer." I was intrigued. Turned out, DX-ers were dedicated radio listeners, scanning the frequencies, searching for radio stations from afar. When you found one, you wrote a letter to the station with the time, frequency and content you had heard. In return, the station sent you a colourful postcard (QSL card) confirming that you had indeed heard the station. DXing proved to be an absorbing hobby for me and I collected hundreds of QSL cards.

My interest in radio changed when I went to London for studies. I now sought out the best radio stations for rock music. One was Radio Caroline broadcasting from a ship in the high seas outside British jurisdiction. It was free of influence of record companies or the government, playing song after good song.

My next move was to the US in 1977. Although FM radio - offering high-quality stereo sound - was popular there, I never quite engaged with it. That was the end of my radio days.

www.facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow "ihtishamkabir" on Instagram.

Writ petition seeks ban on cattle markets in certain areas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer has filed a writ petition with the High Court, seeking its directive on the government to stop setting up cattle markets in Covid-19 affected areas - including Dhaka, Chattogram, Narayanganj and Gazipur cities.

Eunus Ali Akond submitted the petition as public interest litigation on Thursday via email, praying to the court to stop setting up such markets to protect people from the pandemic.

In the petition, he said National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 had recommend authorities to not set up cattle markets in areas heavily affected by the novel coronavirus.

However, authorities have allowed markets in those areas, ignoring NTAC's recommendation, which is a violation of the law and constitution, the lawyer stated.

Advocate Eunus told The Daily Star that the HC may hold hearing on the petition on Monday.

President's brother Abdul Hye dies of Covid-19

UNB, Dhaka

Abdul Hye, younger brother of President Abdul



Hamid, died of Covid-19 at Combined Military Hospital, Dhaka early yesterday. He was 67.

Abdul Hye, also a freedom fighter, breathed his last around 1:15am, said President's Press Secretary M Joynal Abedin.

Hye, also assistant personal secretary to President Hamid, tested Covid-19 positive on July 2. He left behind his wife, a son, two daughters and a host of relatives and well-wishers. He will be buried at his family graveyard in Mithamain today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed condolence at death of Abdul Hye.

Sylhet residents show the way

Locals purchase sacrificial animals online for Eid-ul Azha directly from farms, to avoid crowds at cattle markets

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Though the district administration was planning to set up temporary cattle markets ahead of Eid in Sylhet, locals apparently are showing better judgement by purchasing sacrificial animals directly from farms after selecting cattle online to avoid crowds amid the pandemic.

To attract buyers, most farms are also increasing their presence on social media, showcasing photos of animals and inviting people to visit their farms.

The cattle market or "haat" organisers, who usually remain busy during this time of the year with bidding and setting up markets, also did not show much enthusiasm in arranging haats due to reluctance of buyers.

Meer Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, deputy director of local government in Sylhet, said, "We were planning to set up temporary cattle haats at all 105 unions in the district... We did not get much response from local haat organisers."

They are, however, setting up cattle markets. "Besides permanent cattle markets in the district, we have permitted 47 temporary cattle markets including three in the city."

When asked about people's initiatives to avoid crowds during purchase of sacrificial animals, he said not everyone is familiar with the internet or purchasing cattle online,

which is why they are permitting haats.

"But we are also encouraging online purchasing and selling," he said, adding that the Livestock Department opened a Facebook page where they are trying to connect cattle sellers and buyers.

Till Wednesday afternoon, the page was followed by only 183 people.

Dr Kazi Ashraf Islam, district livestock officer in Sylhet, said, "We are communicating with cattle sellers and trying to inspire them to sell via our online page. As the idea is new, and people buy only a couple of days before Eid, we are getting less response now."

While they are not getting much attention from buyers or sellers, cattle farms are continuing their business online through networks, customer relationships and better offers.

Once a buyer visits the Facebook page, they can communicate directly with the seller after selecting a cattle, drop by at the farm and complete the transaction as per their convenience, said farm owners.

Sahed Ahmed Enam, proprietor of Bismillah Agro at Silam of Dakshin Surma upazila in Sylhet, said, "We reared 30 cows for Eid and have already sold 15 of them."

"We are getting good responses from social media. Due to the pandemic, people are becoming

more interested in visiting the farms to buy cattle of their choice," he added.

Atique Ahmed of Baraikandi of Sylhet Sadar upazila, purchased a cow from the farm.

"I used to purchase cattle directly from haat every year. Due to the pandemic, I searched for cattle online, visited the farm and purchased one."

Syed Ripon Ahmed, an owner of Khan Agro of Khadimnagar of Sylhet Sadar upazila, said, "Not just for health safety, it's also better for customers to buy directly from farms."

"We look after the sold cattle till the night before Eid. Even if the cattle become sick, we give our customers a refund or a chance to change, which is impossible in regular haats," he added.

Meanwhile, Sylhet City Corporation called tender for one temporary haat in the city, said Bidhayak Roy Chowdhury, chief executive officer of SCC.

Abdul Karim Kim, coordinator of Sankhubdho Nagorik Andolon in Sylhet, criticised the move and said amid the pandemic, the government should try to not arrange cattle markets in the city to avoid crowds and tackle the spread of coronavirus.

Asked, the deputy director of local government added that they will set up the haat, maintaining health guidelines and social distancing.



Farm owner Rifat Mohammad Iqbal is a busy man. With only a few weeks left before Eid, not only he has to tend to his cattle, but also maintain his Facebook page "Chatgaiya Agro", where he sells sacrificial animals. A buyer can visit the page, select a cattle and contact Iqbal over the phone for a purchase and confirm delivery or pickup -- all in real time -- that too maintaining physical distancing. This photo was taken from Uttar Kattoli of the port city on Wednesday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Tk 530cr collected through registration of deeds in June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Directorate of Registration has collected about Tk 530 crore as revenue by facilitating registrations of 2,47,780 deeds between May 31 and June 30.

Inspector General of Registration Shahidul Alam Jhinuk sent a letter to the law ministry on Thursday about the matter.

In the letter, he said sub-registry offices across the country have completed registrations while strictly following health guidelines, and collected Tk 529.81 crore in the period.

He also said 22 officials and staffers under the body have contracted Covid-19, and among them, 13 have recovered and one died.

Robbers held within days of filing case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special team of police in a drive arrested four robbers from different areas of Dhaka on Thursday night, less than a week after a case was filed.

Sudip Chakrabarty, deputy commissioner of Gulshan division Police, made the disclosure yesterday to reporters.

On July 10, the robbers allegedly entered the house of one Mujibur Rahman in the capital's Aftabnagar, tied up members of the family and left swiftly with valuables.

Mujibur did not file any complaint at first, but Gulshan Division Police learned about the incident from local sources. Following police request, Mujibur registered the case with Badda Police Station on July 12.

Police also managed to recover all the looted valuables, Sudip told journalists at a briefing at Badda Police Station.

He said the arrestees are professional robbers, and the ringleader is accused in eight cases. "It was one of the fastest operations; we managed to recover looted valuables and arrest the criminals within days of filing the case," he said.

Govt bans fishing nets with mesh smaller than 6.6cm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to save jatka (fish fry) and increase production of hilsa, the government has banned all kinds of gill nets with mesh smaller than 6.6 centimeters or 2.6 inches.

A gazette was published on July 15, under the Protection and Conservation of Fish Rules, 1985.

Fishermen generally use 13 kinds of nets to catch hilsa. Mentioning names, the gazette said nets meant for catching hilsa must have mesh size of 6.5cm.

Masudara Momi, deputy director of Hilsa Management Wing of the Department of Fisheries, said, "If we can save 30 percent of total jatka every year, hilsa production will increase up to one lakh tonne," she said.

Sabrina on fresh 2-day remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed JKG Health Care Chairman Dr Sabrina Arif Chowdhury on a two-day fresh remand, in connection with a case filed over the issuing fake Covid-19 reports.

Metropolitan Magistrate Masud-Ul-Rahman passed the order after Md Liakot Ali, an inspector of detective branch (DB) of police and the investigation officer of the case, produced her before his court with a five-day remand prayer.

Sabrina was produced before the court on completion of her three-day remand.

In the remand prayer, the IO said Sabrina, being the chairman of JKG Health Care, was directly involved with issuing fake Covid-19 test reports. So, she needs to be remanded to gather more clues about the matter and to know whereabouts of others responsible for committing such offences, the IO said.

On the other hand, Sabrina's defence lawyer submitted a petition seeking her bail along with cancellation of the remand prayer, saying their client was not involved with such offences.

Sabrina told the court that she is no more the chairman of the organisation and was not involved with such incidents.

After hearing both sides, the magistrate turned down her bail and issued the remand order, also directed the IO to interrogate her in presence of a female police personnel.

The case, filed with Tejgaon Police Station on June 24, was handed over to DB for investigation.

Earlier on July 12, police arrested Sabrina, about three weeks after the scam came to light.

Following her arrest, the health ministry suspended her from the post of registrar at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases, over violating rules.



Maybe it is because people are spending more time at home and have a little more free time on their hands, there seems to be a growing interest in home decor. A number of streetside shops on High Court Street near Doyel Chattar in the capital, that sell flowers -- both plants and artificial -- as well as pottery and other kinds of decorative items, are seeing a growing number of customers in recent weeks.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Indian national held 'over Neo JMB links'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of police claimed to have arrested an Indian national, for her alleged involvement with militant outfit Neo-JMB.

The arrestee is identified as Ayesa Jannat Mohona alias Jannat Tasnim alias Proga Debnath (25).

Based on a tip-off, a team of CTTC unit conducted drive in the capital's Sadarghat area and arrested Mohona, SK Imran Hossain, assistant commissioner of CTTC unit, told The Daily Star yesterday.

They also recovered an Indian passport, a Bangladesh birth registration certificate, a Bangladeshi national identity card and two phones from her possession.

In primary interrogation, Mohona said she is an Indian national and hailed from Keshabpur village in Hugli district of West Bengal. Quoting Mohona, Imran said she converted to Islam from Hindu religion while she was in ninth grade, in 2009. She was later drawn into religious education.

"She met members of Neo-JMB's female wing on different social media platforms. She later met with Neo-JMB female wing chief Asmani Khatun alias Asma and started working as a member," he said.

AC Imran said she recently collected a fake birth registration certificate and using the certificate, she also collected a Bangladeshi NID card to become a citizen. "Mohona even married an expatriate Bangladeshi national recently via phone call, in Oman. She started living in Bangladesh from August 10 last year," he said.

4 of a family

FROM PAGE 12
Entering the house, they found the bodies in three rooms.
Gani was a rickshaw-van trader. Besides, he used to give people loans and take interests on them, the police officer said.
Shafiqul Islam, additional superintendent of Tangail police, said the four might have been killed a couple of days ago. Police were investigating the incident, he added.
After visiting the spot, Sanjit Kumar Roy, superintendent of Tangail police, told journalists that they have already got some clues, but would not disclose those now for the "sake of investigation".
He hoped that they could identify the killers soon through probe.
Meanwhile, a team of Criminal Investigation Department collected evidence from the spot, said Riazul Hoque, special superintendent of police of the CID.

Irene Khan

FROM PAGE 12
any remuneration for their efforts to maintain their independence.
Khan will be taking up the position in August 2020, and will maintain it for three years.
She will be taking the responsibility of documenting violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
She would also be responsible for gathering information on threats, violence, harassment, persecution or intimidation directed at persons seeking to exercise or to promote the right to freedom of opinion and expression, especially the persecutions of journalists or other professionals in the field of information.
She will also be advising governments, advocating on behalf of those whose rights are affected, and mobilising international support for the cause.
Her responsibilities would also include mobilising international and national communities, including civil society, governments and international organisations, to address the human rights issues.
Khan was also the first woman to head Amnesty International. She had also served as the director-general of International Development Law Organisation, an intergovernmental organisation dedicated to the promotion of rule of law.

Argentinian 'dirty war' suspect hiding in Berlin: report

AFP, Berlin
An Argentinian-German man wanted in Buenos Aires for crimes against humanity committed in the "dirty war" waged by the country's former junta has been hiding in Berlin where authorities have refused his extradition, Bild daily reported yesterday.
Luis Esteban Kyburg is accused of leading an Argentinian naval unit between 1976 and 1983 that was allegedly involved in torturing and killing abducted political opponents of the dictatorship.
Some 30,000 people were "disappeared" in the "dirty war" waged by Argentina's last military dictatorship against suspected left-wing political critics.
Argentinian judicial authorities filed an extradition request for Kyburg in 2015, the daily said.
But German authorities have rejected the demand because Kyburg is a German citizen, and therefore cannot be extradited to face trial elsewhere, the daily added.
Prosecutors in Berlin were not immediately available for comment when reached by AFP.
Kyburg himself told Bild that he was "waiting here. Court in Germany, not in Argentina. I'm waiting.

Mango export drops 85pc since 2016

FROM PAGE 12
buy mangoes randomly from local markets.
These mangoes were also certified by the DAE's Plant Quarantine Wing, which among other duties inspects and regulates the export of plants and plant products according to the requirements of importing countries, as maintaining good agricultural practices.
However, on reaching the destination countries, especially in the US and in Europe, most of the mangoes that were bought from local markets were found to be infected with pests. These were accordingly rejected and then destroyed.
As the rate of rejection rose, the demand for the Bangladeshi fruit continued to fall in the importing countries, DAE officials and farmers said.
Rabiul Islam, a mango producer of Kansat in Chapainawabganj, said, "We survived the losses from producing safe export-quality mangoes because the demand for safe mangoes has luckily increased in local markets. Local buyers are also choosing our mangoes. If we had to depend only on export, we would have had to suffer much more losses."
According to DAE officials, none of the contract farmers in Rajshahi got any opportunity to sell mangoes for export this year, and only one farmer of Chapainawabganj managed to sell some 10 tonnes to exporters.
"When we go for producing export-quality mangoes, our expenditure goes up," said Ismail Khan, general secretary of Shibganj Safe Mango Producers' Association, an organisation of 200 mango producers.
Ismail said he provided some 10 tonnes of Amrapali variety of mangoes to exporters this year.
"If we harvest three tonnes of mangoes from an orchard, we hardly get one tonne of quality mangoes for export. So, the price of export-quality mangoes rises," he told this correspondent.
Contract farmers were trained to produce sufficient quantities of safe mangoes following good agricultural

practices -- that include using the prescribed quantity of pesticides and insecticides, using the fruit-bagging method of cultivation, and harvesting the fruit by engaging skilled labourers -- both farmers and DAE officials mentioned.
As per these rules, exporters have to ensure compliance with the "good agricultural practices" beginning from cultivation to packaging the mangoes, said Md Fazlul Haque, additional director of DAE's Plant Quarantine Wing.
But while exporting, businessmen prefer buying mangoes from local markets, ignoring contract farmers to avoid paying them a "good price".
"Buying the best quality mangoes for export requires paying the contract farmers well. But what happened in the last few years is that some businessmen avoided paying the farmers -- instead they bought mangoes from the markets at lower prices and managed the test results in their favour," said the DAE official.
Most of the mangoes were found to be pest-infected and were eventually rejected in destination countries, especially in Europe, resulting in poor exports these last few years, he noted.
The country produces around 12 lakh tonnes of mangoes a year and can export at least 10 percent of the fruit without having any impact on local demand, said a mango researcher at Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute.
When farmers first began producing safe mangoes following a Chinese method of using fruit bags in mango trees (to combat fruit flies) in 2015, the potential of mango exports came to light.
For the first time, 165 tonnes of mangoes were sent to Europe and the Middle East that year. Of this, only 10 tonnes were from Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj districts with the rest from southern districts, according to the DAE.
Next year saw the highest export of mangoes till date -- 665 tonnes -- of which 90 percent were from Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj, the major mango-producing districts in the

country.
Inspired by the 2016 export, the farmers of Rajshahi region produced some two crore safe mangoes with an export target of 5,000 tonnes in 2017. But they managed to sell only 2.8 tonnes to exporters that year.
Most of the 324 tonnes of mangoes exported in 2017 were bought from markets and not from the contract farmers, DAE officials and farmers confirmed.
In 2018, most contract farmers were once again unable to sell their produce to exporters and only 231 tonnes of mangoes were exported that year.
Last year, mango exports fell to below 100 tonnes -- an 85 percent decline since 2016.
The loss suffered by farmers in 2017 prompted the region's Agro Food Producers' Society Convenor Anwarul Hoque to file a complaint with the Prime Minister's Office on July 10 that year.
In the complaint, Anwarul stated that some officials of the DAE's Plant Quarantine Wing were biased to insecticide-using producers, and they certified "non-organic" mangoes for export resulting in losses to the organic mango farmers.
A three-member committee headed by Mohammad Mahfuzul Haque, chairman of Bangladesh Food Safety Authority, probed Anwarul's allegations.
While the probe report, signed on November 1, 2017, could not find evidence of DAE's backing for insecticide-using producers, it found "neglect and apathy" of officials to organic mangoes and recommended promotion of safe mangoes.
It also detected a lack of coordination among farmers of safe mangoes, exporters, and DAE's quarantine wing officials.
But farmers of safe mangoes say the probe report's recommendations were never implemented and they witnessed repetitions of the 2017 situation in the following years and a sustained fall in exports.
Mango exporter Md Shahabuddin of Feni said all exporters are not the

same and reputed exporters do not flout rules when buying mangoes for export.
"Dishonest exporters in league with dishonest officials are exporting low quality mangoes for profit. Their malpractice is hurting our reputation."
He points out that agricultural officials have to certify when exporters buy mangoes from a garden and they also test the mangoes and certify after exporters take those to a quarantine station.
"You see, officials are involved in two phases and still their certified mangoes are being rejected abroad."
Usually, exporters pay around Tk 20 per kg, and sometimes as much as Tk 40, higher than the market price for mangoes, when they buy from contract farmers. The price goes further up if farmers incur higher costs for production, he said.
Many exporters want to avoid this extra expenditure, saying they compete with Indian and Pakistani exporters in foreign markets, he also said.
The exporter observed there are large market possibilities for Bangladeshi mangoes in European, Middle-Eastern, and Asian countries.
"Yet, we cannot explore this potential for those dishonest people and due to lack of a standard policy for mango exports."
This year during peak mango season, exports were hit hard by lockdowns and travel restrictions across the globe due to the coronavirus pandemic.
Only late in the mango season did exporters become active and start procuring mangoes for export. An agro farm sent a sample consignment to Switzerland on July 12.
DAE's Fazlul Haque said the government is considering setting up quarantine stations in Rajshahi and some other regions to end safe mango farmers' woes.
"One of our projects to set up such stations is awaiting approval," he said, adding that the field-level stations would help exporters source local mangoes.
At present, exporters have to take mangoes to Narayanganj for testing.

Shun parochialism

FROM PAGE 12
sowing seeds of discord among the workers. They are visiting the workers' quarters and spreading hate campaign among workers of different districts. Bangabandhu maintains that all the workers and people of Bangladesh have only one identity -- Bengali. There can't be any differentiation on district-basis, he adds.
Mentioning that his government has exempted land tax upto 25 bighas the prime minister says that he has a demand on the peasants: produce one maund more in every bigha.
PM WARNS MURDERERS
In his Adamjeenagar speech, Bangabandhu sounds a note of stern warning against those who are engaged in political murders. He mentions that at least 70 workers of Awami League have been murdered during the last six months. He says that during the 24 years of Pakistan, nobody ever dared to touch his political workers. But as he is now in power, some quarters are taking advantage of the situation and killing his political workers. The prime minister observes that political assassination is no politics and would never bring any good to the country. He wonders whether these elements have misjudged his forbearance as weakness. He says that his government is determined to maintain law and order at any cost. Bangabandhu asks the criminal elements to rectify themselves or face the consequences.
CHINESE HELP FOR UN ENTRY SOUGHT
Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad today gives it to understand that China will not exercise its vote in the Security Council to thwart Bangladesh's entry to the UN in September. The foreign minister has dispatched a letter to Peking soliciting her help for Bangladesh's entry to the UN.
SOURCES: July 19, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dianik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Solar probe

FROM PAGE 12
The spacecraft, launched from Florida in February, snapped the images in late May using the probe's Extreme Ultraviolet Imager as it orbited nearly 48 million miles (77 million km) from the sun's surface, or roughly halfway between the sun and Earth.
The "campfires" are believed to be tiny explosions, called nanoflares, and could explain why the sun's outer shield, the corona, is 300 times hotter than the star's surface. Scientists are awaiting more data from the spacecraft's other instruments to know for sure.
"We've never been closer to the sun with a camera, and this is just the beginning of the long epic journey of Solar Orbiter," said Daniel Müller, ESA's Solar Orbiter project scientist.
Scientists typically have relied upon Earth-based telescopes for close-ups of the sun's surface. But Earth's atmosphere limits the amount of visible light needed to glean views as intimate as those obtained by the Solar Orbiter.
The spacecraft also carries plasma-sampling instruments to offer researchers further data.
"That combination really allows us to make links and connections to what's happening on the sun and what's happening at the spacecraft," said Holly Gilbert, Solar Orbiter project scientist at Nasa.

Two more

FROM PAGE 12
With them, at least 71 physicians so far died with Covid-19 infection while 11 others passed away showing symptoms of the virus, according to BDF.
On the other hand, Foundation for Doctors' Safety Rights and Responsibility said 67 doctors died of Covid-19 while 10 others died after showing coronavirus symptoms.

3 killed

FROM PAGE 12
Myanmar, police raided Nazirpara Chakbazar area around 2:00am, said the OC.
Sensing police presence, a group of drug traders opened fire targeting law enforcers, who then retaliated, he added.
While the rest of the drug traders escaped, the two brothers sustained bullet injuries during the "gunfight". Police took them to Teknaf Health Complex where doctors declared them dead, the OC claimed.
Police recovered 20,000 yaba pills, two locally-made firearms and 11 bullets from the spot and filed three cases in this regard, he added.
The bodies were kept at Cox's Bazar Medical College for autopsy, reports our correspondent in Cox's Bazar.
Meanwhile, the identity of the man, aged around 35, who died in the capital's "shootout" had not been known.
According to a report by sub-inspector Sajedul Haque of Mohammadpur Police Station, the shootout took place around 3:00am when a team from the police station went to the Bosila Garden City area to apprehend a suspect.
During a "gunfight", the man was injured by bullets and rushed to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, read the report.
The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Flood situation may worsen in northern parts

FROM PAGE 12
may peak between July 25 and July 26.
Sirajul said leakages have appeared at 26 places of the Bhuapur-Tarakandi road, which is also an embankment along the Jamuna, due to pressure from floodwater.
If the embankment collapses, four more upazilas of Tangail will be flooded.
Currently, about 1.3 lakh people in 151 villages in six upazilas of the district have been affected by the flood.
In Munshiganj, the Padma river was flowing 68 cm above the danger mark, yesterday.
Some 13 shelters have been prepared at Srinagar, Louhajang and Tongibari upazila.
However, locals expressed

reluctance to go to the shelters before floodwaters reach their homes.
According to sources at the district administration, 65 metric tons of rice, dry food for 700 people and Tk 4 lakh for children's food have been allocated along with livestock feed.
In Brahmanbaria, the Titas river continues to rise due to incessant rain. It was flowing 6 cm above the danger level yesterday.
"Flooding started in the low-lying areas of the upazila but the town protection dam is yet to be submerged," said Ranjan Kumar Das, executive engineer of the local WDB.
In Jamalpur, the overall flood situation turned worse as the Jamuna was flowing 123 cm above the danger mark at Bahadurabad Ghat point in

Dewanganj upazila yesterday noon.
Over eight lakh people of 625 villages under seven upazilas and seven municipalities have been affected by the flood.
Many along with their livestock have taken shelter on high grounds of villages and on concrete bridges.
There is a scarcity of drinking water, cooked food and hygiene facilities. People are in dire need of water purifying tablets and dry food.
In Kurigram, yesterday afternoon, the Brahmaputra was flowing 91 cm above the danger mark, Dharla 62 cm and Dudhkumar 81 cm above, said Ariful Islam, executive engineer of local WDB.
Jahela Bewa, a resident of Char Shankar Madhabpur under Rajibpur

upazila, said she has been living on an embankment for the last one week as her home was under four to five feet water.
During the June flood, she had to stay on the embankment for 12 days.
In Lalmonirhat, though floodwaters have started to recede from houses, in many areas, roads are still submerged. There is an acute crisis of food and drinking water in the flood-hit areas.
Flood victim Narendra Nath, of Jagatber village in Sadar upazila, said floodwaters have receded from their houses, but they cannot travel for work as roads are still under water. He is now jobless.
Our correspondents from Tangail, Lalmonirhat, Brahmanbaria and Jamalpur contributed to the story.

Amnesty condemns Belarus for 'misogyny' ahead of poll

AFP, Moscow
Belarus is targeting female activists with misogyny and discriminatory tactics, Amnesty International said yesterday, as women in opposition have teamed up to contest President Alexander Lukashenko in an election next month.
The ex-Soviet state has been ruled since 1994 by Lukashenko, a former collective farm director who has claimed that the country does not want a woman president. The 65-year-old is running for a sixth term in the August 9 poll.
The authorities have cracked down on the opposition, barring and detaining would-be candidates and detaining more than 250 people at protests this week.

In a report Amnesty accused the authorities of targeting women involved in politics in "gender-specific ways".
"The Belarusian authorities are wheeling out practices that smack of misogyny," said Marie Struthers, the group's Eastern Europe and Central Asia director.
Amnesty gave testimony from activists who said they faced threats of sexual violence and of their children being taken into care.
The election will be contested by Lukashenko and another four candidates including a woman opposition candidate, Svetlana Tikhonovskaya.
Tikhonovskaya put herself forward after her husband Sergei Tikhonovsky, a popular vlogger, was detained and

barred from standing. She was allowed to run after gathering the necessary signatures.
On Thursday she announced an alliance with the campaign teams of two popular opposition figures who have been barred from standing, Viktor Babaryko and Valery Tsepkalo.
Babaryko, an ex-banker, has been detained over suspected financial crimes. Amnesty has recognised him as a prisoner of conscience along with Tikhonovskaya's husband.
To promote their joint campaign, Tikhonovskaya, 37, posed punching a fist with Babaryko's female campaign chief and Tsepkalo's wife.
Tikhonovskaya said last month she received an anonymous phone call threatening to jail her and put her children in care. She said she

considered withdrawing from the poll.
Amnesty accused Lukashenko of "tokenistic" appointments of loyal women politicians and said he "routinely makes sexist statements".
Lukashenko claimed in May that Belarusian society "has not yet matured enough to vote for a woman".
He said this was "because according to the constitution, our president has strong powers".
The president does not appear in public with any woman partner.
In his electoral declaration he said he is still married but his wife, whom he wed in 1975, is never seen with him in public.
He is has a teenage son, Nikolai, who accompanies him to public engagements.

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Bangladesh saw no improvement

FROM PAGE 12
UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) on measures it had taken to uphold its commitments under the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT).
It was welcomed but the Committee raised allegations of widespread and routine commission of torture and ill treatment by law enforcement officials, and the absence of statistical data on the implementation of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, the report said.
During the UNCAT review, Bangladesh stressed that it had promoted the gradual replacement of the death penalty by other forms of punishment, although had not taken any steps to abolish the death penalty, the UK report adds.
Stating that violence by organisations associated with political parties continued throughout 2019, it said in October, a student from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology was beaten to death by members of the student wing of the Awami League, allegedly for posting material online, which was critical of the government.
It said under the 2018 Digital Security Act (DSA), 42 people were arrested, often on charges of hurting religious sentiment, or undermining law and order. The provisions of the DSA were criticised as empowering the government to arrest and detain journalists, human rights activists, and political opponents.
In April, Bangladesh dropped four places to 150 (out of 180) in the Reporters Without Borders Press

Freedom Index; its lowest ever position.
Throughout the year, UK ministers met opposition politicians, media representatives, and indigenous leaders, and in April the then Minister for Asia, Mark Field, raised human rights concerns with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the report said.
Referring to Amnesty International, the report said Bangladesh's former Prime Minister and leader of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Khaleda Zia, imprisoned since February 2018 on corruption charges, was not receiving adequate health care.
It said gender-based violence remained a concern, mentioning the murder of Nusrat Jahan Rafi, a female madrasa student who complained to the police about harassment by her principal. Women habitually are harassed in public, making travelling on foot or public transport difficult.
The UK report said Bangladesh continued to play a vital role in hosting a significant number of the Rohingya people and maintained its commitment to the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar.
However, there were reports of significant criminality in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, where approximately 855,000 Rohingya refugees are living. These included around 30 murders, gender-based violence, abduction, illegal drug trading, and human trafficking.
In September, the government introduced restrictions on access to the internet in the camps, citing security concerns following a peaceful rally in the Kutupalong camp on 25 August -- a decision that was criticized by the rights groups.

চিটাগাং ড্রাই ডক লিমিটেড
বাংলাদেশ নৌবাহিনী
পূর্ব পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম
তালিকাভুক্তির বিজ্ঞপ্তি
২৩.০২.১৫৫৫.৩৪১.৫১.০০৬.২০.৩৮
১৮ জুলাই ২০২০
১। চিটাগাং ড্রাই ডক লিমিটেড কর্তৃক আগামী ০২ (দুই) অর্থ বছরের (২০২০-২১ ও ২০২১-২২) জন্য নিম্নবর্ণিত গ্রুপ সমূহে মালমাল সরবরাহকারী হিসেবে তালিকাভুক্তির নিমিত্তে নির্ধারিত ফরমে প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ী/সরবরাহকারী/মালদার/প্রস্তুতকারকদের নিম্নে হতে সরাসরি আবেদন করা যাবে।
ক। হার্ডওয়্যার অফ ও পৌরস্বত্ব প্রদান, গ। স্ট্রাকচারাল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং/স্ট্রাকচারাল ডিজাইন এবং হালদাগাঁও ট্রেড লাইসেন্স আবেদন ও মুদ্রক সার্টিফিকেট, মালিকানা/অংশীদারীত্বের চুক্তিপত্র, লিমিটেড কোম্পানির ক্ষেত্রে আর্টিকেল অফ এসোসিয়েশন এবং মেমোরেন্ডাম অফ এসোসিয়েশন এবং ব্যাংক স্বাক্ষরিত সনদপত্রসহ নির্ধারিত ফর্মের সাথে সংযুক্ত করে চিটাগাং ড্রাই ডক লিমিটেড এর বার্ষিক বিজ্ঞপ্তি আগামী ৩০ জুলাই ২০২০ তারিখের মধ্যে জমা দিতে হবে।
খ। নির্ধারিত ফর্ম টাঃ ৫০০.০০ (টাকা পাঁচশত মাত্র) মূল্যে (অফিসিওর) ক্যাশ সেকশন, চিটাগাং ড্রাই ডক লিমিটেড, পূর্ব পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম হতে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।
জিডি-১১৫৬
উপ-মহাব্যবস্থাপক (বাণিজ্য)

Six killed as building collapses in Mumbai

REUTERS, Mumbai

Heavy rains lashing India's financial capital of Mumbai have caused the collapse of a multi-storey building, killing six people and injuring several, authorities said.

The dilapidated six-storey structure in the city's south was home to five or six families who stayed on after residents were advised to evacuate as it was under repairs, eyewitnesses told television channels.

Two people were declared dead on Thursday evening, with disaster response officials pulling four more bodies from debris during the night, fire and police officials said.

Several people had been trapped under the debris with many more stranded in the portion left standing after the collapse, causing instability, city fire chief P.S. Rahangdale said.

"The risk of secondary collapse can't be ruled out," he added.

Another building collapsed in the western suburb of Malad earlier, killing two, including a child, and injuring several.



Buildings are seen submerged in floodwaters following heavy rainfall in Poyang county of Jiangxi province, China yesterday. Large parts of central and eastern China were reeling yesterday from the worst floods in decades, as disruption mounted for key supply chains, including crucial personal protective equipment for fighting the coronavirus.

PHOTO: REUTERS

130 accounts were targeted in cyber-attack: Twitter

Twitter Inc disclosed late on Thursday that hackers targeted about 130 accounts during the cyber attack this week, an incident in which profiles of many prominent personalities and organizations were compromised. Hackers had accessed Twitter's internal systems to hijack some of the platform's top voices including US presidential candidate Joe Biden, reality TV star Kim Kardashian, former US President Barack Obama and billionaires Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Warren Buffett, Bill Gates and used them to solicit digital currency. The FBI's San Francisco division is leading an inquiry into the hacking, with many Washington lawmakers also calling for an accounting of how it happened.

Trump niece's memoir sells nearly 1m copies on first day

A new book on Donald Trump written by his niece sold nearly a million copies on the first day it went on sale in the United States, its publisher said Thursday. Mary Trump's "Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man" is billed as the first unflattering portrayal of the US president by a family insider. Mary, a psychologist whose father was Trump's oldest brother Fred, accuses the president of hubris and ignorance, and says he fits the clinical criteria for being a narcissist. The White House has dismissed the memoir as a "book of falsehoods".

Putin orders snap military drills

President Vladimir Putin has ordered snap military drills involving 150,000 personnel and hundreds of aircraft and naval vessels to ensure "security in Russia's southwest," the defence ministry said yesterday. The drills involve nearly 150,000 personnel including airborne troops and marine infantry of the Northern and Pacific Fleets, the defence ministry said. The exercises also involve more than 400 aircraft and over 100 vessels and will be conducted in the Black and Caspian Seas, among other places. The drills aim to test the Russian army's readiness to ensure "security in Russia's southwest where a serious threat of terrorism remains" as well as prepare for the Caucasus-2020 war games, the defence ministry said.

US aircraft carriers return to South China Sea



For the second time in two weeks, the United States has deployed two aircraft carriers to the South China Sea, the US Navy said yesterday, as China and the United States accuse each other of stoking tensions in the region. The USS Nimitz and USS Ronald Reagan carried out operations and military exercises in the contested waterway between July 4 and July 6, and returned to the region on Friday, according to a US Navy statement. Heated rhetoric has been on the rise between the US and China over South China Sea, where Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam challenge China's claim to about 90% of the sea.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

India passes 1m cases

AGENCIES

Coronavirus cases in India passed one million yesterday, official data showed as authorities struggle to check the spread of the deadly pandemic across the world's second-most populous nation.

With over 600 Indians dying daily, lockdowns are being re-imposed across the country of 1.3 billion following an easing of restrictions in recent weeks on hopes the outbreak was under control.

Health ministry data released yesterday put the total cases recorded at 1,003,382, a jump of almost 35,000, with 25,602 deaths after an increase of 687 -- both new daily records.

India, home to some of the planet's most densely packed cities, is the third nation to hit a million cases after the United States and Brazil, although the numbers of deaths in those two countries are far higher.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said Thursday that India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are together fast becoming the next epicentre of the virus.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

US sets one-day record with more than 77,000 new infections

EU haggles over virus rescue plan

UN seeks \$3.6b more for its plan to battle pandemic

first time in five months hoping to overcome divisions about a planned 750-billion-euro (\$855 billion) stimulus package.

And the United States, which has recorded more cases than both countries combined with over 3,560,000, on Thursday posted yet another record number of new infections in one day with more than 77,000 cases.

The United Nations is seeking an additional \$3.6 billion for its Global Humanitarian Response Plan to battle the pandemic, warning developed countries on Thursday of "the price of inaction" if poorer nations don't receive help.

In China -- where Covid-19 first emerged late last year -- flights were curtailed and public transport shut down in Urumqi, the capital of the far-western Xinjiang region, after new infections were detected.

A record 293 cases were also reported in Tokyo yesterday.

In Melbourne, Australia's second-biggest city, a second wave continues to worsen despite the re-imposition of a lockdown.

TRAVEL BAN

US may target all Chinese Communist Party members

REUTERS, Washington

The Trump administration is considering banning travel to the United States by all members of the Chinese Communist Party and their families, a person familiar with the matter said on Thursday, an idea that China dismissed as absurd.

Senior officials discussing the matter had begun circulating a draft of a possible presidential order, but deliberations were at an early stage and the issue had not yet been brought to President Donald Trump, the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The discussions, first reported by the New York Times, center on whether to deny visas to more than 90 million Chinese in what would be one of Washington's toughest actions yet in a widening feud with Beijing that some have likened to a new Cold War.

Such a ban, if implemented, could hit the ruling Communist Party from the highest levels down to its rank-and-file and would be certain to draw retaliation against Americans who travel to China. This could include not only diplomats but also business executives, potentially harming US interests in China.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, asked about the possibility of such a travel ban, yesterday told reporters that, should it materialise, it would mean the United States was choosing to stand against 1.4 billion people.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stopped short of confirming it was under consideration but said: "We're working our way through, under the president's guidance, about how to think about pushing back against the Chinese Communist Party."



Superheroes reach out to 6-year-old real-life hero

THE STRAITS TIMES/ANN

Six-year-old Bridger Walker, who was mauled after shielding his four-year-old sister from a charging dog earlier this month, has caught the attention of celebrities, including Captain America himself.

Three days after the incident on July 9, the boy's aunt, Nicole Walker, shared the incident on Instagram. She tagged several Avengers stars and wrote: "I'm reaching out to the Avengers and other heroes so that they can learn about this latest addition to their ranks."

The post quickly went viral and actor Chris Evans, who plays Captain America, promptly reached out, sending Bridger and his family a video message: "I'm sure you heard a lot of this over the past couple days, but let me be the next one to tell you, pal, you're a hero."

In her post, Walker said that after the attack, Bridger, who required around 90 stitches after the dog bit his face and head, had told his family: "If someone had to die, I thought it should be me."

Evans' Avengers co-stars also reached out, including Tom Holland, who plays Spider-Man, and Mark Ruffalo, who plays the Hulk. Other celebrities such as Hugh Jackman, Zachary Levi, Anne Hathaway also praised Bridger's heroism.

Talks on to ease tensions but can't guarantee success

Says India defence minister on Ladakh stand-off

THE STATESMAN/ANN

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh yesterday assured that "not an inch of our land can be taken by any power in the world" as he interacted with the Indian Army and ITBP personnel at Lukung in Ladakh.

He also said that talks between India and China on border dispute are underway but added that the extent of the success, however, "cannot be guaranteed".

"Talks are underway to resolve the border dispute but to what extent it can be resolved I cannot guarantee. I can assure you, not an inch of our land can be taken by any power in the world," Singh said and added, "If solution can be found by talks, there is nothing better".

The Lukung post is in the northwestern side of lake, 43 km by road from the Finger 4 area, where the troops of India and China are in the process of disengagement. Lukung is a combined post, where the Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police are stationed.

The Defence Minister also paid tributes to the 20 Indian soldiers who lost their lives in a violent clash with the Chinese People's Liberation Army troops Patrolling Post 14 on the Line of Actual Control in Galwan valley on June 15.

Referring to the martyred soldiers, he said, "I am happy to meet you all but also saddened because of their loss. I pay my tributes to them".

Further, in his address, Rajnath Singh said India is the only country in the world that has given a message of peace to the world.

"We have never attacked a nation and have never staked claim to any country's land. India believes in the message - 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (world is one family)," he was quoted as saying by NDTV. Rajnath Singh was also accompanied by Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and Army chief General MM Naravane.

Following the address, Singh reached Srinagar where he will review the situation at the borders and also visit forward areas in Jammu and Kashmir, his office informed.

DELHI RIOTS TARGETING MUSLIMS OVER CITIZENSHIP LAW

Govt panel faults police role

REUTERS, New Delhi

A government-appointed commission promoting the rights of India's religious minorities said police failed to protect Muslims campaigning against a new citizenship law during violent riots in Delhi this year.

At least 53 people, mostly Muslims, were killed and more than 200 were injured in the worst communal violence in the Indian capital for decades.

The clashes erupted amid an outcry over a new federal law laying out the path to citizenship for six religious groups from neighbouring countries except Muslims. Critics said the law was discriminatory and flouted India's secular constitution.

The Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC) said Muslim homes, shops and vehicles were selectively targeted during the rioting that erupted in



northeast Delhi in February when protests against the new Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) broke out across the country.

In all, 11 mosques, five madrasas or religious schools, a Muslim shrine and a graveyard were attacked and damaged, a team from the commission said the report released on Thursday.

Recommendations made in the commission's report to safeguard minority rights are not binding. "Seemingly, to crush the protests,

with support of the administration and police, a retaliatory plan of pro-CAA protesters was worked out to trigger violence at a large scale," it said.

The commission said police had charged Muslims for the violence even though they were the worst victims.

Delhi police spokesman Anil Mittal rejected the allegation of bias and said police had acted fairly.

Critics of PM Narendra Modi's BJP government say it has been promoting a Hindu-first India and that the citizenship law aimed to further marginalise the country's 170 million Muslims. The BJP denies any bias but says it is opposed to the appeasement of any community.

The report also alleged some senior BJP leaders like former member of Delhi legislative assembly Kapil Mishra of fuelling the Feb 23 violence, but the party spokesman said there was no basis of such allegations.



Lawmakers from Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) clash with lawmakers from the main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) party with water balloons and fists inside the parliament in Taipei, Taiwan, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

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“Audiences play a key role in bringing about positive change in the industry”

— Dipankar Dipon

SHARMIN JOYA

Celebrated director and screenwriter Dipankar Dipon moved to Dhaka from Rangpur after completing his higher secondary education to pursue his passion for filmmaking. He garnered many accolades for his debut feature film, *Dhaka Attack* (2017). He started off his television career with *Shwapnoghuri* in 2002, while he was studying at the Dramatics Department of Jahangirnagar University. After making tele-fictions for nearly ten years, Dipon worked with renowned Indian filmmaker Anurag Kashyap in Mumbai for two years, starting from 2012. Owing to the ongoing pandemic, his films, *Operation Sundarban* and *Dhaka 2040*, are on hold.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

They were set to release around Eid-ul-Fitr this year. The director will be making a short film for the second season of *Ghor Bondi Shomoyer Golpo*, for Eid-ul-Azha. In a recent conversation with *The Daily Star*, he spoke about the current state of the television industry and more.

“Interventions of various agencies have damaged creative fields,” he says. “As a filmmaker, I have experienced difficulties in getting approvals for serious, mature content. Many brilliant directors in our industry have discontinued their work because of such barriers and disappointments.”

Dipon added that more often than not, genuine audiences of television are the sophisticated, middle-class populace, but unfortunately, the industry has abandoned them for the attention of seasonal audiences. He further explained that ‘floating’ subscribers will consume

whatever they will get hold of. As a result, the demand for rich content began to drop in recent years and investments in such productions were discouraged.

“Budget becomes a barrier because of the pressures of maintaining a balance between technicalities and creativity,” he adds. “For instance, if we consider the cost of every minute in a local production, the amount we get differs largely from the Indian industry. We get half of the budget and time. As a result, directors have to compromise in different departments. That being said, budget is not always the main obstacle. A good director knows how to bring out the best work with the given budget. On the other hand, a big budget project might fail on all other accounts. So, at the end of the day, it depends on the talent and vision.” He also added that a television production that should be done in five days, is now being completed in two days, resulting in quality deterioration.

With the increasing subscriptions to streaming platforms, the traditional television and advertisement industries are at stake. “Ad films are at risk because of the reduction in rates. At the same time, the presentations of advertisements have changed,” says Dipon. “The distributors are no longer limited to television. They are releasing online content as well. In such cases, agencies are not willing to invest as substantially as before. As a result, good creators are facing budget problems and the inexperienced individuals are taking advantage of the situation.”

According to Dipon, people the world over rarely watch anything on television these days. “Our television industry needs reformation; we need to familiarise ourselves with new technologies. Streaming platforms have created new scopes for us, and we have to use them wisely,” he asserts. “To keep up with international platforms, we need to have exclusive content, proper investments and business plans with practical and insightful guidelines for web platforms. Failing to do so will affect us both economically and culturally.”

Dipon further added that in recent years, some brilliantly made productions were overlooked, while some poorly executed ones grabbed people’s attention for their improper content. “Audiences play a key role in bringing about positive change in the industry, and they must be aware of their liabilities,” he concludes.



Artwork by Tayeba Begum Lipi.



Tayeba Begum Lipi on stitching through the pandemic

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the name ‘Lipi’ translates to ‘inscription’ in English. Her razor-sharp commentary on the politics of gender and female identity and representation has given her work a unique character. Trained in Drawing and Painting at the Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka, Tayeba Begum Lipi has outstretched her practice in installations, paintings and sculpture, printmaking, and video. She was featured in the book *50 Contemporary Women Artists: Groundbreaking Contemporary Art from 1960 to Now* by John Gosslee and Heather Ziesin, in 2018. Bagging a number of awards including the Grand Prize at the 11th Asian Art Biennale, Bangladesh 2004, she did a number of solo exhibitions and projects around the globe. In a rendezvous with *The Daily Star*, the artist talks about the trajectory of her art practice through the pandemic.

Lipi’s practice is rooted in themes of female marginality and the female body, drawing inspiration from the transitions in her own life. Through dramatic execution, she casts light on to the systemic exploitation and oppression within common situations, effortlessly showcasing colloquial concepts through rather unorthodox, metaphorical expressions. Her work is inspired by her childhood memories and the stories of her life that she puts into perspectives of time.

The artist passionately experiments with different mediums. However, her first shift was to eliminate limitations. “I developed an early vision deficiency, for which the colours on my canvas were not the same for me up close, as they were at a distance. I knew painting was something I probably could do less,” she recalled. Along with her partner, eminent artist Mahbubur Rahman, she has

been instrumental in bringing some fresh ideas of installation art and performance in the contemporary art zone of the country. Her installations arts are powerful. Playing with everyday objects and altering their meanings is a signature style for Lipi. Her works such as *Love Bed* (2012), *Comfy Bikinis* (2013), made with stainless steel razor blades and safety pins, are noteworthy. According to



Tayeba Begum Lipi

PHOTO: COURTESY

her, razor blades – objects that are perceived as ‘masculine’ -- can also define femininity. Gender issues are showcased in many of her works, including her video projection *I wed myself*. The video is a meticulous commentary of gender roles defined by the society. Last year, she showcased her sculpture, photography and video installations that explore issues of female identity at *Sundaram Tagore New York This Is What I Look(Ed) Like*.

The cancellation of her major shows has concerned her deeply. “Isolation was necessary, so we asked our closest associates to maintain it. Every day, the uncertainty of retuning to normalcy is really frustrating,” Lipi expresses. However, limitations have always been the igniting factor of her practice, and thus while locked at her living space, which is also her working studio, she returns to her old habits, transferring them into her practice. A stitching project, *Low Oxygen- No Oxygen*, is her new venture of medium which includes special painted fabric collected from Nepal and thread, a slow process through which she will create six works in series, inscribing low oxygen with in Bangla and English. “From a very young age, my siblings and I have stitched our own clothes. For some odd reason, I never implemented it in my artwork before. Since the novel virus affects the lungs and other internal organs, the series will emphasise the tragic parts of a human body as reflections of the time we are going through now,” she explains. She is the co-founder of Britto Arts Trust, the non-profit artists’ collective. She and her partner have undertaken a project titled *Tales of the Soil*, which in itself is part of a larger project, *Zero Waste- Food Art*, by the Trust. A number of artists from different locations have also collaborated in the larger project with their individual works. They are creating a kitchen garden in the premises of their house across the Buriganga River at Hasnabad. “Through the process, we will develop our artistic projects related to the garden and its products. It will help the neighbours around our home,” she explains. If the pandemic is contained soon, an exhibition of her work is due in Mumbai sometime next year.

Returning to the sets: How safe is it?

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

After reeling under the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the television and film fraternities have resumed shooting, on a limited scale. Productions have been underway in the country for a while, following all safety, hygiene and social distancing measures. However, while some artistes have begun shooting, others are still skeptical about returning to work. Many have started shooting for Eid-ul-Azha projects.



Shootings have resumed in a limited scale.

FILE PHOTO

Actor and director Salahuddin Lavlu, President of Directors’ Guild, is currently shooting in Uttara for his project, *Aha Ki Gonit*. “We are wearing PPE, including face masks, at work. We also have lemon tea for the cast and crew members on the sets. All of us are following safety measures,” he says. He also notes that as offices, salons, shopping malls and other establishments are steadily reopening, it is reasonable to resume shoots too, with strict conditions.

Celebrated actor Chanchal Chowdhury has started shooting for his Eid special serial, *Choritra Premik*. The seven-episode show is directed by Shamim Sezan and features Nusraat Faria opposite Chanchal. He will also start shooting for *Trumpcard* and *Protibeshire Bhalobasho*, both directed by Shamim Zaman. “No matter how careful we are, it is not possible to completely maintain social distance, while shooting,” says the actor. “I have decided to work with only a couple of directors at the moment, who I trust will take these measures seriously.”

“Being careful will reduce the risk of contamination. We are cleaning our indoor locations multiple times before we start shooting,” adds director Shamim Zaman.

On the other hand, Mosharraf Karim is not ready to start shooting just yet. “I don’t feel safe to go to work. I have decided to wait for a little longer and see how things turn out,” shares the actor, who is spending most of his time at home these days.

Zahid Hasan has resumed shooting, and is preparing for his upcoming Eid release, *Gofur Kakar Tormuj*, directed by Himu Akram. “I am prioritising my safety,” he says. “However, there are other concerns as well. We have to support the daily wage earners of the industry. So, after a point, we decided to resume shoots.” S A Haque Alik, General Secretary of Directors’ Guild, asserts that they are taking steps to ensure safety, and reduce the chances of coronavirus infections on the sets.

Apurba and Mezbaben had begun shooting for an Eid special tele-fiction. However, the shoot was halted, after two people in the unit tested positive for COVID-19. “It seems like despite being so careful, the measures were just not enough,” says Apurba. “I have signed some more projects, but now, I doubt that we can start shooting anytime soon.” Nadia Ahmed, on the other hand, will start shooting for her seven-episode Eid special television series from July 22, abiding by the safety rules.

Saju Muntasher, General Secretary of Television and Digital Programme Producers’ Association Bangladesh, requested all artists to be very careful when going to work. “I urge artistes to only come to the sets if they feel healthy,” he says. “Others should not suffer because of our carelessness.” Everyone from the administration to the respective guilds and individual artistes and technicians are keeping their fingers crossed, hoping that the resumption of shoots in these tough times is sustainable.



A Walk Down The Memory Lane Looking back with Shanta Islam

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Shanta Islam, popularly known for portraying a journalist in the hit series, *Rupnagar*, on BTV, was once one of the most celebrated television stars in the country. She has several critically acclaimed projects under her belt, including stage productions. She has been away from the limelight for a while. In a recent chat with *TheDailyStar*, she looks back on her glorious career.

Shanta started acting while studying at the University of Dhaka in the eighties. Being the elected Literary Editor of Rokeya Hall twice, she values her student life immensely. She first acted on the stage opposite Bulbul Ahmed at her university. She also worked with Asaduzzaman Noor and Raisul Islam Asad. Once, Ramendu Majumdar and many other notable personalities came to watch one of her theatre plays. “Ramendu Majumdar inspired me to join theatre,” she shares. “He always told me to work with a calm mind. His advice has helped to never give up. I had some wonderful experiences working in theatre.”

Her first theatre play, *Juddha And Juddha*, was written by Syed Shamsul Haque. It was an instant hit. Ferdousi Mazumder, Abdullah Al Mamun and Khaled Khan among others were her co-stars in the production.

She then started her career on television through BTV. She worked opposite Syed Ahsan Ali Sydney in her first television drama, *Obhijog*.

Written by Imdadul Haque Milan, *Nayok*, another one of her television dramas, garnered immense popularity. Though the production was shut down midway, Shanta and her co-star Afzal Hossain were lauded for their work.

The critically acclaimed show, *Rupnagar*, brought the actor immense fame. “I believe that this show paved the way for the modern era of television dramas,” says Shanta. “It is one of my most memorable works.”

Growing up in Sylhet and Dhaka, Shanta attended school in Sylhet. “I have beautiful memories of those days,” she shares.

After joining Aranyak Natyadal, she won many awards and accolades, including the Best Actor at the BACHSUS Awards for the play, *Moyurshinghashon*. Her play, *Agunmukha*, also received critical acclaim.

“I stopped working because I wanted to spend time with my son and be an active part of his life,” said Shanta, when asked about being away from the industry. After finishing his higher studies, her son is now residing in Canada.

Throughout her career, Shanta has directed twenty-five television dramas, authored books and organised several television programmes. “My experiences as an actor have enriched my life,” she concludes.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



All Eyes On Gabtoli



[MooPac:]
Raja Babu, Gayal, Mirakadim. Y'all know how this go, all eyes on Gabtoli, The OG Roll up in the haat, is that right? All eyes on me, but you know what? I bet you got it twisted you don't know who to trust
 Where is the promised market that would bring millions for us
 I thought there would people here who would holla when they see me.
 And I'll never let him be sorry for the day my human finally freed me
 I was promised a caravan now every time I ride
 Mooiin' at every car that we pass by.
 Until I die; I was to live the life of a boss cow
 Cause now even when I'm tied, I bet a better life is starting right now
 The futures in my eyes, cause all I want is grass and things
 A five-double-oh Semi-truck, flauntin' new garlands and flashy rings
 So many men were promised to pursue me like a dream
 But one swift kick and been known to disappear fore your eyes like a dope fiend
 It seems, my main thing was to get my humans major paid
 They saw my hump and said it was sharper than a razor blade
 Before I left, I told the forgotten humwoman to depend on me like the first and fifteenth
 They might hold me for a second, but these punks won't get me
 We had four cows, in a truck, and eight horns, screamin' COW LIFE every time we pass -- that's how we warn.
 Live the life of a thug city cow, till I die.
 Live the life of a cow boss, off these dope city GMO grass gettin' high.
 All eyes on Gabtoli,
 Why is it empty?
 The beards are watchin', they are plottin' to get me
 Will I survive, will I die, largely depended on my Indian cousins in Gabtoli
 Now they tryin' to price me on the roadside at 40 grand. Man say I am eighty,
 I moo to say I was raised wrong, but come over and weigh me,
 I got all the teeth you need, And unlike Gayal, I'm not crazy
 Plus, what you even want with me all alone?
 I thought it was your piety that would reach him, and not my bones.
 But now packin' hundreds in my drawers; frick the law
 How did I go from the promised beautiful exhibition to livin' rough and raw
 Thought I'd be catchin' eyes at a fast rate, ballin' in the fast lane
 I been Hustlin' 'til the mornin', and won't have stopped until the cash came
 The money is mandatory, I bet all these garlands are for my stress
 This city lifestyle huh? They even got me equipped with a harness
 I tell my human "Make sure your eyes is on the mill ticket"
 Get your money next year, you rascal, let's get rich and we'll kick it
 Live the life of a thug city cow, till I die.
 Live the life of a cow boss, off these dope city GMO grass gettin' high.
 All eyes on Gabtoli,
 Why is it empty?

Where are they now: Drivers who fled the scene of an accident

SHOAIB AHMED SAYAM

After a disastrous road crash in 2015, former trucker Rabiul Hasan's life turned upside down, or right-side up, because he was miserable before but is living the dream now.

"I needed that crash. It was pivotal for thinking over whether I still wanted to run over unsuspecting people," he said, as nostalgia filled the air.

Rabiul, now retired as he says, happily spends days with his beloved family, since fleeing the scene. Locals frequently gather to see Rabiul act in elaborate storylines with his two blonde sons for TikTok, which, according to him, is a great bonding exercise.

"Driving trucks is a family tradition. My father was a trucker, so was his father, and his father was a train conductor so they disowned him," Rabiul said. "They used to say operating trains is for sissies; you just go on tracks, no freedom.

"They failed to realise they're not so free themselves, shackled by dogmas of lineage. I, however, want to break free

and let my children do whatever they want," he said.

But breaking free will not be easy, as trails of his past, in the form of cases filed against him, loom over his head.

When asked about the cases, Officer-in-Charge (OC) Rakibul Hussain of Kowtuholi Police Station said, "Investigation is ongoing. He is still on the run."

After showing him Rabiul's TikTok videos, the visibly shaken OC said, "Investigation is ongoing."

While Rabiul is taking it easy, Tariqul Huq, who had his momentous "accident" in 2018, is now more ambitious than ever.

Tariqul, a former bus driver, now makes educational content on YouTube.

"After running away from the ACCIDENT, I realised how essential it is to educate my fellow transport workers," he said. "I now make videos explaining how to effectively flee the scene, train minors to drive and handle protests

against us, among other subjects."

For emotional support, Tariqul also produces motivational videos on his channel "Trucker Carson". "This is needed, as non-transport workers will never understand the pain experienced when we abandon our cherished vehicles and run the other way or lose the race to get more passengers," he said.

His videos get thousands of views, with accused drivers seeking legal and financial advice in the comment section. "I'm honoured to be of service," Tariqul added.

Many like Rabiul and Tariqul have sacrificed their need for speed to venture into unknown territories. But even then, they will never be able to leave their love for real-life bumper cars behind.

"The thought of crashing into a road divider gets my spine tingling," an excited Tariqul said.

"Yeah, I wish I could ram into a cow-laden truck just one more time," Rabiul chimed in, with a grin on his face.

Then



Now



The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

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Why is there no database of the poor and vulnerable?

Its absence is fuelling inequity in access and distribution

WE are concerned that four months since the onset of Covid-19 in the country, the government is yet to prepare a reliable database of the poor and vulnerable, which continues to pose a major challenge for the distribution of food aid to those in need. From the beginning, the government has insisted that the country has sufficient food reserves to ward off any possibility of a famine, but unfortunately it has not been able to ensure a systematic and equitable distribution of these reserves. As such, vast numbers of those worst hit by the pandemic have been left out of social safety net programmes; corruption and mismanagement in distribution of relief have been rampant. Private initiatives have also fallen short of reaching the vulnerable in a systematic manner, given the absence of a database.

Food secretary, Mosammat Nazmanar Khanum, in a virtual programme organised by the Right to Food Bangladesh, a platform of food security campaigners, admitted that an extensive study is needed to prepare a complete and flawless database to ensure food security. She asked the platform to carry out such a study to find out the exact number of vulnerable people. While we appreciate her candour and her willingness to give space to the development sector, we wonder why the government itself is not preparing such a list, given the complexities and difficulties involved in identifying poor households across the country in the absence of a fully-functioning elaborate identification infrastructure. There needs to be coordination between local government and NGOs in this regard to ensure speedy creation of such a database and effective distribution of food aid.

The government is still using the 2016 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), the last official database for assessing poverty, to roll out social safety net programmes. This needs to be updated on an urgent basis to reflect the growing and current number of poor and vulnerable households so that effective and targeted initiatives can be undertaken. Otherwise, no matter how extensive the food aid packages are, a large number of poor households will continue to go hungry.

Sixty-four-year-old takes bookselling business from the streets to social media

Serving the bibliophiles with commitment

A recent report in this paper sheds light on the sanguine story of Habibur Rahman, a book vendor who came to Dhaka from Narsingdi in 1988. Missing out on the opportunity to attain literacy himself and unable to educate his sons due to the hardships of life, Habibur Rahman resorted to find solace in his bookselling business which brought the joy of books to readers. He started selling books on the street in front of High Court and at Sadarghat but was shunned by many who showed nothing but disrespect towards him. The 64-year-old later settled at the University of Dhaka (DU) campus and has been enlightening many young loyal customers, who were welcoming, for the past 16 years. Many students even assisted him financially during his difficult times.

As the pandemic struck, Habibur's business took a blow—from selling books worth BDT 3,000 per day to barely making BDT 500 now—and it became extremely difficult for him to continue with such meagre income. Upon being advised by a regular customer, and with the help of his son, the father-son duo took an innovative approach and decided to conduct the 32-year-old business digitally through social media by opening a page titled, Book Destiny. Much to their delight, the response was overwhelming and continues to garner traction amongst DU's online student communities. Book Destiny has already delivered books to Farmgate, Khilgaon, Lalmatia, Mirpur, Moghbazar and Mohammadpur and intends to deliver outside Dhaka in the near future.

Despite the abundance in sales made online, Habibur's humble efforts bring him back to his endearing salespoint—on the footpath at Shahbagh—where he continues to set up shop. He feels strongly about the physical interaction he makes with his treasured customers. We have seen many startups skyrocketing to become billion-dollar businesses, all because of the opportunities made available on the digital platform. While Book Destiny may not be on par in terms of such magnitude, it deserves praise for being so committed to its customer-base. We believe book lovers should support such a cause and help spread the message. Such innovative ideas can easily be adopted by other booksellers too. Apart from books, there are a plethora of items available online that make our daily lives easier. As the economic crisis continues, with the help of online marketing, especially during this pandemic, it will be an innovative approach for vendors to deliver those products at our doorsteps, benefitting both parties.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Avoid going out unnecessarily

Besides taking over our daily lives, the pandemic has also taken away our right to leave our homes to visit family and friends. Ever since the lockdown was lifted, I have noticed that a large number of people have been going out for unnecessary reasons and not even following social distancing and other safety precautions. I am not saying that people cannot leave their homes, but they must understand that by staying outdoors unnecessarily, they are at risk of contracting the virus and spreading it as well.

Those who are getting out of their homes without proper protection by not wearing masks or gloves, and hanging out in groups, are just making our fight against the virus more difficult. It is absurd that so many people have taken such a careless approach.

Salma Akhter, by email



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND
SHAMSAD MORTUZA

URING his regular stroll in the palace garden, Emperor Akbar once saw many crows flying around. He asked his minister, "How many crows are there in your kingdom, Birbal?"

Birbal quipped, "There are 95,463 crows in your kingdom, Excellency."

"How could you be so sure?" the Emperor asked.

"You can get them counted, Excellency," Birbal said.

The Emperor again said, "What if there are less?"

"Then some of them must have gone to some neighbouring kingdom for a visit."

"And if there are more than that, then?" asked Akbar.

"Then it means that other crows have come to visit their relatives in our kingdom," said the witty minister.

Thus Birbal got a suitable reward for counting crows by not counting crows.

Our obsession with numbers while hoping for the coronavirus curve to flatten makes this story quite topical. Every day we are counting new casualties, and counting days for this pandemic to be over. Any discerning reader must have understood by now that the trickster that I am referring to is not Birbal, but a hospital owner who made exorbitant amounts of money by pretending to count Covid-19 patients. However, in so doing, in no way am I equating patients undergoing this pandemic with the crows. Crows are the hapless victims, albeit reference points, in this narrative curve.

However, this analogy does involve an animal, rather its instincts. In lack of subtlety, let me say: Shahed the trickster is an animal. It is not unnatural for a trickster to be associated with animals. Tricksters in folk tales are humans with animal attributes, and vice versa. The cunningness or foolishness of a literary trickster such as Birbal, Nasreddin Hodia, Gopal Bhar, Mulla do Piaja can be interchangeably assigned to a fox, an alligator, a coyote, a possum and the like. In many communities, animals are part of human kinship. Hence, we call the foolish fox an uncle. In Western tradition, an animal belongs to the lower strata as it lacks the thinking faculty—its psyche. According to Aristotle, beasts have sensory perceptions, desires, memory, imagination, and even emotions. But animals don't have a soul, which we may call conscience in today's term.

When RAB nabbed Shahed from the outskirts of the neighbouring country, and its footage was being live-streamed, I told myself, what a scavenger! Yet this man sweet talked to climb up the social ladder. He is a conman who appeared in talk

shows, used his media tag to befriend the high and mighty, and put on a peacock's tail to blend in. I guess now we will have his plumes removed and wings clipped.

Shahed by all counts is an animal who does not have any conscience. Or how can one toy with the emotion of the people who are suffering from a fatal disease? Throwing away the test samples and fabricating test results are acts of greed that has its origin in material gain in this earthly life. I am not religious enough to foretell what divine provisions there are for animals of this sort! But I sincerely hope that he gets exemplary punishment to deter others from committing similar wrongs.

According to Investopedia, "Economic rent is an amount of money earned that exceeds that which is economically or socially necessary. Economic rents often arise from market inefficiencies or information asymmetries." One such example is contract rent where involved parties engage in a mutually agreed-upon deal granting one party unequal benefits. The over-invoicing of the price of a pillow during procurement for officials working in the Rooppur Power Plant is a glaring case in point.

A little bird told me, there are some government officials who run or have share in consultancy or trading firms. These officials hire third-party agents,

or second homes in Malaysia. They are the ones who can fly away in chartered planes. Yet when they are interred in their graves, the vaults in which they secured money become useless. But it is the duty of the government to make sure to stop the culture of impunity in which the scavengers have increased manifold. Flushing them temporarily out of the country to show that there are a less number of crows will do no good. If we really want to attain the desired economic growth, we first need to take care of these scavengers who circle over the dead and the dying ones.

In his last public speech, Bangabandhu uttered some unpleasant



Surrounded by officers, Shahed, in blue vest, being taken to the Rab Headquarters right after he was flown back to Dhaka.

Then again, Shahed is just one of many countless crows (read scavengers) that are out there. He is just one conman. There is a controversial con-woman too. A doctor and her husband are breaking bad and making news. A handsome couple—who would have thought! Reality isn't what it always seems. Could it be that they are mere pawns on someone else's chessboard? How do I know? I don't, but any thinking animal can make an intellectual guess by looking at the pattern.

The government has been extra careful to keep its affiliated party cadres away from the fight against coronavirus. It relied mostly on the institutional bureaucracy and its public officials. And these officials in turn often allow a certain type of economic rent to flourish.

give them inside information to get an upper-hand in the bidding process, or do the work themselves under the guise of phony firms. If I have heard it from a little bird, then it must not be a state secret; others who have ears of the big birds must know it too. People like Sabrina, Arif, Shahed are the puppets on strings. Their dance stopped because the cue music had been stopped for them. Now they are performing an act of a different sort. They rose to fame in the first act, and now they are having a spectacular fall at the will of the scribe. Their current job is to keep us entertained and distracted for a while. There are some intelligent people out there who are busy in outwitting the system. They are the ones investing in condominiums in Dubai Palm Beach or Begumpara in Toronto

truth, "My peasants are not corrupt. My labourers are not corrupt. Who takes bribe then? Who carry out black marketing? Who serve as foreign agents? Who does money laundering? Who does hoarding/stockpiling? It is us, the 5 percent educated people. The bribe takers and corrupts are amongst us, the 5 percent educated people. We must change our characters and purify our souls" (Suhrawardy Uddan, March 26, 1975).

The number of educated people has gone up, and so has the level of corruption. It's time we say, bring back conscience; and stamp out corruption.

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Not a blue wave, but a blue tsunami

Corona pushing Trump to an electoral abyss

"The Martians—dead!... slain, after all man's devices had failed, by the humblest things that God, in his wisdom, has put upon this earth."

— HG Wells, "The War of the Worlds"



ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

IN "The War of the Worlds," HG Wells' science fiction novel, the world is brought to its knees by a vastly more technologically advanced species. The tides are turned after the humble bacteria triumphs where man failed, felling the Martians.

In an uncanny echo, US President Donald J Trump may have at last found his match in an invisible virus which is resistant to all his bullying and bluster.

First, a caveat is in order. A lot can change before November, when Trump and the Republican Party face a terrified electorate. With less than 100 days remaining, however, the window of opportunity is closing. Fast.

Putative Democratic nominee Joe Biden has a solid, stable margin in nationwide polls. An *Economist/YouGov* poll finds Biden leading Trump nationally, 49 percent to 40 percent.

The US presidential race is determined by an arcane system of state-by-state victories. A Change Research poll shows Biden ahead in the six battleground states of Arizona, Florida, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

The scrupulously non-partisan Cook Political Report is the gold standard for handicapping US political races. "This election is looking more like a Democratic tsunami than simply a Blue wave," wrote its highly-respected analyst Amy Walter. "Republican strategists we've spoken with this week think Trump is close to the point of no return. A couple of others wondered if Trump had reached his 'Katrina' moment: a permanent loss of trust and faith of the majority of voters."

Trump's flaws are many—his mind-boggling mendacity, his sorry parade of aides, his embarrassing failure to grasp important issues, his brazen penchant for pardoning convicted acolytes.

However, it's the corona crisis that's ultimately proving to be his undoing.

"Poorer nations throughout Latin

America, the Middle East, South Asia and Africa are bearing a growing share of the caseload, even as wealthier countries in Western Europe and East Asia enjoy a relative respite after having beaten back the worst effects through rigorously enforced lockdowns." *The Washington Post* reported. "And then there's the United States, which leads the world in new cases and... has shown no sign of being able to regain control."

There is a simple reason for this mess.

The US is unique among developed nations in fighting science instead of embracing it. Wearing a mask in public, standard elsewhere, is a matter of bitter partisan debate. The Trump

home to a quarter of the world's reported coronavirus infections and deaths, despite being home to only 4.4 percent of the global population.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta is one of the world's most respected research institutions, sought out by the entire world to deal with public health disasters like this. Yet four former CDC chiefs lamented in an article in *The Washington Post*: "It is extraordinary for (CDC) guidelines to be undermined ...

"The four of us led the CDC over a period of more than 15 years, spanning Republican and Democratic administrations alike. We cannot recall

His tone-deaf response to anti-racist protests are particularly anachronistic. It echoes another Republican president who targeted white resentment of Blacks in the last century, the disgraced President Richard Nixon.

So, what's Trump's response to all this? Mean tweets about his pet peeve *du jour*, and dark observations about the other issue where he has failed to grasp the nation's zeitgeist—massive nationwide protests against the recent racist police killing of George Floyd, a Black man.

His tone-deaf response to anti-racist protests are particularly anachronistic. It echoes another Republican president who targeted white resentment of Blacks in the last century, the disgraced President Richard Nixon.

"Trump in recent weeks has repeatedly reprised two of Richard Nixon's most memorable rallying cries, promising to deliver 'law and order' for the 'silent majority'. But... America today is a radically different country than it was when Nixon rode those arguments to win the presidency in 1968 amid widespread anti-war protests, massive civil unrest... and rising crime rates," Ronald Brownstein writes in *The Atlantic* magazine.

"Trump hopes that reprising Nixon-style messages about disorder will allow him to mobilise massive margins and turnout among the white voters who feel threatened by these changes. But the country's underlying evolution shows how narrow a path Trump has chosen. He is betting the Republican future on resurrecting a past that is dissolving before his eyes."

What's true for *haute cuisine* is just as true for politics: You can't make the same soufflé rise twice.

And thank goodness for that.

Ashfaque Swapan is a contributing editor for *Siliconer*, a digital daily for South Asians in the United States.



Democratic presidential hopeful former Vice President Joe Biden, left, and US President Donald Trump.

PHOTO: AFP

administration recently handed US media talking points undermining its most respected and top infectious disease specialist, Dr Anthony Fauci.

"The fight with Fauci illustrated what, to many supporters of Trump, has been a disturbing pattern: ill-timed battles with little evident public support that do nothing to... articulate a rationale for another term in office or contain a pandemic that is both crippling the nation and dooming his re-election chances," CNN reported.

What's so heartbreaking is the US is paying a terrible price for it. The US is

over our collective tenure a single time when political pressure led to a change in the interpretation of scientific evidence." They added: "We're seeing the terrible effect of undermining the CDC play out in our population. Wilful disregard for public health guidelines is, unsurprisingly, leading to a sharp rise in infections and deaths... China, using the same mitigation tools available to us and with a far larger population, has had just a tiny fraction of the 3.1 million cases reported here.

"Trying to fight this pandemic while subverting scientific expertise is like fighting blindfolded."

BANGLADESH AND WATER

A complicated relationship

WILLEM VAN DEURSEN and MYISHA AHMAD

DID you ever consider that water management may not always improve livelihoods? For a long time, we thought better water management will indeed make a better country of Bangladesh. And maybe you are thinking the same. And of course, it is true up to a certain level. But we sometimes seem to forget that our goal should not be to manage water issues better in Bangladesh. Rather it should be to enhance living conditions for people. And this simple truth turns our desire for improved water management into just one of the multiple means. There is a greater, further reaching goal beyond that.

Why is this important, you may ask? Well, we think, strict focus on only water management is blurring the perspective on the overall greater objective: improving livelihoods of people.

Nature has handed Bangladesh (also the home country of one of the authors, The Netherlands) with, let's say, a very peculiar share of all the forces there could be. Water is everywhere, flooding and cyclones and storms. This abundance of water seems to classify Bangladesh as one of the most uninhabitable places on earth. The misery doesn't seem to end here though. An old folk song goes: "Lalon morey jol pipashai, kaasse thakte nadi Meghna (Lalon suffers from thirst of water whilst river Meghna flows nearby)". Water here is either too much or too less. Now, take a step back, think again. The truth is far more nuanced, far more subtle, far more interesting. Bengalis proudly introduce their country as "Nodi-Matrik Bangladesh"—a word that compares the mighty rivers (Nodi) to a Mother (Mata), signifying the strong and gentle, unrelenting and yielding, protecting and releasing, demanding and unassuming power of mother's love. This largest delta of the world is a very fertile place, with a climate that is favourable for vegetation and thus for agriculture. And this very environment has enabled numerous Bengalis to carve out a living in the "most uninhabitable place on earth". Thousands of years. Millions of people. So, there must be something good here. There must be something very valuable here. Nodi-Matrik Bangladesh. Think again...

Let's step back to reality and rethink the

purpose of water management. Why do we manage the water after all? Fact is, water management is only worth the effort we spend on it, if and only if, it ensures improvement of the life situation of the people. Only if it offers better changes for the children of these people, empowers people, makes life a little less marginalised.

The question we are raising is not whether water management could ultimately benefit the people. It undoubtedly does. We are rather concerned whether the current practice of large-scale top-down infrastructure-oriented management is the most effective way to address the water issues. And we think the answer to that question is negative. The current practice largely focuses on infrastructural approaches forcing engineering on people without properly understanding the needs and situation of the community. Such approaches seem to be willing to sacrifice functioning, well adapted livelihoods for optimised monocultures of agricultural production. This

optimised agricultural production is obtained by interventions that can be summarised as Flood Control Drainage and Irrigation (FCDI) projects, which basically aims to optimise yields by obtaining full control over the hydrologic system. Some substantial projects of the past can be highlighted, such as the Flood Action Plan of the 1990s, the Coastal Embankment Projects, the larger irrigation and river barrages projects. All of these examples are spectacular in their failure. There are, however, other projects, just as spectacular—but this time in their successes. The most prominent one to highlight is of course the hugely successful Flood and Cyclone Forecasting and Cyclone Shelter programmes, but also projects, such as rehabilitations of wetlands and local small-scale adaptations such as the (century old concepts of) floating farming.

We would like to point out the difference between the two approaches—"fighting the natural system to make it behave" versus "adapting people's livelihoods to learn how

to survive and live with the system". These two schemes direct to very different ways of water management. Most lessons from the past show that the first approach of trying to control the system has little chance of success and carries huge consequences disrupting social and environmental processes. We prefer the second approach. Although a little less ambitious, it has a larger success rate and lower impact from social and environmental disruption. This poses importance to serious efforts of involving local people, their knowledge and experience, in the strategic planning. And thus effectively abandon the perspective in which we aim for huge infrastructures to totally control the system.

Water management strategy in Bangladesh at present is fragmented and public participation in water projects is an utmost necessity. A united effort of water experts and the general public (local communities, farmers) through information sharing, diffusion of new technology and shared governance is required,

practicing not just top-down approach but also prioritising bottom up perspective. It is high time we shift the perception from single-focused management action towards a less standardised and more reflexive process. Thus, enhancing stakeholders' capacity to adapt to complexities and uncertainties of future climate challenges, viewing water management not as a conventional or prescriptive system, rather as an evolving learning process. Water management is too important to leave it to just the water managers.

We all have heard the story before, we all have paid lip service to participatory water management, and we all have said that this time it will be different. But it is time that we really need to start evaluating our previous projects and learn from the mistakes we made then. Otherwise we are condemned to repeat the same mistakes again. We should know better by now.

Bangladesh has made incredible steps in improving livelihoods of people. From becoming self-sufficient in rice production to realising huge economic growth through textile, jute, seafood, shipbuilding, pharmaceutical industries and so on—the success is impressive and overwhelming. But the future still holds some challenges. Most of them are related directly or indirectly to water. And there are major and minor water related projects in the planning pipeline. Combined they will cost a fortune. Bangladesh has to make some very wise decisions about these projects. Are they worth these hefty investments or are they just white elephants? Rhetorical plans, exorbitant real construction costs, but with "benefits" yet to be realised! Are these the most efficient projects, or are they overambitious, not well in-tune with the local situations and the local needs? And in the end, the very hard question is: which way is the most effective to improve the quality of life? "Nodi-Matrik Bangladesh" surely has some very hard thinking to do to find the wise answers.

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PHOTO: STAR

Water management strategy in Bangladesh at present is fragmented and public participation in water projects is an utmost necessity.

The rise in plastic pollution during Covid-19 crisis

FARAH KABIR and ANHARA RABBANI

EVER since the pandemic began this year, countries across the globe have been striving to protect their people from the virus through various preventive measures where protective gear also known as PPE are in high demand. On the contrary, this has dramatically increased the unsustainable use of plastic posing significant risk for the environment. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) which includes masks, gloves and goggles have become indispensable plastic products for everyone currently witnessing the coronavirus pandemic. The global health crisis has given rise to the consumption of PPE at a staggering rate, which is considered a shield for combatting the virus. PPE is playing a key role in protecting people, especially the frontline workers, who are fighting day and night to cure millions of patients ever since the outbreak started. This has led to some tough questions for those of us who are continually advocating for environmental protection and sustainability—how are we going to manage the devastating impact of plastic waste generated due to Covid-19?

The worldwide lockdown during the pandemic initially led to positive change to the environment. Reduction in air travel and road transport brought significant drop in the daily CO2 emission level across the globe. However, an unsurmountable challenge has emerged as countries are stockpiling plastic products such as PPEs to prevent the spread of Covid-19 virus. Growing number of households have also been seen to hoard groceries which too come in single-use plastic packaging. According to the World Health Organisation, it is estimated that 89 million medical masks are needed globally every month while the coronavirus pandemic lasts,

together with 76 million examination gloves and 1.6 million goggles and face visors. An article in *The Economist* says that consumption of single-use plastic may have grown by 250-300 percent in the United States alone. A research report has forecasted a spike in the global disposable-mask market from an estimation of USD 800 million in 2019 to USD 166 billion in 2020. A crash in oil price has made it easier for industries to produce more plastic as petroleum, one of the main constituent of plastic composition, has become extremely affordable.

Ever since the outbreak of coronavirus, billions of gloves and protective masks are being disposed every day at a global scale. According to a report published by Environment and Social Development Organisation (ESDO), Bangladesh alone has generated around 14,500 tonnes of PPE and other hazardous plastic waste in March 2020. In order to curb the spread, healthcare workers are mandated to wear PPE and government has ordered people to wear a mask every time they go in public spaces. Few opted for masks made out of fabric, but its effectiveness remains highly questionable. As the consumption of these plastic products have become an everyday norm for us, uncontrolled disposal of these items is severely impacting the environment. Hazardous PPE wastes are piling up in landfills, seabeds and oceans, further adding to the existing plastic pollution and threatening the marine ecosystem. Used PPEs, especially medical waste from hospitals, are also creating health hazard for waste pickers who are responsible for collecting and transporting the waste to the storages. The lockdown period has given rise to online shopping and food delivery where most items come in unrecyclable plastic packaging, an

inevitable choice people are making at this point.

Scientists have been warning us about the impacts of plastic pollution for decades. Globally the production of plastic has quadrupled over the years and the scientific community is worried that if this growth continues, the entire plastic production

Plastic waste is considered one of the greatest environmental challenges that can have devastating impact on land, wildlife, oceans and human health. Ironically, the issue of plastic pollution has taken a back seat during the pandemic.

will make up to 15 percent of total global emission by 2050. Plastic waste is considered one of the greatest environmental challenges that can have devastating impact on land, wildlife, oceans and human health. Ironically, the issue of plastic pollution has taken a back seat during the pandemic. What we are using now to fight the global public health crisis, is contributing to a bigger crisis. The year 2020 was noted to be the year for climate and environment action, where countries are said to be gearing up to take

a comprehensive and coordinated effort in addressing climate change. Adopting circular economy was considered a catalyst for accelerating implementation of the global agenda 2030 and became a key interest of focus for government, development agencies and corporations. Number of industries had started recycling initiatives to show their commitment in protecting the planet. However, due to the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, government and corporations are finding it hard to live up to their commitment of sustainable practices, as it has become critical for both parties to revive the economy at any cost. Ecological sustainability is being given the least priority as countries are racing to revive their economy. Many recycling businesses have been reported to close down because of fear of contracting the virus from plastic waste, lack of staff member and high overhead cost.

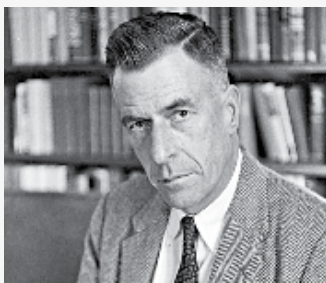
The global pandemic has highlighted crucial gaps in our structural system among which plastic pollution has lingered for ages. Managing this unprecedented level of plastic waste will be a challenge for countries, especially developing nations like Bangladesh who has poor, unregulated waste management system that can further trigger health risk for workers from informal sector. The current pandemic situation has made it difficult for us to make a conscious choice due to not having an alternative solution. What we require is to make informed planning at different level and timescale. During the recovery period it's imperative that government consider ecological sustainability as a key priority in disaster preparedness. This also means investment in efficient waste management system and allocating resource for research and development. We must look into a post-pandemic recovery through the lens of

environmental sustainability and resilience, where green initiatives are integrated within the economic stimulus package to create a win-win situation for both economic revival and sustainable development of the country. Most importantly, a shift in behaviour is needed where every citizen makes conscious choice of avoiding the use of unrecyclable plastic products in everyday life to protect the environment.

The current crisis requires urgent government action to prevent long term environmental risk and health hazards. At this point it is critical that the government, along with experts and development actors, establish a practical guideline on the usage and disposal of PPE for medical facilities, factories, malls, shops and local bazaars. A strict monitoring mechanism and law enforcement engaging the local authorities are required to ensure that guidelines are being implemented at every facility. Media can play a crucial role in disseminating the guideline and creating public awareness. This can also become an employment opportunity for young people to engage in monitoring process of waste disposal at community level. It is important to ensure health and safety of workers involved in waste management where they are provided with PPE to protect themselves from virus-related hazards. While a number of medical facilities are burning the used PPEs, it's critical to ensure that these activities do not cause air borne hazards. Finally, we strongly urge for a specially trained taskforce to oversee nationwide management of Covid-19 related waste to prevent further degradation of the environment.

Farah Kabir is the Country Director of ActionAid Bangladesh, Anhara Rabbani is the Resilience and Environmental Sustainability Officer of ActionAid Bangladesh.

QUOTABLE Quote



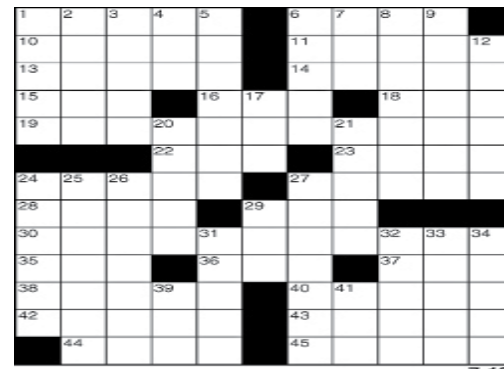
JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH (1908-2006)
American economist.

It is a far, far better thing to have a firm anchor in nonsense than to put out on the troubled seas of thought.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| ACROSS | 36 Clumsy one | 9 Increases |
| 1 Auctions | 37 Buddy | 12 Declares |
| 6 Piercing tools | 38 Waned | 17 Question of identity |
| 10 Swindler | 40 Fill with joy | 20 Like a wet blanket |
| 11 Decreases | 42 Worker's reward | 21 Orange shade |
| 13 Entertain | 43 Seth of "Superbad" | 24 More adept |
| 14 Beginning | 44 Golf pegs | 25 Circus performer |
| 15 King, in France | 45 Used up | 26 Store giveaway |
| 16 Binary base | | 27 Strong-boxes |
| 18 Tax-time helper: | DOWN | 29 Govt. agcy. since 1934 |
| Abbr. | 1 Neck wrap | 31 Does some programming |
| 19 Breakfast choice | 2 Knight wear | 32 Mirror sight |
| 22 Cry of insight | 3 Comic Anderson | 33 Consumed |
| 23 Detective's find | 4 Dawn goddess | 34 Fragrance |
| 24 Eccentric | 5 Not detailed | 39 Language suffix |
| 27 Cowboy wear | 6 Underway, to | 41 Cut off |
| 28 Pale tan | 7 Victory | |
| 29 Enemy | 8 Milan opera house | |
| 30 Fast food side | | |
| 35 Sock part | | |

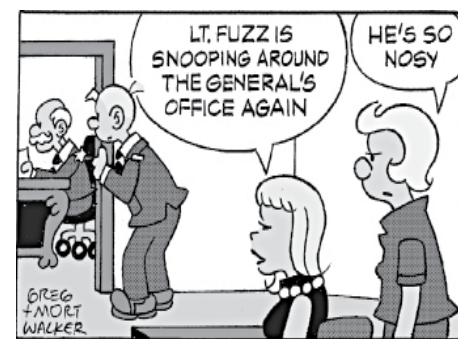
WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



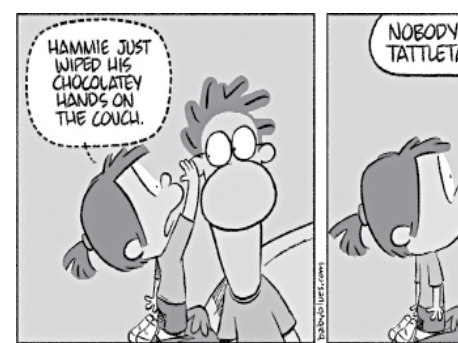
BETLE BAILEY



BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES



BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



Remembering Jane Austen on her 203rd Death Anniversary

Sparkling Elizabeth and Timid Anne: Two Sides of the Same Coin?

SOHANA MANZOOR

Readers over the last two centuries have generally liked the bright and sparkling world of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, whereas *Persuasion* has often been described as "a departure from the rest of the novels, a turning away from the brilliant and public play of the mind for the deep and private truths of the heart" (Morgan 168). Yet there are certain aspects in these two novels that have made at least some critics and readers question if *Persuasion* might be a revisiting of Austen's earlier novel. The reawakening of feelings and emotions of Anne Elliot and Fredrick Wentworth is a revisiting of what they had before they broke up. Anne's visit to Kellynch, Wentworth's return to Somersetshire and the

loss, misunderstanding, and separation. But why did Austen deign to look back and explore themes and scenes of such a successful novel as *Pride and Prejudice*? In a letter to her sister Cassandra on February 4, 1813, Jane Austen wrote that *Pride and Prejudice* was "rather too light & bright & sparkling;-- it wanted shade;-- it wants to be stretched out here & there with a long Chapter" (Letters 203). Indeed, one theme dark and somber in this sparkling novel is the marriage of Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the idea that a woman of twenty-seven cannot introduce romantic love is forcefully implemented through the decision made by Charlotte Lucas. At the age of seven-and-twenty, Charlotte encourages and accepts the proposal of the pompous Mr. Collins because she has little money and beauty, and is unwilling to lead the life of a spinster. Her reasoning is practical, reflecting on crude expectations of a society that appreciates a woman only when she has entered marriage. In her last novel, however, Austen decides to re-introduce and re-assess how much chance a woman of twenty-seven has in inspiring love and in the marriage-mart. Anne Elliot, the heroine of *Persuasion*, is about the same age when she is reacquainted with her old love.

At first glance, however, Elizabeth Bennet and Anne Elliot seem to have few similarities. Elizabeth is all that Anne is not—sparkling and lively, witty, probably rather impudent, and observant, taking pride in understanding people's characters. And yet, most readers forget how *Pride and Prejudice* sets out. Even though Elizabeth's father praises her for being different from his other daughters, she hardly stands out among her sisters. Beside lovely Jane and boisterous Lydia she fades into background. Very soon, however, she starts moving about with ease and grace, has her own set of admirers even if snobbish aristocrats like Darcy look disdainfully at her.

Anne, on the other hand, seems even more quiet than Elizabeth in the beginning. After their first meeting Wentworth comments that she has altered so much that he almost did not recognize her. So, how did she look like? Austen describes her briefly as, "a few years before Anne Elliot had been a very pretty girl, but her bloom had vanished early" (5). She has had eight years to ponder over her decision of breaking her engagement, and Anne's

moment of glowing happiness returns after she hears Wentworth's passionate commentary on Benwick's betrothal to Louisa Musgrove:

Anne saw nothing... Her happiness was from within. Her eyes were bright, and her cheeks glowed;-- . . . His opinion of Louisa Musgrove's inferiority, an opinion which he had seemed solicitous to give,--his half averted eyes, and more than half expressive glance;-- all, all declared that he had a heart returning to her at least. . . . He must love her. (*Persuasion* 123)

She has been waiting for Wentworth to return and reclaim her, but up until this moment all that the readers have had are half-expressed passages from Anne.

Elizabeth Bennet faces similar moments of epiphany after meeting Darcy at Pemberley again and more so after Lydia's elopement:

She began now to comprehend that he was exactly the man, who in dispositions and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, would have answered all her wishes. (*Pride and Prejudice* 202)

After hearing from the housekeeper and seeing Darcy's portrait Elizabeth realizes that he would have made her the husband she could ever want. Darcy's changed behavior and kindness confirm her belief. But Lydia's disgraceful elopement makes her realize that he would surely never stoop so low as to marry a sister-in-law of Wickham.

Both Elizabeth and Anne had good reasons behind their refusals, but both also regret their decisions later. Elizabeth refuses Darcy for two reasons—that he mistreated Wickham, and he had been the cause behind Jane's unhappiness. Even though her first conjecture is grounded on false information, her second accusation against Darcy is true. Yet, later on she realizes that sometimes well-intentioned people too, can make mistakes, as Darcy did by wanting to save his friend from making a loveless marriage with low connections. Furthermore, Jane's unhappiness in love is caused more by the members of her own family and Jane's own reticence in expressing her feelings than by Darcy's intervention.

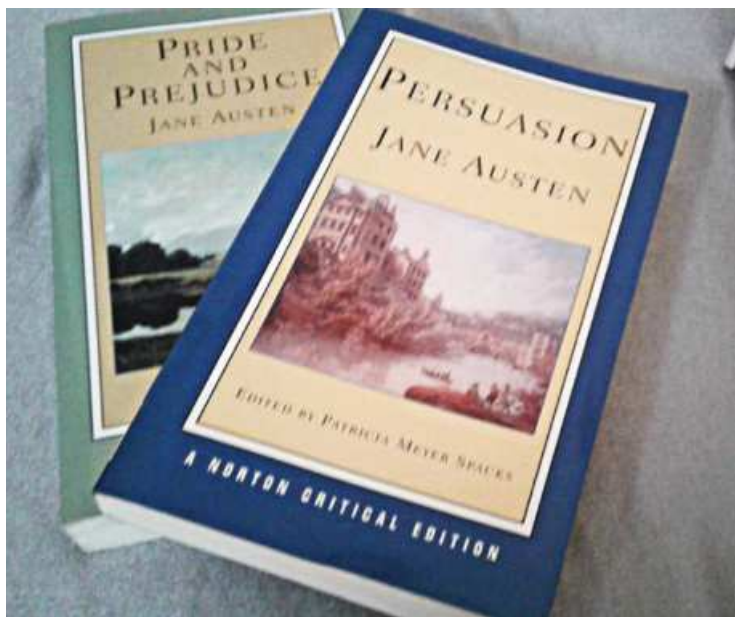
Unlike Elizabeth, however, Anne's refusal sprang from prudence.

Persuaded by her surrogate mother-figure Lady Russel, she thought that it would not be a good idea for her to get into a long engagement with Wentworth. She broke up with him even though she loved him. And yet she says: "I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience" (*Persuasion* 164). I believe that Anne's observation is Austen's own dictum against long-term engagements. Through the engagements of Edward Ferrars and Lucie Steele, Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax, Austen's attitude toward long-term engagement becomes clear. Whereas Edward is trapped into a relationship he does not want any more, Jane has to watch her betrothed flirt with another young lady. Ironically

from total disgrace. Anne's situation is very similar, but since her mistake was greater than Elizabeth's her amends has to be greater too. So, we hear her whispering passionately to Captain Harville, "All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one, you need not covet it) is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone" (*Persuasion* 157). If she had made an error in judgment, if she had hurt her lover once upon a time, through this comment she makes the best amends possible. Even if she is not talking to Wentworth, he is in the vicinity, and in revealing her heart she puts herself in a vulnerable position. William Galperin sees her "early loss of bloom" following her rejection of Wentworth as an act of autonomy and a lasting effect of her decision to remain single. The period ends with the famous walk at Lyme when her beauty is miraculously restored and she becomes the "cause of two men's admiration" (222).

Another notable similarity between these two Austenian heroines is that through their marriages they cross the barriers of class-difference. Even though in her defense to Lady Catherine de Bourgh Elizabeth claims to be a gentleman's daughter, in her union with Darcy she actually crosses over the seemingly uncrossable barrier. Elizabeth's father belongs merely to the gentry (and she is tainted by her mother's family who are in business), whereas Darcy is definitely from the untitled but aristocrat class. Strangely enough, Anne Elliot is the only other heroine of Austen who shifts from one class to another so ostentatiously. However, Austen once again revisits and reconstructs her former ideas because Anne belongs to the landed gentry, but by "accepting Frederick Wentworth the naval officer in preference to Charles Musgrove or William Walter Elliot, she (Anne) leaves the life of the stately homes, taking its best feminine strengths with her" (Magee 206). In all her previous novels, Austen often mocks the landed gentry when they fail to do their duty, but her heroes always belong to the class of land owners. In her last novel, however, like her heroines she herself seems to abandon the old dissipated land owners and aristocrats in favor of the rising professional class.

Sohana Manzoor teaches English at ULAB. She is also the Literary Editor of The Daily Star.



subsequent events suggest not simply repetition, but fresh understanding and recognition of what they had together. Hence, isn't it possible that a novel that concentrates so much on the theme of revisiting, is a revisiting of a prior work, namely, *Pride and Prejudice*?

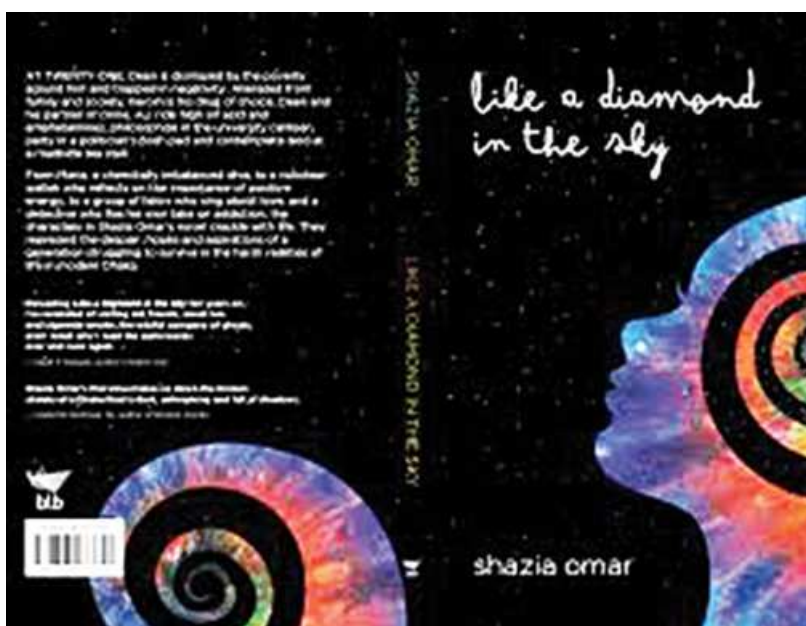
When looking at the two novels, it is next to impossible to ignore the similarity between the novelist's handling of the rejected suitors. The heroines of both novels decide to refuse the first proposals from the men they ultimately marry, and both come to regret their earlier decisions and learn to improve themselves. The heroes, too, learn to reassess their personalities, social positions, and more important, the depth and extent of their emotions and feelings for the women they love. In short, both couples improve through

Star REVIEWS

Understanding Addiction A Review of Like a Diamond in the Sky

ISBN: 9789843473691. Bengal Lights Books, 2019

BY MARK BARTHOLOMEW



Unshaven, skeletal men, with hollow, black-ringed eyes, sitting in silent solitude in inner city gutters. Youngsters turned ageless by addiction, their endless need for the next fix drowning out all other desires, commitments or relationships. That's the sort of portrait of drug users that I grew up with but never truly bought into. I did not trust the propaganda machine that conjured up the glib slogans ("Just say no!") or the sad black-and-white posters of victims held captive by an inescapable chemical dependence.

More reliable information about users was hard to come by, lost in moronic platitudes about massacring brain cells, about instant addiction to drugs that I knew did not create dependence, about implausible pushers flocking the gates of primary schools to force heroin onto unsuspecting kids without any money to buy it or the means of stealing it later. Every fictionalized account ended in prostitution, infection, misery and solitude. Frankly, an overdose often seemed the best, the only way out.

Not so with Shazia Omar's *Like a Diamond in the Sky*, now re-published by Bengal Lights Books ten years after it was first written. Deen, her attractive and

charming hero-addict, has a life apart from chemical stimulants. He develops strong relationships that don't always flounder because of his drug usage; he has a sense of loyalty to his friends, even to his unexpectedly kind-hearted pusher - in short, he's someone I think I would like to spend time with, whether he is high or not. He is a many-textured young man, admittedly living on the edge... but so many of us do when we are undergraduates, especially if we have the money to make it fun. And Deen or one or another of his friends usually does.

And that's what made Omar's story so appealing to me.

True, the prose is vigorous, her range of vocabulary more than adequate for the complexity of her characters and the adventures and incidents that mark their lives, and the pace rapid enough to maintain the interest even of readers with attention deficit disorders. Yes, we are happy (and, perhaps, a little surprised) to be on familiar territory, as Omar guides us through the shanties of Uttara and Tangail and the glitter of Dhaka's diplomatic quarter, without ever patronizing us about the evils of poverty or bragging about the

opulence of the good and the great. But the success of her novel lies elsewhere!

The essential thing is that we care about Deen and, so, worry for him when he's ill, when he tries, tries and tries to give up all the chemical paraphernalia that, at times, make him feel trapped because he can never make his escape. We will him to make it through. And we do so because we know and like him. He's not your usual faceless, archetypal junkie. That's Omar's gift to us: she's more interested in Deen than she is in some all-too-familiar morality. She never lectures us, then, about the terrible risks he and his companions take along the narcotic path towards their own destruction.

Like a Diamond in the Sky is a novel that is hard to put down, fast-moving, but also memorable because we invest in characters and their futures and remember them fondly long after we turn the final page.

Mark Bartholomew has worked with different universities and schools in Bangladesh since he first arrived with British Council in 1999. He loves reading and is interested in promoting Bangladeshi authors.



Real Madrid players and officials celebrate with the La Liga trophy following their 2-1 win over Villarreal at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium on Thursday night. (Bottom) Jubilant players toss manager Zinedine Zidane in the air.

PHOTO: REAL MADRID FC

'Zidane is a blessing from heaven'

REUTERS, Madrid



Zinedine Zidane risked tarnishing his record by diving back into the Real Madrid coaching job 10 months after resigning, but in securing the La Liga title in his first full season back, he has showed yet again that no-one is better suited to the role.

One of the finest midfielders of all-time and a league and Champions League winner as a Real player, Zidane collected his second La Liga title as the club's coach after his side beat Villarreal 2-1 on Thursday, adding to his triumph in 2017.

"He has been the key, he is the captain of this ship," said Real captain Sergio Ramos of his coach.

"I hope he lasts a long time at the club and that he is appreciated, because he is unique."

In spite of his remarkable record in two and a half years with Real before resigning in 2018 after winning a record third consecutive Champions League crown, Zidane was often dismissed by some as little more than a smiling motivator.

Described in the Spanish media as an "alineador", doing little more than picking a starting 11 from one of the world's most talented squads, his success has also often been put down to being blessed with good fortune.

But this season Zidane has proved to be a superb manager in every sense.

Key to the team's success has been the bolstering of the defence, which let in 46 goals last season under Julen Lopetegui and Santiago Solari, before Zidane was persuaded to make a shock comeback in March 2019.

Real continued to look shaky in defence



HIGHLIGHTS OF REAL MADRID'S 34TH LA LIGA TITLE

- Beating visitors Villarreal at makeshift home venue Alfredo Di Stefano Stadium, Real Madrid clinched their 34th La Liga title, which equates to an impressive 38 per cent success rate in the 89-year history of the competition.
- Los Blancos now have won eight more league titles than the nearest competitors and archrivals Barcelona, who have 26 titles in their trophy cabinet.
- Zinedine Zidane's side did not concede in any of their four league games against Barcelona and Atletico Madrid, making it the first such instance in La Liga history.
- Real have used 26 players this season, and 21 of them have scored, which means they are the team with the most different scorers in La Liga in the 21st century.
- Zidane, who celebrated his 11th title across two spells as manager of Real Madrid on Thursday night, is now only three behind the Spanish side's most successful manager Miguel Munoz.
- After Luis Molowny (1977-78, 1978-79 and 1985-86) and Fabio Capello (1996-97 and 2006-07), the Frenchman became only the third Madrid boss to win La Liga titles in different terms at the helm.

as they shipped six goals in their first four matches this season, but they responded by keeping 10 clean sheets in their next 15.

Their defence has got even better since the coronavirus stoppage, conceding three goals in nine matches and keeping five consecutive clean sheets for the first time since 2008. They now boast the best defensive record in Europe.

"Zidane is a blessing from Heaven above and I hope he stays with us for a very long time," said Real president Florentino Perez. "People can criticise him all they want, we'll keep on winning trophies with him."

The coach has also overcome a series of obstacles. He was in deep trouble when his side were thrashed 3-0 by Paris St Germain in September then beaten by promoted Mallorca in October, as Spanish media speculated he could lose his job and be replaced by a then unemployed Jose Mourinho. But the coach weathered the storm by leading Madrid to an unbeaten run of 15 league games.

Zidane has also had to grapple with serious injuries, such as losing Spain winger Marcos Asensio for 11 months due to knee surgery, while star signing Eden Hazard's season has been plagued by ankle problems.

Zidane's use of his entire squad is evidenced by having 21 different goalscorers in La Liga, while he has also rejuvenated senior players who had been widely dismissed as past their best, including Luka Modric, Marcelo and Isco.

"He is the one who made the difference, the person who put all his faith in the players, something very few coaches do," Ramos said.

"We always feel that he has our backs and we believe in him."

Frustrated Messi calls for change

AFP, Madrid



A frustrated Lionel Messi called for change after Barcelona handed the La Liga title to Real Madrid on Thursday, warning the team will lose in the Champions League as well if they fail to improve.

Barca's title challenge ended with a whimper at Camp Nou, where they were beaten 2-1 by Osasuna while Madrid's 2-1 victory at home to Villarreal ensured they were crowned Spanish champions.

Defeat increases the pressure on coach Quique Setien, who took over in January with Barcelona sitting top of the table. Club president Josep Maria Bartomeu has said Setien will remain in charge for the Champions League next month, when Barca play their second leg at home to Napoli, with the last-16 tie in the balance at 1-1.

"The feeling of the team is that it tries but can't do it, that we leave a lot to be desired in many areas and today in the first half I think they were better than us," Messi said after the loss. "I said long ago that if we continued in this way, it would be very difficult to win the Champions League and that has been shown to be the case in La Liga too."

"If we want to fight for the Champions League we will have to change a lot because otherwise the match against Napoli, we will lose that as well."

Messi scored a brilliant free-kick against Osasuna but it was not enough. Madrid pulled seven points clear of Barcelona ahead of Sunday's final round of games.

"We didn't expect or want to finish like this but it almost sums up the whole year," said Messi. "We have been very inconsistent, very weak, beaten on intensity or desire."

"They created chances very easily and scored. During the whole year we have been inconsistent and we have lost a lot of points where we shouldn't have. This game showed what this



year has been about for us."

Messi has been critical of the board this season and suggested everyone at the club should take their share of the blame.

"After the break Madrid have not lost any games and they deserve credit for that but we have also helped them a lot," said Messi.

"We lost a lot of games that we should not have lost and we have to be self-critical, starting with the players, but it has to be a total self-criticism from everyone because we are Barcelona and we are obliged to win the matches whatever happens and instead look at us."

If Barcelona come through against Napoli, they will face Bayern Munich in the last eight, with a compressed format of single legs all the way through to the final.

"I think we need a little air, this break will be good for us, to clear our heads, forget about everything that has happened," said Messi.

"It has been very bad from December until now but it is the Champions League and there are four games that can give you a trophy that we all want. But we have to change a lot and be very self-critical."

BCF mulls small-scale GM tourneys

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) is contemplating small-scale GM tournaments after their efforts over the past four years to hold such tournaments on a large scale have gone in vain. Their last attempt, the staging of the Bangabandhu Grand Master Chess Tournament in late April to celebrate the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The BCF had also attempted to hold a GM tournament in 2017, but that did not see the light of day, prolonging the wait for a GM tournament. Such a tournament was last held in 2009, although the federation has held numerous international rating and age-group tournaments and the national championships over the past four years.

"We have seen that there is no benefit in holding international rating tournaments. Although some players benefit from prize money, no one can earn titles. So we want to hold GM tournaments on a small scale with a round-robin league system instead of the Swiss-League system," BCF general secretary Syed Shahabuddin Shamim said, adding that they had discussed it at the first executive meeting of the ad-hoc committee last week. "We want to focus on the local players who can earn norms from the tournament. We need Grand Masters from three countries to hold the tournament. We want to hold at least four GM tournaments a year and Max Group has already promised to provide Tk 15 lakh each for two tournaments."

The sub-continent's first GM, Niaz Murshed, took the initiative in 2009 and held GM and IM tournaments on a small

scale in round-robin-based tournaments under the banner of Six Seasons, from which two Indian players earned GM norm and WIM norm. Niaz held eight tournaments -- two GM tournaments, one WGM tournament, two WIM tournaments and three rating tournaments -- from 2009 to 2013 while Chattogram Jilla Kriya Sangsha held a GM tournament in 2015.

However, the BCF could not hold GM tournament for the past 11 years and Bangladesh has not seen a new GM since Enamul Hossain Razib became the country's fifth during the 2009 national championship. No player has even earned a GM norm since.

Shahabuddin said that Mohammad Fahad Raman and Shamima Akter Liza earned IM and WIM titles directly after winning Zonal Asian Chess Competitions held in Bangladesh and he believes holding GM tournaments on a small scale will help others earn IM and GM norms.

He also informed that BCF president and IGP Benazir Ahmed told them to start tournaments or leagues after ensuring sponsors so that no one could have a negative image of Bangladesh Chess Federation.

"We also decided to form different sub-committees, which will first place their draft budgets for the approval of the executive committee and then start work, subject to approval. We will also collect funds from our sources, especially from chess officials who are solvent. This will be used for different tournaments if we don't get sponsors and for sending national teams abroad for tournaments. We will also try to renew the contract with our long-serving sponsors -- Saif Powertech and Walton," said Shamim.



STOKES, SIBLEY DRIVE ENGLAND

England all-rounder Ben Stokes celebrates his century with Dom Sibley as the hosts piled on the runs on the second day of the second Test against the West Indies at Old Trafford yesterday. The left-hander brought up his century shortly after lunch following the opener's hundred as England went into a position of strength following some early hiccups on the previous day. The hosts looked set for a mammoth score after reaching 338 for three at the drinks break at the end of the 125th over. Ben Stokes, no longer the skipper after Joe Root's return to the side, had amassed 152 runs and remained unbeaten while Sibley was unbeaten on 120. The duo shared an unbeaten 259-run stand which proved to be a huge source of frustration for the visitors, whose bowlers, after doing so well in the first Test, failed to have any sort of impact.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'All lives don't matter until black lives do'

AFP, Johannesburg

Former South African captain Faf du Plessis on Friday came out in support of Black Lives Matter and said a comment he made in January that "we don't see colour" had been a mistake.

His post on Instagram comes after 30 black former players claimed this week that racism remained a factor in the game.

"If we wait only for the ones that attack us personally, we will always live for 'my way versus your way' and that way leads us nowhere," he said.

"I surrender my opinions and take the knee as an intercessor. I acknowledge that South Africa is still hugely divided by racism..."

Du Plessis was criticised for being naive when he said he didn't see colour. He admitted: "I have gotten it wrong before. Good intentions were failed by a lack of perspective when I said on a platform that I don't see colour. In my ignorance I silenced the struggles of others by placing my own view on it." "I am saying that all lives don't matter UNTIL black lives matter. I'm speaking up now, because if I wait to be perfect, I never will."



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

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT BSRM



GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES

World's Largest VRM

SHAH CEMENT

Mango export drops 85pc since 2016

The credit goes to DAE officials, exporters

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Mango exports have declined by around 85 percent since 2016 due to negligence of a section of agricultural officials and exporters' violation of rules of good agricultural practices for greater profits.

Many importing countries recommend good agricultural practices that ensure the fruits are produced, packed, handled, and stored safely to minimise risks of food safety hazards.

Under these practices, the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) advocates exporters to select contract farmers ahead of the mango season. These contract farmers would then follow prescribed methods of cultivation and produce the best quality of safe, organically grown mangoes for export.

The exporters would then buy these mangoes from the contract farmers, complete procedures for packaging, testing by the DAE's Plant Quarantine Wing, and prepare for export.

But two years after the country began mango exports in 2015, exporters began to ignore the contract farmers and

YEAR	MANGOES EXPORTED (tonnes)
2015	165 (1st year)
2016	665
2017	324
2018	231
2019	<100

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



People looking at the burnt home of local Awami League leader Sheikh Zakaria in Mashiali village of Khulna's Phultala upazila yesterday noon, hours after three were killed and six injured in a shooting incident and another was beaten to death nearby. Locals set 11 homes and business establishments of the AL leader and his family members on fire following the shooting.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY



Irene Khan made UN special rapporteur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former secretary general of Amnesty International Irene Khan has been selected as the next United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Khan is the first woman to be appointed to this mandate in its 27 years of existence.

The United Nations Special Rapporteurs are independent investigators who examine the situation of human rights all over the globe. They report directly to the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly but do not receive

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Rights Situation in 2019 Bangladesh saw no improvement

Says UK report, lauds it for hosting Rohingyas

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UK has lauded Bangladesh for continuously playing a vital role in hosting the Rohingyas, but observed that the overall human rights situation in the country in 2019 saw no improvement.

In its annual Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report on Human Rights Democracy, UK said the number of death sentences issued in Bangladesh increased -- two executions were carried out in Bangladesh in 2019.

At least 327 death sentences were issued in 2019 compared to 319 in 2018. In November, six of the seven people convicted over the Holey Bakery terrorist attack in 2016 received death sentences, said the report published on Thursday.

"Reports of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and attacks on journalists and others continued during the year," says the report that UK considers an essential guide to the British government's work and to the global human rights landscape over the year.

In July, Bangladesh government submitted initial country report to the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Shun parochialism



Bangabandhu addressing a mammoth gathering at Adamjeenagar, Narayanganj on July 18, 1972.

July 18, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU VISITS NARAYANGANJ

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today visits Adamjeenagar, Narayanganj and addresses a mammoth public meeting attended by workers in large number. The prime minister reiterates his advice to workers to shun parochialism. "I advise you to give up parochialism not as your minister but as your Mujib Bhai, Bangabandhu and Father of the Nation," he says.

In an emotion-choked voice Bangabandhu says that he would rather prefer his death to see the workers quarreling among themselves over regionalism. He regrets that some people are

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Two more doctors die from Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more doctors died of Covid-19 while undergoing treatment at two city hospitals yesterday.

They are SM Nur Uddin Baki Rumi, assistant professor of surgery at Kushtia Medical College, and Kohel Karim, doctor of medicine at Dhaka National Medical College.

Rumi breathed his last around 2:30am at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), said Mily Dey, director of Bangladesh Doctors' Foundation (BDF) Trust.

He tested positive for coronavirus on July 3 and was admitted to BSMMU on the same day.

Meanwhile, Karim breathed his last around 3:15pm at Intensive Care Unit of Popular Medical College Hospital where he was admitted with coronavirus symptoms a few days ago, said Mily.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Solar probe reveals tiny 'campfires' on sun's surface



REUTERS, Washington

A solar probe built by the European Space Agency and Nasa has delivered the closest photos ever taken of the sun's surface, revealing a landscape rife with thousands of tiny solar flares that scientists dubbed "campfires" and offering clues about the extreme heat of the outermost part of its atmosphere.

"When the first images came in, my first thought was, 'This is not possible - it can't be that good,'" David Berghmans, principal investigator for the Solar Orbiter spacecraft's ultraviolet imager at the Royal Observatory of Belgium, told reporters on Thursday.

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4 of a family murdered at Tangail home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Four members of a family were found murdered inside their home in Tangail's Madhupur yesterday.

Assailant(s) hacked them and slit their throats, said police, after recovering the bodies.

The victims are Gani Miah, 45, his wife Tajiron, 37, son Tajel, 14, and daughter Sadia, 9.

Locals said Gani, of Golabari village in Madhupur upazila, constructed a house at Masterpara in Madhupur municipality area around a year ago and started living there.

They got a stench from the house yesterday morning and informed Madhupur police of the matter.

Tarek Kamal, officer-in-charge of Madhupur Police Station, told The Daily Star that a police team went to the spot and found the house locked from outside.

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3 killed in 'gunfights' with cops

STAR REPORT

Two suspected yaba traders were killed in what police said was a gunfight in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

Around the same time, an unidentified man was killed in a "shootout" with police in the capital's Boshila area.

No policeman was reported shot or injured in these incidents.

The deceased in Teknaf -- Faruk Hosen, 37 and Ajidul Huq, 26 -- were brothers, said Pradip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station.

Based on a tip-off about a consignment of yaba being smuggled in from

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A bridge on Basail-Mirzapur road collapses due to strong currents of floodwater, snapping communications between parts of the two upazilas in Tangail. Six out of the district's 12 upazilas are hit hard by flood which has affected about 1.3 lakh people so far. The photo was taken in Basail's Kanchanpur village on Thursday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Flood situation may worsen in northern parts

Heavy rains likely in some areas next week

STAR REPORT

Although floodwater has started to recede in the northern districts, flood situation may deteriorate there again by the middle of the next week.

"Water level of the rivers in this region may rise as there may be heavy rainfall upstream [from Bangladesh] by the middle of the next week," said Arifuzzaman Bhuiyan, executive engineer of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), yesterday.

Flooding in the northern districts may prolong for the next couple of days, he warned.

Currently, floodwater is heading towards the central parts of the country.

Low-lying areas of some districts adjacent to the capital may be inundated. But there is no chance for the water to enter Dhaka city, added the engineer.

District flood situation In Tangail, water of all rivers is increasing, as heavy flow upstream from the district continues.

The Jamuna river was flowing 88 cm above the danger mark on Thursday. On Friday, the river rose by another 11 cm, said sources in the Water Development Board (WDB).

Water in the tributaries of the Jamuna, Dhaleswari and Jhenai rivers also increased, flooding fresh areas, especially the chars.

The district's WDB Executive Engineer Sirajul Islam said, based on their forecast, after decreasing for a couple of days, floodwaters may start to rise again from July 21 and

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PRAYER TIMING JULY 18

Fazr 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