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BANGLADESH UPDATE

2,928
New cases in 24hrs

2,07,453
Total cases

2,668
Deaths

1,13,556
Recoveries

610,248
Deaths

14,712,537
Total cases

PANDEMIC FALLOUT

About 100 schools go up for sale

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

It was a heartbreaking decision for Nargis Akter to make. Burdened with unpaid bills, she had no other choice but to put her school up for sale.

Over the last four months, Ideal Public School in the capital's Matikata area saw its earnings plummet as most of the guardians were unable to pay tuition and other fees amid the Covid pandemic.

"I had my back against the wall... The pandemic posed unprecedented challenges... The amount of outstanding house rent and unpaid salaries of teachers and staffers are going up every month," said Nargis, the founder and head teacher of the kindergarten.

If she fails to find a buyer, the school has to close its doors to 300 students and 25 teachers and staffers after 15 years of operation.

No one has yet showed any interest in buying it, said a frustrated Nargis.

Every month, Nargis has to pay Tk 50,000 as house rent and Tk 70,000 in salaries of teachers and staffers. Till June, the dues stood at about Tk 5 lakh.

The government announced closure of all schools from March 17 due to the coronavirus pandemic. It's still uncertain when they will reopen.



Nargis said they don't have any funds to meet the expenses as the school reached breakeven point only a few months back.

Many schools in and around the capital found themselves in a tight corner amid the pandemic. The majority of the teachers at these schools have returned to their village homes and are in financial hardship.

About a hundred schools have been put up for sale over the last few months, say people involved in the sector.

Srijan Central School and College in Savar's Bypile area is one such institution. It has about 150 students and 15 teachers.

Its Chairman Shamim Iqbal said, "I was compelled to make such a difficult decision. I really feel bad when I think

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Vehicles plough through knee-deep water on Mirpur Road near Dhanmondi-27 in the capital. People suffered badly as many streets in the city went under water after it rained for a few hours yesterday. The photo was taken around 9:00am.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

TRIALS IN UK, CHINA

Two vaccines 'produce immune response'

AFP, Paris

Two coronavirus vaccine candidates have proven safe for humans and produced strong immune reactions among patients involved in separate clinical trials, doctors said yesterday.

The first trial among more than 1,000 adults in Britain found that the vaccine induced "strong antibody and T cell immune responses" against the novel coronavirus.

A separate trial in China involving more than 500 people showed most had developed widespread antibody immune response.

The studies, published in The Lancet medical journal, constitute a major step on the road towards a Covid-19 vaccine that is effective and safe for widespread use.

The authors of the studies said that they encountered few adverse side effects from the vaccine candidates.

However, they cautioned that more research was needed, particularly among

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Dedicated booth for migrant workers

Plans the govt in wake of Covid-19 certificate scams

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government mulls setting up a Covid-19 testing booth and lowering the test fees for Bangladeshis going abroad to work as it begins implementing its decision that all passengers must show coronavirus negative certificates at airports from Thursday.

"We are in talks with the expatriates' welfare ministry for setting up a dedicated booth for migrant workers. Fees for their tests can also be reviewed," Khalilur Rahman, additional secretary and also the coordinator of the Covid-19 cell at the foreign ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He, however, said it was not decided yet where the booth would be set up.

All passengers departing from Bangladesh must show Covid-19 negative certificates from government-listed 16 testing facilities. The tests must be done within 72 hours of their flight.

As per an announcement from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab), the test of those scheduled to fly on July 23 began yesterday.

The 16 government-listed test facilities are: National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Referral Centre, Institute of Public Health, and National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine in Dhaka; Sher-e-Bangla Medical College in Barishal; Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases in Chattogram; Cox's Bazar Medical College (IEDCR Field Laboratory); Cumilla Medical College; Narayanganj 300 Bed Hospital; Khulna Medical College; Kushtia Medical College; Mymensingh Medical College; Bogura Medical College; Rajshahi Medical College; M

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Stop raids amid the pandemic

Pvt medical college body urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Private Medical College Association yesterday demanded that law enforcement agencies stop raiding health facilities during the pandemic.

A six-member delegation of the association made the demand in an hour-long meeting with Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan at his home in the capital's Dhanmondi.

This happens a day after Rab officers assisted by Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) raided Shahabuddin Medical College Hospital (SMCH) in Gulshan and detained its officials on charges of conducting unauthorised coronavirus tests and making test reports without any tests.

During yesterday's

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

SHAHED'S FRAUDULENCE Cops sat on his warrants for 10yrs

Prosecution alleges

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Ten years have passed since a Dhaka court served two arrest warrants, including a conviction warrant, against Regent Group Chairman Md Shahed in a cheque bounce case, but police are yet to take any action in this regard, the prosecution alleges.

Additional Public Prosecutor Abdus Sattar Dulal told it The Daily Star on Sunday.

As per the provision, if the copy of an arrest warrant is sent to a police station, they are supposed to arrest the accused and produce him/her before the concerned court.

If police can't arrest or don't find them at their specific addresses, they will submit a report to the court about it.

But in this case, police did not submit any report on the execution of arrest warrant, Dulal said.

On August 18 of 2010, Judge Md Harunur Rashid of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka sentenced Shahed to six months of simple imprisonment and fined him Tk 53 lakh in absentia in the cheque dishonour case.

In failing to pay the fine, Shahed will suffer six months more in jail, the judge said, adding that the punishment would be effective from the day of his arrest or surrender.

The judge also issued a conviction warrant against him and sent a copy of the warrant to Uttara Purba Police Station.

Earlier, the same court cancelled his bail on October 5, 2009 and issued an arrest warrant against him for

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Money down the drain

City corporations spend crores but can't stop waterlogging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two city corporations in the capital have "spent" several thousand crores of taka in the last few years for the "development" of Dhaka's road infrastructure and drainage system, yet many areas in the city go under water after only after hours of rainfall.

The torrential monsoon rain from Sunday midnight to Monday morning inundated many parts of the capital, disrupting people's movement and triggering traffic chaos.

In some areas, the water level even rose to waist height.

In the last four years, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) spent over Tk 2,000 crore for the "development" of road infrastructure and drainage but there has been no visible sign

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Three college teachers held in Chandpur

Sued under DSA for 'propaganda' against edu minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Three teachers of Farakkabad Degree College in Chandpur's Sadar upazila were arrested on Sunday night for allegedly spreading propaganda against the education minister and some others on social media.

A team from Chandpur Model Police Station arrested them from the college in Farakkabad area, Jahid Parvez Chawdhury, additional superintendent of police (ASP) said.

The laptops and mobiles they used to spread propaganda material were seized during the raids, he added.

The teachers are Jahangir Alam, 40, Noman Siddique, 35 and ABM Anisur Rahman, 40.

The ASP said the trio were operating a Facebook page and spreading propaganda against

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



People intending to fly abroad report to a desk dedicated for their Covid-19 testing at the DNCC Market in the capital's Mohakhali yesterday. According to government rules, anyone departing Bangladesh from Thursday must show Covid-19 negative certificates at airports. The tests must be done at some dedicated laboratories within 72 hours of the flight. Inset, other passengers wait to get tested there.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

PVT HOSPITAL IN CUMILLA Treated Covid-19 patients though no deal with govt

DGHS won't pay its bill for ICU establishment

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The private hospital in Cumilla has not renewed its licence since 2018. The government has not signed any deal with it for Covid-19 treatment.

Yet the hospital treated Covid-19 patients at the instruction of local district administration and eventually asked for a hefty amount from the government for establishing an ICU.

Almost four months ago, the district administration sent a letter to AFC Health Fortis Heart Institutethe private hospital, asking it to prepare an ICU for Covid-19 patients.

Two days after receiving the letter, on March 25 it replied that there was no intensive care unit at the facility and establishing one would take a long time, according to documents.

About a week later, Cumilla Civil Surgeon office wrote a letter to the hospital, asking it to start treating Covid-19 patients.

The hospital authorities then started working to establish the ICU and it was ready for use on May 2.

Between May 10 and June 3, only 19 patients with coronavirus were treated at the hospital. Four of them died and 15 recovered.

For their treatment, the hospital sent the government a bill of Tk 12,75,636. It also sent a bill of Tk 5.41 crore for establishing the ICU, officials said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Major focus

FROM PAGE 3
and maintenance purposes
which was Tk 7.25 crore in
the last fiscal.
The amount of Tk 3.50
crore was kept for the
city's park and playground
development works in the
current fiscal which is Tk
50 crore less than the last
fiscal.
DNCC also kept
Tk 18.20 crore for
environmental
development activities
like tree plantation,
beautification, construction
of public toilet,
landfill development
and maintenance,
and construction and
maintenance of secondary
transfer station. Of the
revenue, DNCC set a target
of earning the highest Tk
400 crore from holding tax,
which is Tk 40 crore less
than the last fiscal.
DNCC also set a target
of earning Tk 300 crore
from property transfer fees
and Tk 100 crore from
trade license fees.



As traffic situation approaches normalcy post-shutdown, unruly parking has once again become an issue. In this photo, a large number of bikes are parked on this footpath in Tejgaon industrial area, making life hard for pedestrians. This photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Development at

FROM PAGE 3
principal, said he "verbally consented"
to RCC's proposal to reconstruct the
wall.
He verified that the college
authority did not seek prior approval
from the education ministry for giving
away the college land for construction,
which requires some six to ten feet
wide area along the 500-metre college
boundary. "The corporation sought
the ministry's approval," Prof Rahman
said.
Mayor Liton corroborated that they
sought necessary approval from the
ministry three months ago, and the
old wall would not be demolished
until approval.
As per laws, any building that is
more than a century old is a heritage,
and the government becomes its
substantial owner. No authority can
destroy it without the government's
approval, archaeologists said.
JU's Nurul Kabir explained just
how special the college's architecture
is and why it must be protected.
Palladian architecture is considered
a European landmark since the 16th
century. Such constructions were
initially not readily accessible, mainly
used by rulers and forbidden for
commoners, said Nurul, who is an
expert on colonial architecture and
cultural heritage management.

With expansion of colonial rule
in later centuries, followers of the
architectural concept developed and
adapted its design to be used by
common people, he said.
"The Palladian style features
classical forms, symmetry, and strict
proportions. The college building,
its open spaces, and of course, its
boundary wall - everything was built
following a geometric proportion,
which makes the architecture visually
pleasing to visitors viewing from afar,"
he explained.
Colonial-era buildings also have
economic value, said Nurul, adding
that many international organisations
pay countries to protect these
buildings.
"We consider the colonial era as
a curse of oppression by the then
rulers. But organisations want to
preserve the historical role of the
era by protecting such structures. If
the sites' authenticity is affected, the
organisations might not spend for
their protection," he said.
Authorities should consult
architectural experts before taking up
development work relating to any
heritage site, he continued.
"Archaeological experts and
architects are not blind to the
development needs for expanding
urbanisation. They can find solutions

to such conundrums and protect
heritage sites too," he added.
Bangladesh University of
Engineering and Technology and JU
have experts who are ready to provide
consultations. The country also has
skilled individuals to work on heritage
conservation, Nurul said.
Rajshahi College is one of the few
old educational establishments that
became a university-level institute
from a school, said Ahmed Shafi
Uddin, president of Shushasoner
Jonno Nagorik, Rajshahi chapter.
"The destruction of its design,
when the college's 150th anniversary
is just a few years away, will hurt the
memories of its many students," he
said.
"We are concerned after observing
the city's heritage sites being destroyed
one after another. Destroying history is
an unforgivable crime, and authorities
must stop these acts," he added.
In the past, Bhubon Mohon Park
gate, Shah Makhdum College gate
-- and residences of Rajanikanta Sen,
Sir Jadunath Sarkar and judge Loken
Palit, where Rabindranath Tagore
stayed -- were destroyed.
In recent past, the old municipality
building, Public Library, Ritwik
Ghatak's residence and the colonial-
era building inside Rajshahi Central
Jail were also destroyed, locals said.

Rajshahi flights
resume today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Shah Makhdum Airport
in Rajshahi is resuming
operations on the domestic
route to Dhaka from today.
US-Bangla and Novoair
are resuming four flights
each while Bangladesh
Biman is still suspending
its operations, said airport
manager Setafur Rahman.
"We've taken necessary
preparations to manage the
flights smoothly," he said.
US-Bangla has two
flights in the morning
and two others in the
afternoon between Dhaka
and Rajshahi. Similarly,
Novoair has four flights.
Biman has not resumed
operations since March 14.
The Rajshahi airport was
closed on March 27. It was
not resuming due to a lack
of a medical expert.
The civil aviation
authorities decided to
resume the airport after
Rajshahi civil surgeon
appointed a medical
assistant to ensure health
rules at the airport.

River channel on Dhaka-
Barishal route closed after
cargo ship capsizes

Launch owners concerned over losses during Eid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

The Miarchar channel on Barishal-Dhaka
river route has been declared closed after a
cement-laden cargo vessel capsized there
on Saturday afternoon.
The vessel -- MV Farhana Monem -- got
stuck in the char due to strong currents in
the Meghna river and tilted to its right. At
one point, part of the vessel went under
water, said Ajmol Huda Mithu, deputy
director of Bangladesh Inland Water
Transport Authority (BIWTA) and Barishal
river port officer.
Nine crew members were rescued by
fishermen, he added.
Considering navigational risk, BIWTA
has declared the channel closed till
further notice and asked water transports
travelling on the Dhaka-Barishal
waterway to use the alternative route
along Mehendiganj upazila's Ullania-
Kaliganj channel.
"Miarchar is the main channel
for plying passengers launch on the
Dhaka-Barishal route. But due to the
circumstance, we are closing the channel
and requesting launch owners to use the
alternative route," said the BIWTA deputy
director.
BIWTA personnel have installed
marking buoys around the spot and
are monitoring the situation. Salvage
operation of the sunken cargo will start
as soon as water flow pressure decreases,
Ajmol said.
The Miarchar channel -- connecting the
Muladi and Hizla upazilas of Barishal -- is
a critical waterway, the closure of which
will come with inconveniences for
travelers of the route as well as for the

launch service industry of the area, said
Reazul Kabir, owner of passenger launch
"Surovi-8".
"The channel is generally used by
passenger launches of the Dhaka-Barishal
route as it saves time and cost. During
Eid, when we start non-stop service due
to increased demand, this closure will
be costly, and may even lead to increased
accidents due to increased load on the
Ullania-Kaliganj channel," he speculated.
Put in context of the Covid-19
pandemic, the scenario becomes even
more miserable for launch owners,
said Saidur Rahman Rintu, central vice
president of launch owners association
and owner of a launch fleet plying this
route.
"We are already running launches with
only one-third of passenger capacity for
the sake of social distancing, incurring
huge losses," he said.
"If the Miarchar channel remains
closed, the losses will only increase as
we will be bound to ply an extra four
kilometres, paying for four more barrels
of oil. This will add more than Tk 50,000
per trip to operating costs," he added.
He said Commodore MA Sadek,
chairman of BIWTA, has assured them
of reopening the channel as soon as
possible, after the pressure of upstream
water flows decrease and salvage work is
completed.
Meanwhile, a general diary was lodged
with Muladi Police Station with the vessel
capsize, said Bellal Hossain, officer in
charge of Hizla River Police Station.
The vessel was going from Narayanganj
to Nowapara of Jashore with 13,000 bags
of cement worth around Tk 55 lakh.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Tk 17 lakh
stolen from
Rajshahi bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Thieves yesterday stole a bag
containing Tk 17 lakh from
a branch of Agrani Bank in
Rajshahi's Shaheb Bazar.
However, police looked
at the CCTV footage of the
theft and suspected that the
depositor might have some
connection with the thieves.
The stolen money
belonged to Rabiul Islam,
proprietor of Sarker
Petroleum Agency, said
Nibaran Chandra Burman,
OC of Boalia police station.
Islam, a fugitive in a case
for stealing railway oil, is
also a fertiliser dealer.
Rabiul sent his employee
Ripon to deposit the money
meant for withdrawal of
his share of fertiliser from
government depots.
"From CCTV, we
identified five people who
might have been involved,"
the OC said. "The footage
shows Ripon exchanged a
pen with one of the thieves
and exchanged words with
others after entering the
bank," the OC said, adding
that a case was filed.

Dhaka Wasa

FROM PAGE 3
In the statement, the graft watchdog called upon the
authorities concerned to follow due procedure and
transparency in all appointments of contractual jobs
including the managing director post at Dhaka Wasa.

It made the call to curb corruption and ensure good
governance at the organisation, saying in the past, violation
of rules was evident while allegation of irregularities and
corruption was also raised in case of such appointment.
Especially, good governance has to be established after
wiping out a long-standing malpractice of "one [person]-
centric dominance" in the Wasa management, TIB said.

ACC to

FROM PAGE 3
The bank, which was established in 2013, became a
hotbed for financial irregularities in less than three years
of operation. More than Tk 3,500 crore was siphoned out
from the bank, according to the Bangladesh Bank.
On December 15 last year, the ACC filed five cases with
its Integrated District Office-1 of Dhaka against Chisty, his
wife, son, daughter and daughter-in-law for amassing over
Tk 135.45 crore illegally.
In 2018, Chisty and his son were arrested in a Tk 160
crore money laundering case.

Hearing after

FROM PAGE 3
justice, by a majority view delivered the verdict around five
years after International Crimes Tribunal-1 handed down
capital punishment to Azharul. The SC released the full text
of the verdict on March 15 this year, clearing the way for
Azharul to move a petition seeking review of the judgement.
Azharul (67) was commander of notorious Al-Badr
force and president of Chhatra Sangha in Rangpur during
the 1971 war. He is now in Gazipur's Kshimpur Jail-2.

Nirmul Committee

FROM PAGE 3
The committee leaders alleged that mass murderers like
Mueen and Ashrafuzzaman are getting political asylum in
those countries (UK and USA respectively) due to flaws in
the legal system of western countries.

"The governments and civil society of these countries
must realise that there is no alternative to justice and
punishment for the perpetrators of genocide, if the world
is to be freed from heinous crimes against humanity," it
added.

It said if these countries continue to give asylum to
horrific perpetrators of genocide, then they will never be
able to win the declared 'war on terror', because these
people are involved in various militant activities.
"To maintain communal harmony, rule of law in
these countries and to build a terror-free society and state,
Chowdhury Mueen Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman should be
sent back to Bangladesh for execution immediately," the
statement further added.

They hoped that the Bangladesh's foreign ministry
will take more effective diplomatic steps to bring back
the fugitive assassins of Bangabandhu as well as the war
criminals convicted by the tribunal.
Chowdhury Mueen Uddin sued UK Home Secretary
Priti Patel for £60,000 in libel damages, alleging that he
was defamed in a Home Office report last year.
Mueen alleges the report libeled him by stating that he
was responsible for serious criminal violence, including
crimes against humanity, during Bangladesh's war of
independence in 1971.

Nasir or a

FROM PAGE 3
in the tenure of an incumbent council of a
city corporation.

"The government may do two things --
it may instruct the incumbent council to
continue through an administrative order
or it may employ an administrator to run
the corporation until declaration of polls
schedule," he said.
"It is more of a political decision than an
administrative one."

"In my opinion, a new administrator
will not be able to add any value at this
moment. S/he may face challenges to run
the corporation at the present pandemic
situation. It would be better if the
government instructs the present body to
continue until declaration of polls," said
Dr Tofail.

"In that case, the council should not be
allowed to make any policy, and should
just focus on routine works," he further
added.
Awami League presidium member Eng
Mosharraf Hossain, however, differed with
Dr Tofail's opinion.
The former minister and incumbent
lawmaker from Chattogram-1 (Mirsarai)
constituency said as far as he knew, there
was no scope for the present council to

continue after the expiry of tenure as per
law.
Mosharraf said the government may
employ any citizen as an administrator of
CCC during the interim period.
The administrator can be a government
official or a political person or a common
citizen -- it solely depends on the
government, he said.
Asked whether any discussion was held
in the party forum regarding it, Mosharraf
replied in the negative.
Echoing the same, Minister for Local
Government, Rural Development and
Cooperatives Tajul Islam told The Daily
Star that as per law there is no scope for the
present council to continue after its tenure
expires.
"So we are going to employ an
administrator in CCC until the election is
held," he said.
Asked whether the incumbent mayor
would be employed as an administrator,
or they are going to choose someone new,
Tajul Islam said, "It is an internal matter.
You will know when we make a decision
about it."
Despite repeated attempts, this
correspondent could not get in touch with
the CCC for comments.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Land Port Authority (BLPA) recruitment. It includes the organization's logo, name, and details about a recruitment drive for various positions. The text is in Bengali and mentions the authority's website and contact information.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Development Bank (BDBL) recruitment. It features the bank's logo and details about a recruitment drive for various positions. The text is in Bengali and includes the bank's website and contact information.

Advertisement for North-West Power Generation Company Ltd. It includes the company's logo, ISO certifications, and details about an e-Tender notice for the procurement of calibration gases and panel spares. The text is in Bengali and includes the company's website and contact information.



People suffer a lot as a number of houses and government and non-government offices remain under floodwater in Sadar and Chowhali upazilas of Sirajganj.

PHOTO: STAR/COLLECTED

No respite for flood-affected people in Sirajganj

About 2.36 lakh residents in six upazilas have been marooned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Flood-hit people in different parts of Sirajganj are not seeing any immediate respite from their sufferings although floodwater has started receding from Saturday. Meanwhile, water level in the Jamuna river has started to rise again. As a result, many new areas in six upazilas of the district have been flooded in the last one week.

Floodwater in the river was still flowing above the danger level at different points as of yesterday, said AKM Rafikul Islam, sub-divisional engineer of Sirajganj Water Development Board (WDB).

Floodwaters started receding from the area early Saturday, he said, adding that although water in the river is receding, the flood situation is still unchanged.

The affected people in the district are yet to get respite from their sufferings as the floodwater is now receding slowly from the area, he said.

Many new areas have been flooded due to the second phase of flood, according to the district relief and rehabilitation office in Sirajganj.

At present, 224 villages in 35 unions of six upazilas in the district have been flooded,

said Md Abdur Rahim, district relief and rehabilitation officer, adding that the flood has marooned about 2.36 lakh people in 47,217 families of the upazilas.

Flood-affected people are not getting respite from their sufferings although floodwaters have started receding from the areas early Saturday. The affected people are mainly sufferings due to adequate supply of food, pure drinking water and shelter.

Kahinur Begum and Jamiran Begum of Betilchar in Sirajganj's Chowhali upazila said they have been facing the waterlogging problem since last month. Their houses still remain under floodwater. They are eating only dry food like puffed rice.

Several hundred families in the remote shoal of Jamuna in Betilchar area are suffering a lot as their houses are still submerged, said Md Anwar Hossain of the area, adding that "We hardly get relief from anyone. We are now struggling to survive in the flooding area."

Like Anwar, several flood-hit residents in different areas said they were not getting adequate relief from the government or the private organisations.

Contacted, the district relief and rehabilitation officer said flood relief work is stopped now as they have started vulnerable group feeding (VGF) programme for ultra-poor people in Sirajganj. A total of 2,500 families are likely to get 10 kg of rice under the programme.

The villagers said people in the affected areas mainly earn their livelihood by engaging in fishing and farming. Though water is receding, the affected people are passing hard days as they are jobless due to flooding.

"I have lost my income as my entire croplands remain under floodwater for a month," said grower Anwar Hossain, a resident of Betilchar area in Chowhali upazila.

Md Abdul Khaleque of Kamalpur village in Shahzadpur upazila said he is passing very hard days due to the flood. He is now making a living by rowing boat.

According to the district relief and rehabilitation office, 53 kilometer road and embankment have been damaged here due to flood. At least 35 educational institutions and 14,000 hectares of croplands are under floodwater at present.

Lightning kills schoolboy in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A schoolboy was killed in lightning strike in Pirganj upazila of the district on Sunday.

The victim, Farhadul Islam, 12, son of Matifur Rahman of Jabarhat Hatpara village in the upazila, was a Class V student at a local primary school.

Quoting local people and the victim's family members, local Union Parishad Chairman Humayun Kabir said Farhadul was digging a narrow waterway amid rain at their courtyard to make way for the stagnant rain water.

At one stage, a streak of thunderbolt struck him around 10:30am, killing him instantly on the spot. Inspector (investigation) of Pirganj Police Station Mohammad Khairul Anam said.

Being informed, police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to the hospital for autopsy, added the police official.

Woman killed for dowry Housewife found hanging in Jamalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A housewife was killed allegedly by her husband for dowry in Chatmohar upazila on Sunday night.

The deceased, Kalpana Rani Pal, 40, was wife of Niranjana Pal, a tea vendor, of Haripur Mridhpara village in the upazila.

Meanwhile, police detained Niranjana yesterday for his alleged involvement in the murder.

Officer in Charge of Chatmohar Police Station Aminul Islam quoted victim's family members as saying that Niranjana often used to torture Kalpana, also mother of two sons, for dowry.

As a sequel, Niranjana killed Kalpana by slitting her throat and fled the scene, leaving her body at her house in a bid to spread the incident as miscreants' attack.

During primary interrogation, Niranjana confessed his involvement in the murder, the OC said, adding that victim's father Monoranjan Pal filed a case accusing Niranjana yesterday.

Police recovered the body yesterday morning and sent it to Pabna General Hospital for autopsy.

Away in Jamalpur, police recovered the hanging body of a woman in Sarishabari upazila on Sunday night.

The deceased, Labonya Aktar, 25, wife of Saudi expatriate Ismail Hossain, was a resident of Bilbalia village in the upazila.

Officer in Charge of Sarishabari Police Station Fazlul Karim said deceased's in-laws found her hanging from the ceiling fan of her room around 9:00pm.

Being informed, police went to the spot, recovered the body the same night and sent it to Jamalpur General Hospital for autopsy yesterday.

The reason behind the death will be confirmed after the autopsy, police said.



A local influential person fell down six year-old trees in Pirojpur's Nazirpur upazila parishad premises recently allegedly without informing the authorities concerned.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

SUPPLEMENT

B-SkillFUL: Shaping the Labour Market and Promoting Skills Development

MD NASIR UDDIN RANA, JANNATUL FERDOUS, FATEMA TUZ JOHOORA

In 2017, the World Economic Forum featured an article claiming Bangladesh to be the "New Asian Tiger" which captured the attention of researchers, policymakers, economists, development workers, and the government. The article mostly relied on the trend and forecast of several economic and development indicators, such as the persistent GDP growth rate (over 6 percent, for more than a decade), political stability, steady macroeconomic performance, and geopolitical support. However, the article also indicated that the non-diverse export market, weak labour market, lack of employment opportunities, and the absence of skilled workers are major barriers in Bangladesh's journey to become a developed country.

According to the Labour Force Survey 2016-17, the country has a working-age population comprising of a staggering 109.1 million, of which only 60.8 million are employed. Among the remaining working-age population of 48.3 million, 45.6 million are unemployed and discouraged workers, where discouraged workers refer to those who are not even looking for any job opportunities. This sub-population is a matter of rising concern for Bangladesh. In addition, despite there being 20.1 million young individuals in the labour force, more than 12 million are "Not in Education, Employment, and Training (NEET)" and another 8 million are discouraged.

Unemployment is one of the major reasons behind poverty in Bangladesh. According to the latest Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2016, Bangladesh's upper poverty line has been recorded at 24.3 percent and the lower poverty line (or people living in extreme poverty) was recorded at 12.9 percent. Several studies show that unemployment, lack of decent jobs and limited scope for employment have induced the rise in poverty in Bangladesh.

There is a clear mismatch between the growth in labour force and associated sectors. An analysis of the last two labour force surveys shows that between 2013 and 2016-17, jobs in agriculture sector had declined by 1.1 percent annually against the sector output growth of 3.2 percent. In comparison to that, jobs in the industries sector grew by only 0.5 percent while the sector output growth was at a robust 9.8 percent. Additionally, jobs in the services sector grew by approximately 4 percent against output growth of around 6 percent. These scenarios clearly exhibit the weak growth in jobs with respect to the growth of outputs in

the sectors, and the "growth elasticity" (change in the growth rates of jobs with respect to the change in growth rates of the GDP) suggests that jobs are showing an overall declining trend in comparison to the national growth of the country.

Furthermore, there is also a mismatch in the required skills to perform optimally amid the new technological waves in industries. Although data on skills mismatch in Bangladesh are limited, one important source of information, a tracer study conducted by The World Bank (2007), provides statistical evidence indicating that the skills imparted by much of the Technical and Vocational Education and



Training (TVET) system are not what the market requires. The study suggests that 47 percent of graduates from formal TVET programmes report being unemployed when surveyed even two years after their graduation. There are significant pieces of evidence in academic and policy research studies that show that skills and education do not reflect the demand of the job market in the economies of developing countries and Bangladesh is no different. In an era of technological revolution, such as Artificial Intelligence, the nature of jobs is increasingly becoming high-tech and service-oriented and is focused on participation of skilled labour force

in the workplace (Bresnahan et al., 2002).

With the vision to reduce the skills mismatch in the labour market and eradicate poverty through generating employment, Swisscontact Bangladesh has been implementing a project titled "Building Skills for Unemployed and Underemployed Labour (B-SkillFUL)" since November 2015. With assistance from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the European Union (EU), in the last four years, B-SkillFUL has provided training to nearly 40,000 poor and disadvantaged men and women in almost 18 different occupations. All these occupations have been selected through demand and skills



forecasting disaggregated by regions, industries, and sex of the beneficiaries. Thus, the skills training provision of B-SkillFUL and selection of occupations represent the demand of the industries including manufacturing firms such as ready-made garments, light engineering, handicrafts, and many more. The project also supports trainees to gain employment with a minimum salary of BDT 5,000 in the form of both self and wage employment. The project has been implemented in six districts across Bangladesh, where people living under and/or near poverty thresholds are relatively higher. To be considered a potential beneficiary of

B-SkillFUL through skills training, an individual is required to fulfil the criteria of the poverty threshold (upper poverty line of income of USD 2.5 per day, according to World Bank) and be disadvantaged in socioeconomic aspects.

B-SkillFUL's key focus has been to develop a labour force in the informal sector. Over 85 percent of Bangladesh's labour force are working in the informal economy, which is not regulated by welfare, social security, unemployment benefits, labour rights, and other labour market institutions such as minimum wage. B-SkillFUL has facilitated the training provision of trainees through private training schools or training provision centres. With B-SkillFUL's support these schools have also organised apprenticeships or on-the-job training known as Workplace-Based Training. Additionally, the project has sensitised over 3,000 informal small and medium enterprises (SMEs) on labour rights and decent work issues. B-SkillFUL has worked in partnership with Informal Sector Industry Skills Council, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce & Industries (BWCCI) and National Association of Small Cottage and Industries of Bangladesh (NASCI). These partners have provided the labour rights training to informal enterprises and followed up on their progress. The partners have put significant efforts into this collaboration as they have the same targets and mandates to achieve as part of their mission with the Government of Bangladesh.

In alignment with the demand for skilled workers in the industries and the future of work in the labour market of Bangladesh, B-SkillFUL has focused on bolstering employment scope for women in atypical jobs. These jobs include occupations such as mobile phone servicing technicians and electricians. The project has also organised apprenticeship programmes for trainees to provide them with real-time industry exposure. More than 50 percent of the students trained under the project are female; and of the total B-SkillFUL female graduates, more than 30,000 have been employed. To boost the female beneficiaries' enrolment and retention, the project has also explored innovative ideas, i.e. introducing female hygiene products, separate washrooms at training centres, and providing counselling to the guardians of the female beneficiaries.

From the experience of working with the training centres and their job placement offices, B-SkillFUL has observed that the centres alone cannot ensure sustainability in the employment of trainees. There is a need for an additional buy-in of the enterprises and that is why building and maintaining regular relationships

with the enterprise employers are key factors in assuring sustainable employment. There should be measures in building and maintaining relationships with these employers, sensitising and encouraging them to improve enterprise productivity by investing in skills development initiatives and improving the technical capacity of the labour force in their workplaces. Nevertheless, as these small businesses lack capacity to create decent workplaces, despite their positive awareness about it, they will require technical assistance and financial support to convert this awareness into action.

Considering the recent coronavirus outbreak and the subsequent economic slowdown, the current skills development landscape is experiencing a paradigm shift. In a post-COVID economy, the need for efficient enterprises and a technically enabled labour force will increase at an exponential rate. The time calls for initiatives to support enterprise growth along with efficient employment generation, such as increasing growth through diversification of products and better integration of training and labour markets. At the same time, both private and public institutions need to demonstrate sensitivity to areas like decent work, institutional accountability, and qualitative improvement in labour rights, which are critical to shaping the future of the Bangladeshi labour force.

B-SkillFUL has successfully ensured labour market insertion for thousands of poor and disadvantaged individuals through skills development training and subsequent employment in SMEs. The project has been supporting Bangladesh in achieving SDG 8, Decent Work, and Economic Growth. Building on these achievements, it requires a significant stride from the enterprises to take lead on the next generation of skills development initiatives that include initial skills development and upskilling of their employees. There should be initiatives from the government and development partners to further support these thriving enterprises to modernise and upgrade their labour force management, production processes, and product development, and promote diversification to introduce a systemic incentive-based model on skills development schemes.

Md Nasir Uddin Rana, Jannatul Ferdous and Fatema Tuz Johoora are development consultants at Swisscontact Bangladesh. The views expressed in this article belong to the authors alone, and do not necessarily represent those of the authors' employer, donor organization, committee or other groups or individuals.

Floods kill scores in India's Assam

9 rare rhinos die; China blows up dam to ease flood risk

AGENCIES

Intense rain and floods in the Indian state of Assam have killed at least 84 people and displaced more than 2.75 million since May, authorities said yesterday, as they tried to collect the bodies of nine rare rhinos drowned in the past 10 days.

Rescue teams were facing a double challenge of rising flood waters amid the novel coronavirus as villagers driven from their homes huddle in shelters.

"It's hard to enforce social distancing when people are being ordered to move away from the rising waters," said Sanghamitra Sanyal, a member of the northeastern state's flood management force. "We're urging people to at least cover their mouth and nose with a piece of clean cloth."

Officials warned that the water level in the Brahmaputra river was expected to rise by 11 cm (4.3 inches), two weeks after it burst its banks swamping more than 2,500 villages.

Floods have also inundated Assam's the Kaziranga National Park, home to the world's largest concentration of one-horned rhinoceroses, with an estimated 2,500 out of a total population of some 3,000 of the animals.

"Nine rhinos have drowned and over 100 other animals have been killed," Atul Bora, Assam's agriculture minister who is Kaziranga's member of the state parliament, told Reuters.

In China, authorities blew up part of a dam in eastern Anhui province to relieve flood pressure, local media reported, as heavy rains continue to swell rivers across parts of the country.

Rising waters across central and eastern China have left over 140 people dead or missing, and floods have affected almost 24 million since the start of July, according to the ministry of emergency management.



This aerial photo taken on Sunday shows water released from the Xiaolangdi Reservoir Dam in Luoyang in China's central Henan province, in preparation of the upcoming annual flood season at the Yellow River basin. PHOTO: AFP

Iran executes spy who helped to track Soleimani

Iran yesterday executed a former translator convicted of spying for the US and Israel, including helping to locate a top Iranian general killed later by the Americans, the judiciary said. The killing of Major General Qasem Soleimani in a US drone strike near Baghdad airport in January brought decades-old arch enemies Iran and the United States to the brink of conflict.

The judiciary's Mizan Online website said Mahmoud Mousavi Majd's death "sentence was carried out on Monday morning over the charge of espionage so that the case of his betrayal to his country will be closed forever". Soleimani headed the Quds Force, the foreign operations arm of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Sudan to try ousted Bashir over 1989 coup

Sudan's former autocratic president Omar al-Bashir, ousted amid a popular pro-democracy uprising last year, faces trial from today over the military coup that brought him to power more than three decades ago. Bashir, 76, who is already behind bars for corruption, could face the death penalty if convicted over his 1989 coup against the democratically elected government of prime minister Sadek al-Mahdi. The Khartoum trial starting at 0800 GMT against him and 16 co-accused comes as Sudan's post-revolution transitional government has launched a series of reforms in hopes of fully rejoining the international community. Sudan has also pledged to hand over Bashir to the International Criminal Court to face trial on war crimes and genocide charges related to the Darfur conflict, which left 300,000 people dead.

Saudi king hospitalised with gall bladder inflammation



Saudi Arabia's 84-year-old ruler King Salman was admitted to hospital in Riyadh yesterday for gall bladder inflammation, the royal court said, prompting the postponement of the Iraqi prime minister's high-profile visit. It is rare for Saudi Arabia to report on the health of the ageing monarch, who has ruled the top oil exporter and the Arab world's biggest economy since 2015. King Salman is the second reigning monarch in the Gulf to be hospitalised after Kuwait's 91-year-old emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was admitted to hospital last week, at a time when the region is gripped by the twin crises of the coronavirus pandemic and a plunge in crude prices.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

EU in 'mission impossible'

Summit drags on as Europe's big players see Covid recovery deal coming

REUTERS, Brussels

European Union (EU) heavyweight Germany yesterday said that national leaders split over a massive coronavirus stimulus plan had sketched a framework agreement that could bring a successful end to a fraught summit dragging into its fourth day.

Slow to coordinate their initial response to the outbreak and already weakened by Britain's departure, the EU's 27 nations could redeem themselves with an economic aid plan that would show Europeans they can step up to a crisis and are united.

But old grievances between fiscally-frugal northern nations less affected by the pandemic and more indebted southern European nations like Italy and Greece, whose economies are in freefall, have made progress painfully slow.

Ahead of the 1400 GMT restart, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said leaders now had a new basis for a deal on a 750 billion euro (\$858 billion) recovery fund and the bloc's next 2021-



2027 common budget, worth around 1.1 trillion euros.

"We worked out a framework for a possible agreement last night after long negotiations," she told reporters, arriving for the fourth day of talks in Brussels in what could be the bloc's longest ever summit.

"This is progress and gives hope that an agreement can be reached today."

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was also upbeat about the chances of a deal.

With talks going past midnight for two consecutive nights, French President Emmanuel Macron lost patience in the early hours of yesterday

and banged his fist on the table in frustration at "sterile blockages" by the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Austria, two diplomats said.

But by daylight, he shared Merkel's optimism, telling reporters as he arrived back: "I'm starting today with a lot of determination to make progress."

Summit chair Charles Michel urged leaders on Sunday to achieve "mission impossible", reminding them that more than 600,000 people had now died from COVID-19 around the world.

"It looks a bit more hopeful than at the times where I thought last night that it was over," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told reporters in the early hours.

Within the 750 billion euro recovery fund, 390 billion euros could be considered as non-repayable grants, diplomats said, a compromise between the 350 billion level of the five "frugals" - who also include Finland - and the 400 billion euros demanded by France and Germany.

West Bengal announces 2-day weekly lockdown

NDTV ONLINE

West Bengal will go into complete lockdown two days of the week to fight the spurt in coronavirus cases. State Home Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay, making the announcement, said there were pockets of community transmission across the state.

This week, the state will be under lockdown on Thursday and Saturday. The next week, it will be on Wednesday. Future dates for August will be announced in the coming days. The containment zone-based restrictions will continue to be in place.

"Bengal is making an effort to break the chain of transmission. The strategy now is to intensify the effort to break the chain. A lockdown for 2 to 3 days a week will act as a brake. It will have a good effect," home secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay said.

"There is a perception of community transmission in some pockets," the home secretary said.

Congress MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury reacted strongly to what he called was an ad hoc decision by Bengal. "The state had four and a half months to prepare for this situation but all we saw was half-boiled and half-baked decisions which has left the people in the state in the dark about what to do and where to go if they get infected," he said.

Citing the turnaround in New Delhi, Chowdhury said the state should look to the capital where the recovery rate is over 80 per cent while in Bengal it is going down." His remarks did not go down well with Dr Shantanu Sen, Trinamool MP and former President of the state's medical association.

"This whole situation is the result of the centres callous handling of the migrant issue among other things. And all that they are doing is, writing letters to the state sometimes from the health secretary sometimes from the home," Dr Shantanu Sen said.



Kanye West holds chaotic opening of 2020 polls bid

AFP, Washington

US rapper Kanye West broke down in tears on Sunday at the chaotic launch of his unlikely campaign to oust Donald Trump as president in November elections.

Wearing a bullet-proof jacket marked "security," West gave a rambling speech in which he claimed he had wanted his wife, Kim Kardashian, to get an abortion and that renowned American abolitionist Harriet Tubman "never actually freed the slaves."

West told the event in Charleston, South Carolina, how he had wanted his wife to get an abortion when she was pregnant with North, their oldest daughter. He then revealed his father also had wanted to abort him.

"My dad wanted to abort me. My mom saved my life. There would've been no Kanye West because my dad was too busy," West said, bursting into tears.

He later shouted, "I almost killed my daughter! I almost killed my daughter!"

At another point during his speech, he said, "Harriet Tubman never actually freed the slaves, she just had the slaves go to work for other white people."

West's speech, clips of which went viral on social media, provoked confusion, anger and concern for the musician's mental health.

Less than four months ahead of November's election, West, 43, raised eyebrows on July 4 when he announced on Twitter he would challenge Trump.

'Breakthrough' treatment slashes virus death risk

AFP, Paris

An aerosol-based treatment could drastically reduce the number of new coronavirus patients dying from the disease or requiring intensive care, according to preliminary results released yesterday by a British biotech firm.

In a randomised trial of 100 patients admitted to hospital with Covid-19, those who received an inhaled formula of the protein interferon beta were at 79 per cent lower risk of developing severe disease compared to those who received a placebo.

They were also more than twice as likely to make a full recovery compared with the control group.

The firm behind the treatment, known as SNG001, said the preliminary results suggested "a major breakthrough" in the pandemic.

"We are all delighted with the trial results announced today, which showed that SNG001 greatly reduced the number of hospitalised COVID-19 patients who progressed from requiring oxygen to requiring ventilation," said Richard Marsden, CEO of Synaigen.

The results published yesterday have not yet been peer-reviewed and the sample size is relatively small.

But if confirmed the treatment could revolutionise the way Covid-19 is dealt with in hospitals.

Interferon beta is a naturally occurring protein, commonly used to treat multiple sclerosis. It forms part of the body's natural fight against infection, and the novel coronavirus suppresses its production in an attempt to evade an immune response.

Delivering the protein directly into the lungs of patients is designed to trigger a robust immune response to the virus, even in patients whose immune system is already weakened by infection.

"The results confirm our belief that interferon beta... has huge potential as an inhaled drug to be able to restore the lung's immune response," said Tom Wilkinson, professor of respiratory medicine at the University of Southampton.

There are currently a number of treatments available for patients hospitalised with COVID-19.

Last month a Britain-based team of researchers announced they had successfully reduced the risk of death among seriously ill patients by administering the commonly available steroid dexamethasone. Several countries have also authorised the use of remdesivir for treatment.



Catalan pro-independence demonstrators take part in an anti-monarchy march in Monasterio de Poblet yesterday coinciding with a visit of the Spanish royals to the Royal Abbey of Santa Maria de Poblet. PHOTO: AFP

UK going down 'wrong path'

Warns China as Britain to scrap Hong Kong extradition treaty

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday warned that Britain was heading down "a wrong path" as Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab was expected to announce the suspension of an extradition treaty with Hong Kong, raising tensions between the countries.

Wang Wenbin, spokesman for China's foreign ministry, told a regular press briefing that Beijing would "firmly counter" any interference in its internal affairs, also slamming suggestions it was mistreating minorities in Xinjiang as "slander."

"We urge the UK not to go further down this wrong path, in order to avoid further damage to China-UK relations," Wang said.

"Recent erroneous remarks and measures concerning Hong Kong have seriously violated international law and basic norms governing international relations... China strongly condemns this and firmly opposes it."



A new security law imposed by China on Hong Kong last month has drawn widespread criticism in Britain and elsewhere, and Raab later yesterday was to announce a package of measures similar to those already introduced by the United States, Canada and Australia.

They are expected to include the suspension of an extradition treaty.

Tensions between Hong Kong's former and current rulers have soared over a number of topics recently.

Britain recently bowed to sustained pressure from Washington and ordered the phased removal of

Chinese telecoms giant Huawei from its 5G network despite warnings of retaliation from Beijing.

Wang also hit back at comments by Raab that accused Beijing of human rights abuses against ethnic and religious minorities in the northwest region of Xinjiang.

Raab told the BBC on Sunday that it was "clear that there are gross, egregious human rights abuses going on... it is deeply, deeply troubling."

Wang called the comments "nothing but rumours and slander."

"The Xinjiang issue is not about human rights, religions or ethnic groups at all, but about combating violence, terrorism and separatism," he said.

Rights groups and experts estimate that more than one million ethnic Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities have been rounded up into a network of internment camps, which China says are facilities for job-training and to steer people away from extremism.

Astrophysicists unveil biggest-ever 3D map of the Universe

AFP, Geneva

Astrophysicists yesterday published the largest-ever 3D map of the Universe, the result of an analysis of more than four million galaxies and ultra-bright, energy-packed quasars.

The efforts of hundreds of scientists from around 30 institutions worldwide have yielded a "complete story of the expansion of the universe", said Will Percival of the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada.

In the project launched more than two decades ago, the researchers made "the most accurate expansion history measurements over the widest-ever range of cosmic time", he said in a statement.

The map relies on the latest observations of the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS), titled the "extended Baryon Oscillation Spectroscopic Survey" (eBOSS), with data collected from an optical telescope in New Mexico over six years.

The infant Universe following the Big Bang is relatively well known through extensive theoretical models and observation of cosmic microwave

background -- the electromagnetic radiation of the nascent cosmos.

Studies of galaxies and distance measurements also contributed to a better understanding of the Universe's expansion over billions of years.

But Kyle Dawson of the University of Utah, who unveiled the map, said the researchers tackled a "troublesome gap in the middle 11 billion years."

Through "five years of continuous observations, we have worked to fill in that gap, and we are using that information to provide some of the most substantial advances in cosmology in the last decade," he said.

Astrophysicist Jean-Paul Kneib of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL) in Lausanne, who initiated eBOSS in 2012, said the goal was to produce "the most complete 3D map of the Universe throughout the lifetime of the Universe."

For the first time, the researchers drew on "celestial objects that indicate the distribution of matter in the distant Universe, galaxies that actively form stars and quasars."

LAW WEBINAR

Legal and Policy implications on Commerce and Investment during Pandemic

THE COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the economy around the world. The IMF has identified three areas of the Bangladesh economy that have been hugely impacted by this pandemic. Firstly, the domestic businesses are being severely hit due to the lockdown measures; secondly, the export sector, particularly in the RMG sector has also seen a sharp decline; and thirdly, the sources of foreign remittance from migrant workers has significantly fallen down. On the other hand, as more European businesses shift their focus from China, Bangladesh, as a budding investment hub, has the opportunity to improve its favourability in receiving more foreign investment.

To discuss these issues from legal and policy perspectives, Law & Our Rights, The Daily Star organised the webinar on 'Legal Implications on Commerce and Investment during Pandemic' on 14 July 2020. Mohammad Golam Sarwar, from Law Desk and also a Lecturer in Law, University of Dhaka moderated the webinar.



Dr. Rumana Islam, Professor of Law, University of Dhaka

Bangladesh is a party to 32 BITs (numbers differ between 31 and 33 as well) but unfortunately not all the BITs are accessible. Bangladesh has signed multilateral and regional treaties as well, such as the SAFTA, the BIMSTEC, the MIGA, and notably, the ICSID which is the Convention relating to the settlement of investment disputes. Bangladesh is also a party to the WTO and the WIPO treaties and has signed some double taxation agreements as well. In March, an online service was launched to improve the ease of obtaining services digitally. In the past decade, attraction of foreign investment has been a top priority which is reflected in the UNCTAD report of 2018 showing that the foreign direct investment (FDI) flow has gone up by 68%. Dedicated EPZs have also been created as incentives. Foreign investors can invest in almost every area except four – the regime is liberal and there are also tax holidays provided as incentives. The fact that Bangladesh is a party to the ICSID Convention and the New York Convention, enforcement of awards is a big advantage in attracting foreign investment.

However, it is often argued that the entire BIT regime of Bangladesh needs to be revised; for example,

India has undertaken a nationalistic approach and has adopted a model BIT in 2016. This is an instance we can take note of, because in the post-pandemic world, Bangladesh will need sufficient regulatory space with regard to its foreign investors. The current framework may lead to disputes against Bangladesh as most of the treaties do not envision public health emergencies like the present one.



Professor Dr. Mustafizur Rahman, Distinguished Fellow, Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

Once Bangladesh graduates from its LDC status, it will no longer receive some of the market access and preferential treatment, including in the RMG sector. This is a vital concern at present, specially with regard to the impact of the pandemic. Although more initiatives are being undertaken to attract FDI in recent times, we have been falling short of meeting the goals. For example, we received 12 billion dollars in foreign investment against the expected 30 billion dollars envisioned in the 7th Five Year Plan. This means that despite the legal and policy incentives, we are unable to attract the expected amount of FDI inflow. It is also seen that the rate of re-investment is higher compared to new investments which means that we are not attracting enough new investors. If we look at the example of Vietnam whose GDP is close to that of ours, we will realise that they have a substantially larger FDI inflow, mostly from the export-oriented businesses facilitated through their special economic zones.

We are going through a three-dimensional risk including health risk, economic risk and humanitarian risk. Without addressing our health risks, we cannot really proceed with economic revival. A good idea might be to incorporate foreign investment in the development of our infrastructure including power and health sectors. Now is the time for us to confluence many positive opportunities; we must act soon to utilise this window of opportunity. We can prioritise sectors which are strategically important to our policy objectives, specially relating to sustainable development goals (SDGs), and work to attract foreign investment in these areas.

We must also think about how to provide decent work to a substantial percentage of the population that has gone or is about to go beneath the poverty line due to the pandemic. They

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Transparency, accountability and good governance must be improved to bring about a holistic rebranding of Bangladesh as an investment-friendly country.
- We must think about how to provide decent work to a substantial percentage of the population that has gone or is about to go beneath the poverty line due to the pandemic.
- Bangladesh should adopt strategies to attract FDI that are in-line with its policy objectives of attaining SDGs.
- The existing FDI screening procedure should be implemented properly to uphold national interest while scrutinising foreign investments.
- The entire Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) regime of Bangladesh needs to be revised to update and adjust their provisions considering the new developments.
- The Bangladesh Arbitration Act 2001 should be chosen as the applicable law for dispute settlement concerning commerce and investment.
- The involvement of academics and researchers should be ensured in policy and lawmaking in order to encourage informed discourse.
- A coordinated effort of all stakeholders is necessary to overcome the effects of the pandemic.

will have to be given employment opportunities in the industrial sector. Furthermore, we must look beyond the RMG sector and explore other industries for diversification.



Md. Sirazul Islam, Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA)

BIDA is progressing in a planned and calculated manner in order to ensure the improvement of ease of doing business. The International Finance Corporation of the World Bank is providing assistance to the BIDA. This year, an additional indicator has been incorporated in the World Bank's ease of doing business. We hope that a substantial improvement will be seen in the coming days. 23 reforms in 7 of the 10 indicators have been submitted. As per the guidance of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, BIDA will be consulting with the relevant ministries and government agencies to discuss the plans of action and possible reforms.

The framework on which the World Bank measures the ease of doing business is quite narrow – an improvement in the index might not necessarily improve the FDI inflow. So, the government is working in other areas as well. One stop service (OSS) platform is specially pertinent in the post-pandemic 'new normal' as it aims to digitise the relevant services. The platform is providing 19 services relating to NID, Tax certificate, registration, etc. Although government offices were closed, online services have been provided to businesses.

Last year, we signed MoUs with six organisations and this year, we signed with six more. Ten more MoUs are under consideration. A business needs 150 services from about 35 government agencies and we hope to incorporate all these services within the OSS platform. We are aiming to provide at least 50 services online by the end of the year. Moreover, BIDA is conducting an entrepreneurship and skills development project to incentivise the youth to participate in business ventures.

The next two years will be years of survival and attracting foreign investors should be our priority during these times. But at the same time, we must ensure that our national interests are safeguarded, for example, FDI should be used to improve employment opportunities for our people.



Shah Monjurul Hoque, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Most of the laws specifically addressing foreign investments are recent and as such, they have not been tested out before courts. However, a strong infrastructure has been built in the meantime. Foreign investors prefer to take their arbitration outside the country. Unfortunately, arbitration procedures are long-drawn and costly in our legal system. All domestic laws are relevant for foreign investors, so merely reforming investment laws will not suffice. Investors looking to acquire lands may face many difficulties due to bureaucratic hurdles. These areas

should be addressed.

On a different note, The FDI screening procedure should address various factors including health, environment and most importantly the security issues of the host country. India, for example, has recently changed its policy protecting their national interest. As per the new policy, all investments from border sharing countries of India will require the prior approval of the Indian Government.

Furthermore, we should ensure that the Bangladesh Arbitration Act 2001 is chosen as the applicable law for dispute settlement. Laws relating to foreign exchange, loan recovery, money laundering are also pertinent in this context and should be properly implemented.



Barrister Anita Ghazi Rahman, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Foreign direct investments comprise three types of transactions: equity finance, reinvestment of earnings and intercompany loans. Bangladesh Bank has recently issued circulars widening the scope of intercompany loans. It has also issued a circular to ease the process of repatriation of sale proceeds to foreign residents in order to attract more foreign investments. This is in contrast with other countries imposing more stringent measures. This is a window of opportunity for us and the government has taken excellent initiatives.

Although Bangladesh has been home to some of the largest social enterprises, the legal framework has not been updated to accommodate them. Bangladesh has a two-tiered system where for-profit and not-for-profit ventures have to operate separately. In contrast, countries like the USA allow for a joint entity that can have both for-profit and not-for-profit activities. Social enterprises can be brought within the scheme of 'alternative investment' as laid down by the Bangladesh Securities Exchange Commission rules, but the law does not provide a proper definition of such investment. A third entity between a company and non-profit should be recognised now. Although the ICT division is providing grants to non-profit organisations, it should also provide the same to social enterprises which may even help them gain revenue.

THE EVENT REPORT IS PREPARED BY LAW DESK, THE DAILY STAR.

LAW OPINION

COVID-19: SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTION AND THE NEED FOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION SPECIALISM

DR. KHALED HAMID CHOWDHURY

WE are going through the crisis of the century faced by the mankind due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. Most of the countries are implementing drastic lockdown measures as well as travel restrictions, which are creating serious supply-chain disruptions, production delays and distribution slowdowns, resulting in major impediments for many businesses that depend on international supplies.

Since the ease of the lockdown situation, Bangladesh's apparel industry has been going through a common problem of negotiation of contractual terms. The widespread disruption brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak has compelled companies to consider invoking "force majeure" clauses – a provision, that may exempt them from performing contractual obligations, if successfully pleaded. At first glance, this might seem like an attractive option. In practice, the threshold for establishing force majeure is high. The "Act of God" or "Force Majeure" clauses that cover a range of events such as floods and earthquakes are designed to help insulate firms from the shock of the unforeseen.

The structuring of force majeure clauses in particular, and the allocation of risks in contracts more generally, will no doubt be given a great deal more thought in the future as lessons are learned from the impact of COVID-19.

Immediate concerns, however, should be around how the impact of the virus on the existing supply chain can be borne with and whether the force majeure provisions available in such contracts will be capable of



being enforced. An international sale and supply contract may also have applicable law and causation issues, Covid-19 itself may not be the reason to prevent performance, there may be other options to perform, albeit, expensive.

Hence, one needs to find the specific consequences of Covid-19 on a particular contractual performance – did it hinder or prevent performance? The relevant date of entering into contract would be crucial to find the reasonable anticipation of Covid-19 as a force majeure event, the effectiveness of the clause often requires giving notice of failure to perform to the other side and there is a duty to mitigate as well. One should also look at payment impact before claiming force majeure. Had the payment already fallen due?

If this contention fails or there is no force majeure clause in a contract, a plea of frustration may be made but that has

an even higher threshold – performance of a contract must have become impossible, illegal or radically different from what the parties originally bargained for. Moreover, this may be pleaded for contracts entered into before Covid-19 for it to be considered as a frustrating event and must not be in the contemplation of the parties at the time of entering into the contract.

At any rate a comprehensive Act such as the one passed in Singapore, namely Covid-19 (Temporary Measures) Act, 2020 would have allayed doubts about Covid-19 being a force majeure event, giving the parties relief from performance of contracts, made renegotiation easier, fairer, and taken care of limitation periods prescribed under general and special laws.

Our RMG sector that contributes to over 80% of our export revenue is now forecasted to face loss of payment of over US\$3

Billion for products already made and the cumulative liability for unfinished products reaching US\$10 Billion due to importers and foreign buyers taking advantage of the loosely formulated contracts by renegotiating their previously confirmed orders at a much lesser price, compelling the manufacturers and suppliers to haplessly agree to arbitrary terms.

In the recent years, many buyers also took advantage of inequality of bargaining powers making suppliers agree only on the basis of purchase orders without resorting to traditional payment of methods by letters of credit or without even offering a sales contract leaving suppliers without much legal safeguards. There are further complications created by deferred payment mechanisms.

Our RMG industry needs to take some urgent actions. Contractual disputes with foreign parties are likely to open floodgates but the question is, do we have the power to bargain or test these claims through litigation? With almost 4 million pending cases and a dearth of judges, and only a handful of courts operating remotely, here our best option must be to have resort to alternative dispute resolution (ADR) measures. There should be efficient, structured, integrative and collaborative negotiation to review the respective obligations to save the contract and to maintain future relationship, failing which one may opt for mediation or arbitration. There are the New York Convention 1958 for arbitration and the Singapore Convention 2019 for mediation to deal effectively by recognition and enforcement of cross border settlements involving foreign parties. Bangladesh is yet to be a signatory to the Singapore Convention. This needs to be considered at the earliest to save immense cost of litigation or even

arbitration. Even if a contract does not have an ADR clause, there is no bar to resort to ADR if the parties concerned agree to it mutually even after the dispute arises (which, in any event, ought to be the most sensible decision in the current crisis).

The necessity to use online platform need not be reiterated. There is fast, efficient, secure platform that is already doing wonders during this crisis. ADR measures also avoid the formality to change the legal rules. Efforts should also be made to make statute annexed ADR provisions such as in making money loan recovery more effective, implementing the amendment made to section 89 of the Code of Civil Procedure back in 2012 and making mediation mandatory in all civil suits. There should be cost implications for failing to reach a resolution or settlement through ADR without realistic efforts. Constant monitoring, taking effective measures including giving practice directions, dialogues between stakeholders, more activism ought to help our economy to recover in the coming days.

The impact of Covid-19 has just started to unfold and will evolve fast. We need to stay ahead of the curve and get ready with appropriate emergency assistance and post-crisis collaboration in different forms as appropriate. Every sector should cooperate for survival, restructuring and recovery. It is time for the dispute resolution specialists acting as peacemakers putting off their adversarial hats unless unavoidable, to take the lead when the survival of the mankind is at stake.

THE WRITER IS A BARRISTER AND ADVOCATE AT THE SUPREME COURT, BANGLADESH AND HEAD OF LAWS AT LONDON COLLEGE OF LEGAL STUDIES (SOUTH).

Medical personnel at BSMMU provided with fake masks

Who will take responsibility?

WE are dismayed and worried about reports of counterfeit N95 masks—evident by the syntax and spelling errors in the labelling—being given to medical personnel at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMU) recently. It is doubtful that one of the world's biggest suppliers of respiratory protection, 3M, would release products with such errors in the labelling. The doctors who were provided with the masks have given enough reasons to establish the unreliability of the product based on its texture and build quality. What is even more disturbing is that authentic masks were mixed with the fake ones, making them even more difficult to detect. Doctors have already filed complaints addressing the hospital director and concerned authorities.

It is a shame that the hospital authorities tasked with purchasing the masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensuring the quality of the products have failed to do so, especially at a time when a mask can be the difference between getting infected and possibly dying, or being protected. When infection rates are continuing to rise, how can hospital authorities be so careless about monitoring such vital protective gear? From the beginning, we have witnessed the lack of adequate protection for our healthcare workers struggling to cope with the ongoing pandemic in a fragile healthcare system. If such callousness prevails in a reputed institution such as BSMMU, what example will it set for other facilities? We can't help but question, why weren't the masks checked prior to their procurement?

Experts have repeatedly urged the government to solve the problems related to the supply of poor-quality protective gear—problems which tend to drive the high infection rates among health workers as well as patients. The hospital authorities must acquire supplies from reliable sources and ensure their quality prior to the distribution. The nation already faces a shortage of healthcare professionals, as many have been martyred in the fight against coronavirus, and such unforgivable oversight will further threaten their safety and wellbeing. Strict laws must be in place to bring those perpetrators who are involved in selling these fake products to book. Even though there appears to be no end to the crisis facing frontline workers, the most important thing to do now is to immediately ensure that all medical staff is equipped with authentic masks and PPEs that will ensure their safety so that they can successfully continue their work to try and save lives.

Exporting food in the post-pandemic era

We must not miss this opportunity

ONE of the biggest challenges faced by governments all over the world during this pandemic has been guaranteeing food security, which essentially means supporting the agriculture sector and also ensuring a steady supply of food through imports. For Bangladesh, while food security is a continuous concern, there is a need to explore the opportunities for export of food in the near future, which can be a major source of revenue. We therefore need to develop an agricultural policy that will ensure farmers get fair prices for their crops and promote the growth of diversified crops.

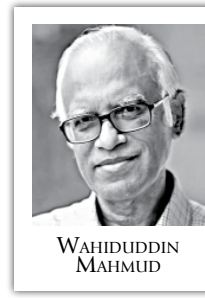
At a recent webinar, media personality and agriculture development activist Shykh Seraj said that while in the coming days the country will face a major challenge to ensure food and nutrition security during the pandemic, in the post-pandemic period, Bangladesh can take advantage of the opportunity to export food as the whole world will be preoccupied with ensuring food supply.

This is not an unrealistic ambition given the scope of agriculture that remains unexplored. One of the biggest hurdles farmers face, apart from floods and rains that destroy their crops, is getting fair prices. Middlemen dominate the agriculture market and take the lion's share of the revenue from selling crops. This has led to farmers giving up their vocation and landowners selling off their land at low prices, which are then used for non-farming purposes. The result is a reduction in agricultural land and hence a decrease in the amount of food grown. This is not the scenario Bangladesh can afford as it compromises local food security and takes away the opportunities to export.

The primary challenge for the government, therefore, is to remove the middlemen from the market so that farmers can directly sell their crops and get fair prices for their hard earned crops.

As Shykh Seraj has pointed out on many occasions, investment in agro-industries have huge returns. There has to be more emphasis in high value agricultural products such as fruit, vegetables and dairy products, all of which have a high demand abroad, especially among expatriate Bangladeshis. Last year, Bangladesh earned USD 909 million by exporting processed items like vegetables, betel leaf, tea, dry food, tobacco, fruit and foliage. This can be scaled up by increasing diverse food crops while maintaining compliance protocols, promoting innovative technologies of growing, increasing cold storage facilities, reducing pesticide use and making sure that the farmers are the ones who enjoy maximum profit from selling their products.

With a drastic fall in export revenue from readymade garments, there is an immediate need for diversifying our export portfolio. Commercialising agro-based products could be a golden opportunity to earn revenue and also provide job opportunities for young people and incentivise entrepreneurship in this sector. It is an opportunity we must not miss out on.



WAHIDUDDIN MAHMUD

infrastructure. These efforts, however, proved inadequate for preventing the countrywide community-level transmission of the infection. The existing public health infrastructure proved too moribund to be repaired easily. The lockdown was marred by inadequate management, including allowing some "super-spreader" events like religious gatherings, mass movements of garment workers and Eid-related holidaying. The current strategy seems to be to continue to gear up the Covid-related health measures, including some lockdowns here and there, while letting the economy regain the normal levels of activities, albeit subject to complying with Covid hygiene. The epidemiological goals of localised lockdowns of certain hotspots remain vague, particularly when the infections seem to have spread almost all over the country, and in the absence of a surveillance system based on adequate numbers of tests to determine both the extent of current infections and the immunity acquired by past infections.

Opinion polls suggest that while the general public could accept the hardship of the initial three month lockdown, they are against a repeat lockdown, which seems to also conform to the current understanding of the authorities regarding the political sociology of such lockdowns. Compliance with Covid hygiene seems to thus remain the only fallback position, at least to let the course of the infections go through a "slow-burning" process without reaching an unmanageable peak.

Fortunately, experts believe that compliance with some simple rules like wearing masks, washing hands and keeping physical distance in public places can provide about 95 percent protection against the infection. The authorities are also now trying to convey this message to the general public in a variety of ways. But such messages seem to remain largely unheeded, as clearly evident from the visual reporting on electronic media. One reason may be that these messages do not have enough credibility with the general public, particularly because of mixed signals from time to time and in the absence of clearly defined, coherent and implementable guidelines. But there may be also other issues of individual incentives and social psychology related to the behavioural norms of Covid hygiene.

First, one of the early messages coming from the official health spokespersons was that Covid-19 is not a serious ailment for most of the infected people, which is factually correct; only about 15 percent of those who show signs of infection may develop serious symptoms, about five



NAWSHAD AHMED

SOCIAL research is generally not a priority during a serious crisis. Despite the fact that Covid-19 has dramatically impacted our society and altered the life patterns of a large section of the population, we have undertaken very few studies in Bangladesh to assist informed decision-making during this pandemic. While basically a health problem, Covid-19 has led to large-scale socioeconomic impacts. The measures taken to limit the rate of spread of the virus such as quarantining, physical distancing and social isolation have resulted in sudden unemployment of millions of people in the country.

The unprecedented circumstances unfolding over the last four months due to shutdown of business, transport and daily life are greatly influenced by several societal realities which are, persistent social and economic inequalities, the proliferation of misinformation, and the uncertainties associated with lack of proven strategies and tools to deal with this major crisis.

In Bangladesh, the vulnerability of the working population in both formal and informal sectors became apparent as a result of the shutdown to contain the spread of coronavirus through human contact. Millions of poor people who lack personal savings or alternative means of livelihood to fall back upon during this crisis, quickly became dependent on food assistance and financial support from the government.

The government of Bangladesh runs regular social safety net programmes and it covered over seven million of the poorest and most vulnerable families in 2019

Why do people resist Covid-19 hygiene?

percent may need life-saving hospital-based interventions and less than two percent die, while many do not show any symptom at all. What was not fully comprehended was that Covid-19 may be ten times more infectious than the general cold and flu, so that while the risk for an individual to be seriously ill from this infection may be small, the total numbers of people being seriously ill and needing hospital care may prove overwhelming. Thus, the risk to society as a whole far outweighs an individual's perception of risk; it is the latter that mainly affects his or her incentives for compliance with Covid hygiene.

Second, the incompatibility between the social risk and individual incentive is heightened by the age structure of the population of Bangladesh. Compared to many other countries, the proportion

regarding Covid hygiene may prove less harmful for themselves than for the elderly who are susceptible to serious and fatal infection. As distinct from self-interested behaviour of people, complying with Covid hygiene is thus more of a social responsibility that needs far more vigorous awareness campaigns. Moreover, recent studies on experimental psychology regarding the practice of Covid hygiene also show that, as opposed to established social habit, even simple things like social distancing involve some effort and mental exercise and, therefore, more persuasion.

Since it now looks like Covid-19 is not going away soon, the policymakers have to think beyond routinely adding Covid hygiene merely as a qualifying proposition while making announcements of freeing up more and more economic activities. The foregoing

initiatives, involving volunteers, NGOs and other community organisations and with support from the government administration, can be a means for effective awareness campaigns as well as for identifying and supporting families in need of relief, credit or healthcare. In this respect, combatting the Covid-19 pandemic is more to do with community mobilisation than like conducting a war with a centralised command and control system, as remarked by Amartya Sen in the context of the successful campaign of containing the pandemic in the state of Kerala in India.

The strict compliance of Covid hygiene will inevitably involve considerable economic costs, so that policies will need to be devised to share this burden of cost equitably in society. This cost will be reflected in various ways: investments



The use of face masks in the "new normal" has seeped into street art in different parts of the world.

PHOTO: INDRANIL MUKHERJEE/AFP

of the youth population in Bangladesh is disproportionately large because of the increasing adoption of birth control measures since the late 1980s, which dramatically reduced the high birth rates of the erstwhile period. This has resulted in the so-called "demographic dividend" which is good for boosting economic growth through a youth bulge in the age composition of the population. But since younger people are less susceptible to serious or fatal Covid infections, it means that the larger proportion of the working-age population, being young, can move around with a perception that Covid-19 infection may not do much harm to them.

Third, an even more important source of incentive incompatibility arises from the fact that complying with Covid hygiene is as important for ensuring one's own safety as for protecting others. This is particularly true for the more mobile younger people whose negligence

analyses suggest that effective compliance will need a well-articulated strategy involving strict compulsion measures, along with more vigorous awareness campaigns. The challenges are there, not least posed by the extremely high congestion of human habitation and economic activities, especially in the urban centres. A foreign journalist once remarked on his first visit to Bangladesh: this is the only country where one cannot be in an open space without at least another person being in sight. Physical distancing in such an environment is not always easy.

The hygiene rules need to therefore be practicable while implemented strictly, albeit in a humane way. A rickshaw-puller, for example, may be excused for taking off his mask in the scorching heat of the sun while not carrying passengers; but such instances should be treated only as exceptions to the rules. Local level

needed to create more hygienic work environments in factories, fewer number of passengers carried by buses and other vehicles, suspension of services like ride-sharing by motorbikes, temporary shutting down of entertainment facilities like cinema halls and stadiums, adequate spacing of roadside vendors, queuing of buyers in kitchen markets, and so on. But it should be realised that there are not many options left. Even if we were cynical enough to accept the Covid-related loss of life for the sake of unrestricted opening up of the economy, we would be deluding ourselves in expecting that economic growth can regain its full momentum while the pandemic continues unabated.

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Social research can be an important weapon in the fight against coronavirus



NAWSHAD AHMED

SOCIAL research is generally not a priority during a serious crisis. Despite the fact that Covid-19 has dramatically impacted our society and altered the life patterns of a large section of the population, we have undertaken very few studies in Bangladesh to assist informed decision-making during this pandemic. While basically a health problem, Covid-19 has led to large-scale socioeconomic impacts. The measures taken to limit the rate of spread of the virus such as quarantining, physical distancing and social isolation have resulted in sudden unemployment of millions of people in the country.

The unprecedented circumstances unfolding over the last four months due to shutdown of business, transport and daily life are greatly influenced by several societal realities which are, persistent social and economic inequalities, the proliferation of misinformation, and the uncertainties associated with lack of proven strategies and tools to deal with this major crisis.

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The government of Bangladesh runs regular social safety net programmes and it covered over seven million of the poorest and most vulnerable families in 2019

to 2020. The government has allocated funds to support an additional five million impoverished families with cash assistance and 12.5 million destitute families with food aid in response to the economic crisis resulting from the ongoing pandemic.

A recent study has found that 63 percent of the main income earners of poor families lost their jobs or livelihood opportunities due to this crisis. A big chunk of the urban population have moved to their rural homes. The loss of jobs and

Social research is essential to find out how people's everyday lives have been disrupted by closure of schools, workplaces and businesses. A huge number of people are confined to their homes and are worried about their future.

income, shifting of location, and reduced level of services and amenities in the rural areas have had a debilitating impact on these families.

One thing to notice during this coronavirus crisis is the widespread use of internet, mobile devices and social media. While social media has played an important role in reducing the stress and impact of physical isolation by building social connections, it has also spread misinformation, which created panic among the people. In this situation, the value of social research is vital in bringing

in reliable information. However, in the current situation, the methods of research and data collection have to be modified. Physical distancing requirements will not allow traditional modes of in-person research in many cases and therefore, mobile technologies and data collection by local enumerators should be introduced.

Social research is essential to find out how people's everyday lives have been disrupted by closure of schools, workplaces and businesses. A huge number of people are confined to their homes and are worried about their future. It is important to get the insights of the most at-risk population groups. If more and more research agencies and think-tanks undertake studies, it will reduce misinformation and the lack of evidence-based information.

In an unusually challenging and pressing environment where saving lives is the foremost priority, political decision-making is not easy. In this situation, social research findings can be an important basis for taking innovative decisions. Without the advantage of quality data, policies are likely to be made in a vacuum that may lead to poor outcomes and waste of public resources.

Since we are in uncharted waters with the novel coronavirus, we need to improve our understanding on various responses of the government to the pandemic and its effectiveness in dealing with the spread of the virus. One potential area for research is how people—from different socioeconomic backgrounds, location, age, gender, health or disability status, income, ethnicity/race, educational background and employment status—are responding to the crisis. The other study areas are whether food assistance is reaching target groups as per standards set and if allegations of corruption are valid, how family relationships are influenced by confinement to homes and if domestic

violence is affecting women and children, how students are coping with the disruption to education due to closure of schools, if child labour is increasing due to poverty, and if large-scale school drop-outs are likely to happen in the coming months and what measures are required to stop this.

With falling family income, food consumption of children are also likely to go down. New studies should look at the level of child malnutrition during this pandemic and the policy implications of it. Studies should also look at the performance of the health sector and how much regular child immunisation, disease control and family planning programmes are affected by the pandemic, and how a reasonably satisfactory level of services can still be maintained.

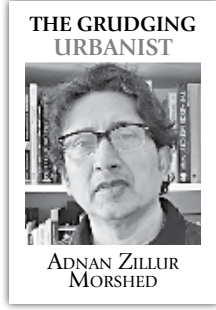
Other possible research questions are: which digital media have been useful for the people in terms of getting information, how helpful digital technologies have been in case of educational and working-from-home arrangements, how have the experiences of teachers and students been in adopting online teaching and learning approaches, what have been the experiences of private medical facilities and health professionals, and how the small industries, dairy, poultry and fishery owners are trying to sustain their enterprises in the face of lower demand.

The government and its development partners are expected to support fresh studies and data generation. The findings of different research initiatives should be fed into policy-making processes to deal with the numerous problems the country is currently struggling with. There is no alternative to taking well-informed and evidence-based decisions, be it in a normal or in a crisis situation.

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To remove or not to remove?

The "soft weapons" that continue to perpetuate structural racism in the US



ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

LINCOLN Park is our community hub on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. Just a block away from where we have lived for nearly two decades, it is a magnificent swath of urban green, within walking distance from the US Capitol. This is where we often take a stroll, jog, watch toddlers doing fun stuff, and breathe fresh air that blows through a range of native and exotic trees: American Elm, Sawtooth Oak, Norway Maple, Black Locust, Chinese Elm and Saucer Magnolia, among others. The neighbourliness of our community flourishes here.

Yet, there is a monument in the park that has always made us uncomfortable: the Emancipation Memorial, built in 1876, to commemorate Abraham Lincoln for "freeing the slaves" with his Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Set on a high pedestal, the monument portrays Lincoln as a towering saviour and an unshackled slave, who kneels in front of him, as a grateful recipient of white mercy. Many in our neighbourhood view it as an unabashed embodiment of white supremacy. Many consider it repugnant.

But, as in any other diverse neighbourhood, not everybody finds the statue unnecessary. There are those who feel that monuments like this are necessary to remind people of America's birth defect: while, in 1776, the United States Declaration of Independence stated that "all men are created equal," captured African slaves were transported to America in ships specially built to maximise human cargo and sold as "property" in slave markets. Not all men were created equal. Some "deserved" to be in chains and work in the cotton fields like animals. As the 1619 Project of *The New York Times* tells us, the period between 1760 and 1860 was the heyday of slave trading in the United States.

Approximately 1.2 million enslaved men, women and children were sold during those hundred years. The White House Historical Association notes that at least eight of the first 12 US presidents brought slaves with them to work at the White House.

There is no black-and-white narrative about racism in the USA. Some of our black neighbours discover the promise of a new America in the slave "rising" before a Moses-like Lincoln glorifying the Emancipation Memorial. Some see in it a mutually respectful convergence of white and black America. Many white and black neighbours believe that Lincoln was more concerned about saving the Union than freeing the slaves. They want the monument gone. There has been no dearth of opinions. The lingering question has been: to remove or not to remove?

It was déjà vu when our neighbourhood suddenly found itself in the national spotlight. As the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement inspires people across America, local and out-of-town activists of all political persuasions converged on Lincoln Park. The young BLM activists described the Emancipation Memorial as a symbol of America's systemic racial injustice that makes the brutal police killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor possible. Therefore, it should be removed as soon as possible.

In late June, they convened a public meeting in front of the memorial to demand its removal. But the meeting quickly fizzled out in the cacophony of conflicted opinions: "topple it," "take it away," "put it in a museum," "no, keep it up, it is history," and "that statue ain't killing me, police is." The failed meeting, it seemed, was symptomatic of the never-ending national debate on America's entrenched racial inequality. Taking down a controversial statue in a civic space could be more difficult than winning a military battle.

In the context of the recent debate on Confederate monuments in the US, architectural historian Dell Upton suggested that making moral arguments against individual historic figures (such as Lincoln) was a "losing

proposition" because good and bad coexist in individuals and, in the end, it is impossible to make a reasoned case for their erasure from history. He argued, "no final accounting convincing to everyone can be made." But one wonders why it is important to convince everybody. Could a statue with complicated histories ever be removed or retained by consensus?

Of course, not everybody agrees with Upton. Writing on the radical

to discuss race relationships. The pioneering American silent film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), didn't need a knee to press down on anybody's oxygen supply. Instead, it normalised racial hierarchy. Embedded in its epic story and filmic innovation was the glorification of the slave-owning Old South and its ideology of white supremacy. The American film critic Roger Ebert wrote: "It is a great film that argues for evil."

dependent on white benediction—hardly represents Alexander's heroic and arduous journey to freedom. His subservient presence on the pedestal is defined by what the African-American novelist Ralph Ellison called "invisibility." Before Lincoln's prophetic posture, he remains invisible, socially and politically. He is hardly given any historical space.

I kept wondering, why can't erasure or removal itself be part of a monument's continuing legacy? The presumed permanence of a public monument is itself an oppressive idea, dangerously incompatible with the democracy of a public place. The eternal presence of a statue, in the name of preserving history, impervious to criticism and revisionism, can perpetuate the inhumanity of the system that produced it in the first place.

The sustainability of an unjust system often depends on its ability to create perpetual, infallible public signs, symbols, monuments, and a compliant majority unwilling to question their original intent to intimidate. The idea of "emancipation" is complicated. Oppressive systems can adapt to evolving conditions and repurpose the very idea of emancipation to control what they consider both dangerous and inferior. That is the tragic side of the idea of emancipation.

Many in our neighbourhood thought that the restoration of normalcy in Lincoln Park would be possible only when the emblem of racial inequality is taken to a museum to educate people about America's past failings. The moral context of the monument's removal is that a city's civic realm must treat all its citizens equally and its history with the empathetic power of hindsight.

By the way, family DNA research reveals that Archer Alexander, born enslaved in Virginia in 1813 and the model for the kneeling slave, was the great-great-grandfather of boxing great Muhammad Ali.



PHOTO: ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

toppling in Bristol, UK, of the statue of seventeenth century slave trader and philanthropist Edward Colston, Oxford archaeologist Dan Hicks stated: "... these statues were never 'just statues,' but part of an apparatus of racism. Statues were used to make racial violence persist. Today, their physical removal is part of dismantling systems of oppression."

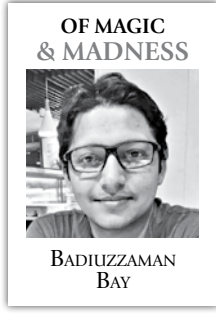
The debate on the Emancipation Memorial on Capitol Hill shows how structural racism does not necessarily need a racist police to enforce the ideology of racial domination or a frenzied white mob to lynch a black male. It can work, more powerfully, through public symbols, films, novels, and even white politeness in refusing

Another American classic, *Gone With the Wind*, the 1939 Oscar winner, portrayed southern plantation slaves as a happy bunch, living harmoniously with their white masters in a peaceful pre-Civil War South. These slaves were made to look like they would never leave their plantation utopia even when free. A black-owned newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*, called the film "a weapon of terror against black America."

The Emancipation Memorial, too, is a "soft weapon" that serves as a propaganda piece at the heart of a public park by reinforcing the hierarchy of the master and the slave. Modelled after a real-life freed slave named Archer Alexander, the kneeling slave—

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The ministry of utmost disappointment



BADIUZZAMAN BAY

THE call for defunding police in the US, after the death of George Floyd in police brutality, is one of the most striking messages coming out of what is perhaps the largest civil movement in US history. Has there ever been a call to defund a ministry? If there were, I imagine Bangladesh's health ministry would be a top contender for this "honour". To be clear, I am not actually suggesting we do that. But if you look at the endless public sufferings and protests caused by the cataclysmic failure of this ministry in the over four months of Covid-19 in Bangladesh, the idea suggests itself. Which means, in practical terms, embracing a radical approach to reform and revitalise this vital ministry so it can finally start doing its job.

That bureaucracy-as-usual is not going to cut it is pretty clear by now. The recent Regent/JKG testing scams have laid bare, once again, how corruption is deeply ingrained in the system. We've had reports detailing how the owners of these hospitals gained favour with powerful people in the government allowing them to operate without licenses, bag lucrative deals and even sell thousands of fake Covid-19 certificates. The dizzying pace at which new facts and evidence have come to the surface makes it hard to distinguish the essential from

the superfluous. What I find more interesting is the rapid-fire barrage of accusations and protestations that came in response to reports that the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) had signed an MoU with Regent Hospital in a ceremony attended by the health minister himself and many high officials. The deal, signed in full knowledge of its lack of legal status, allowed the hospital to operate as a dedicated Covid-19 facility.

Note some of the statements that have come out since this revelation: "The MoU was signed at the direction of the higher authorities" (DGHS DG); "Countless deals are made; ministers don't read all papers" (health minister); "We have been deceived after giving contracts to Regent and JKG in good faith" (one DGHS official); "There is a syndicate that has been active since BNP's term and I tried to dismantle it but failed; ministers are helpless in the face of its dominance" (former health minister). One old video clip aired by Ekattor TV shows a boastful DG (DGHS) claiming that the ministry cannot take his job even if it wants to. Another report by *Pratham Alo* quotes several ministry officials who said it has no control over the DGHS partly because, they claimed, it is located "far away" from the ministry!

These statements, amusing as they may seem, reveal more than what they were intended to. They give us a glimpse into a ministry where chaos is order and order is chaos, where there is no central command and no accountability at all. It's being tied down by reckless corruption, mismanagement, inefficiencies as

well as bureaucratic deadweight that wouldn't let it evolve or serve the people even at this most crucial moment. In the broader context, Regent/JKG is just another piece on the chessboard in an infinitely repeated game. They are neither the first of their kind nor the last. By now, it has become rather tiring to recall all the times a crime was exposed, either in the health sector or others, followed by from an old playbook. Actually, two-thirds of the country's over 15,000 private clinics and diagnostic centres have been running without any valid licence since 2018, hardly facing any consequences. These facilities have been providing various surgeries, medical treatment and pathological tests. It's frightening to think of the impacts of such large-scale anomalies on public health. No less frightening, especially during a pandemic, is the continued trade of counterfeit medicines, fake protective equipment, and other such corrupt practices both in the private and public sectors.

Meanwhile, people continue to die or get infected, in greater numbers than ever. According to the latest count, the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases has crossed the two lakh mark while the death toll has surpassed 2,600. The total infection rate in the country stands at 19.86 percent. When it comes to testing, among the 22 countries that have so far reached at least one lakh infections, Bangladesh has the lowest level of testing. On July 18, only 10,923 samples were tested. How do you explain such a number in a country of over 160 million? Calls for addressing our progressively decreasing testing capacity, as for widening access to treatment for those infected as well as the general patients, have gone largely unheeded. Nothing seems to be working as it ought to. While a few old guards are still in place, serving the people as best as they can, they risk coming undone in the absence of proper leadership.

But how long before we realise that this cannot go on? How long

before we reform how the system governing the health ministry and its departments works? How long before we understand that going after a few corrupt individuals and officials only without dismantling this system, which enables or creates or sustains them, will never uproot corruption? Or should we stop having such "juvenile" asks from an administration where the weather is an eternal free-for-all, with deeply connected layers of corruption, confusion and lawlessness?

A shift in existing policy is urgent and long overdue. The old spheres of influence that have held back progress in our health sector must be dismantled. Old policies and strategies that have proven to be unscientific must be discarded. Given the health emergency and given its life-endangering potential, corruption must not be tolerated. And those who have consistently failed us in these past months must make way for those who can deliver.

Involving health experts in the decision-making process of the health ministry by creating high-level posts for them and granting them appropriate authority would be the most logical step forward. These people will basically make policy decisions and lead Bangladesh's overall Covid-19 response, while a handful of skilled bureaucrats will help them and coordinate with other sectors as well as do regular official work. This will not, of course, solve all our problems. But it may give us a radical new start that is essential for our fight against Covid-19.

Badiuzzaman Bay is a member of the editorial team at *The Daily Star*. Email: badiuzzaman.bd@gmail.com

QUOTABLE Quote

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN (1925-2017)
Polish-born sociologist who was one of the most influential intellectuals in Europe.

Power, in a nutshell, is the ability to get things done, and politics is the ability to decide which things need to be done.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Walked in water
- 6 Ready to hit
- 11 Mindful
- 12 Paris divider
- 13 Letter feature
- 14 Annual traveler
- 15 More acute
- 17 Cry from Homer
- 19 Capture
- 20 Vitality
- 23 Stir up
- 25 Lion feature
- 26 Cheater's deck
- 28 Different
- 29 Pendant with a picture
- 30 Toronto-to-D.C. dir.
- 31 Signing need
- 32 Old hand

DOWN

- 1 Used to be
- 2 Really impress
- 3 Unexpected candidate
- 4 Pennsylvania port
- 5 Protection
- 6 Useful skill
- 7 Sign of sorrow
- 8 Storage spot
- 9 Crumb carrier
- 10 Afternoon social
- 16 Sewing items
- 17 Titled women
- 18 Some exams
- 20 Board-walk's partner
- 21 Rear-- (accident)
- 22 Basil-based sauce
- 24 Luau strings
- 25 Comic Bernie
- 27 Get in touch with
- 31 Tough puzzle
- 33 Book unit
- 34 Lotion additive
- 35 Drill need
- 36 Outback bird
- 37 Camel
- 39 Friend of Harry and Hermione
- 40 Has permission to

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

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

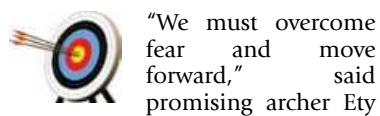


PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ety Khatun, who had become the first female athlete from the country to win three gold medals in a single edition of the SA Games last year in Pokhara, is now reduced to practising inside her house after having received bows from the Bangladesh Archery Federation last month.

'We must overcome fear and move forward'

SABBIR HOSSAIN



"We must overcome fear and move forward," said promising archer Ety Khatun, who emerged as a national star after achieving an individual milestone by becoming the first female athlete from the country to win three gold medals in a single edition of the South Asian Games in December last year in Nepal.

The 15-year old from Chuadanga was eagerly waiting to return to proper practice because she knew better from a previous experience that a long break from proper training means one has to start from the scratch.

"It doesn't matter how much you train inside your house, there will always be a deficiency if you don't do outdoor training and you will feel it when you return to real business. I am saying this from my previous experience. Last year I had

missed a camp for one-and-a-half months due to exams and it took me eight months to get back my rhythm," Ety told The Daily Star.

"I couldn't train for the first three months after lockdown started in March. I only had some physical exercise at that time. But a month ago, I received bows from the federation, and I have been training inside my house since then. We are expecting the camp to start after the Eid break," she said.

The youngster is aware of the lurking danger of Covid-19, but she believes athletes should take the challenge of the new normal and they cannot wait for an indefinite period of time.

"We have to be careful and must follow hygiene rules and protocols keeping in mind the risk of infection but we have to overcome the fear of coronavirus and move forward. I think we must return to the field. We will be safer there if we can maintain the safety measures,"

opined Ety.

"The most important thing for an archer is to practise shooting arrows. But I can't do that right now because I don't have the opportunity to train outside my house. Archery is such a game that if we don't practise for two days in a row, our performance will drop on the third day. So, it goes without saying how much we suffered because of staying home. I am trying hard and federation officials are also helping us stay healthy so that we can return to training with full fitness," she said, adding that she has been getting great support from coach Martin Frederick.

She also said that she was always trying to stay positive in the current crisis. "To be honest, I never felt too much stress. Many people have been affected by the coronavirus. It has spread all over the country. I am just trying to be careful."

She was, however, a bit concerned

about her financial troubles. "I'm in a lot of financial trouble. At the very beginning of the lockdown, I got Tk 4,000 from the federation and before the Eid-ul-Fitr, State Minister for Youth and Sports, Zahid Ahsan Russell, distributed each of us Tk 10,000. Unfortunately, I didn't get any support from my club and they have not contacted me so far."

"I always try to make my parents happy and since they have no son, I want to play that role and that's why I want to be successful. My SA Games successes brought smile on their faces and my life has also changed a lot. I am chasing a bigger dream as I am looking forward to play in the Olympics in future," she said.

The young archer is looking forward to making the word 'archery' popular among sportslovers in the country. "Everyone knows it as the bow and arrow game, but hardly the name archery. I want to change that."

Twenty20 World Cup postponed

AGENCIES

This year's Twenty20 World Cup, which was scheduled to begin in Australia on Oct. 18, has been postponed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the governing International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Monday.

ICC Chief Executive Manu Sawhney said: "We have undertaken a comprehensive and complex contingency planning exercise and through this process, our number one priority has been to protect the health and safety of everyone involved in the sport."

The decision to postpone the ICC Men's T20 World Cup was taken after careful consideration of all of the options available to us and gives us the best possible opportunity of delivering two safe and successful T20 World Cups for fans around the world.

"Our Members now have the clarity they need around event windows to enable them to reschedule lost bilateral and domestic cricket. Moving the Men's Cricket World Cup to a later window is a critical element of this and gives us a better chance of maintaining the integrity of the qualification process. This additional time will be used to reschedule games that might be lost because of the pandemic ensuring qualification can be decided on

the field of play.

"Throughout this process we have worked closely with our key stakeholders including governments, Members, broadcasters, partners and medical experts to enable us to reach a collective decision for the good of the game and our fans. I would like to thank everyone involved for their commitment to a safe return to cricket."

At Monday's meeting of the IBC Board (the commercial subsidiary of the ICC), windows for the next three ICC men's events were also agreed to bring clarity to the calendar and give the sport the best possible opportunity over the next three years to recover from the disruption caused by COVID-19.

The IBC Board agreed to continue to monitor the rapidly changing situation and assess all the information available in order to make a considered decision on future hosts to ensure the sport is able to stage safe and successful global events in 2021 and 2022.

The IBC Board will also continue to evaluate the situation in relation to being able to stage the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2021 in New Zealand in February next year. In the meantime, planning for this event continues as scheduled.



Barcelona's Lionel Messi takes on a host of Alaves players during their last match of the La Liga season on Sunday. The Argentine superstar may have seen his side relinquish the title but he grabbed the top scorer's award for a record seventh time with 25 goals.

PHOTO: REUTERS



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh batsman Imrul Kayes completed running and batting sessions yesterday at BCB's practice facilities in Mirpur for the first time since the coronavirus outbreak. He was one of the nine cricketers to have resumed individual training.

Time is right to axe De Gea, says Shearer

REUTERS, Undated

Manchester United should replace goalkeeper David de Gea with Dean Henderson next season, former England striker Alan Shearer has said after the Spaniard's disappointing display in Sunday's 3-1 FA Cup semifinal loss to Chelsea.

De Gea, 29, was at fault for Olivier Giroud's opener late in the first half and then allowed Mason Mount's shot to squirm through him and into the net after the restart.

A string of errors from De Gea have prompted calls for him to be replaced as first choice by Henderson, who is drawing praise for his showings on loan at Sheffield United.

"If the goalkeeper makes one mistake, or possibly two, you think you should stick with him," former Newcastle United striker Shearer told the BBC.

"But it keeps happening. I think you only bring Dean Henderson back to Manchester United as the number one, or you keep him where he is to keep gaining experience. I think that time has come."

United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer described De Gea as



Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea lets one slip through his hands during their 3-1 defeat against Chelsea in the FA Cup semifinal on Sunday, prompting many to once again call for his axe from the Red Devils' No 1 goalkeeping spot.

PHOTO: REUTERS

mentally strong after the game, but former club defender Phil Neville said the keeper was low on confidence.

"He's unrecognisable from the goalkeeper that won (club) player of the year four years out of five years. He's making mistakes. A confident, assured, on-form De Gea saves all three (goals)," Neville said.

"If I was Solskjaer, then I would be worried because of his performance levels. They've dipped and his inconsistency is costing United games."

"I wouldn't leave him out yet. His credentials are still up there with the best in the world. He's just lost all his confidence."

Ballon d'Or cancelled

AFP, Paris

The Ballon d'Or will not be awarded this year due to the extraordinary conditions created by the pandemic, organisers France Football announced on Monday.

It will be the first time the trophy given for the world's best men's footballer has not been awarded since Englishman Stanley Matthews won the inaugural edition in 1956.

"There will be no edition in 2020, because it turns out, after thoughtful consideration, that all the conditions are not met," said Pascal Ferre, the editor of the magazine.

France Football said it would be unfair to vote on the world's best player when some leagues, including the French Ligue 1, cancelled their seasons early.

The women's Ballon d'Or, which was first awarded in 2018, has also been cancelled.

Hathurusingha joins NSW Blues

AFP, SYDNEY

Former Sri Lanka and Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha joined the New South Wales Blues Monday as an assistant to Phil Jaques.

It is the second stint at this club for Chandika, who was sacked by Sri Lanka after their lacklustre World Cup campaign last year. He held a similar role from 2011 and 2014.

"It is one of the best working environments I have experienced being part of NSW," he said. "The best part is there is always a lot of talent coming through NSW cricket."

Rahm rises to the top

AFP, Los Angeles



Jon Rahm became the first Spaniard since Seve Ballesteros in 1989 to hold golf's world number one ranking, fending off a late challenge Sunday to win the US PGA Memorial tournament.

Rahm holed out an amazing 31-foot chip shot at the par-3 16th and, despite a two-stroke penalty that turned it from a birdie to a bogey, took a three-stroke victory over American Ryan Palmer that boosted him over Rory McIlroy atop the rankings.

"I don't know how to describe it," Rahm said. "It has been a goal since I was 13-, 14-years-old."

Rahm was among the Spanish youth inspired by the feats of Ballesteros, a five-time major champion who died in 2011 at age 54 of brain cancer.

"Seve is a very special player to all of us, and to be second to him, it's a true honor," Rahm said. "Anytime I can join Seve at anything, it's incredible."

Rahm said the moment was difficult to comprehend in part because his thoughts were with his family, two members of which have died from COVID-19.



England fast bowler Stuart Broad celebrates the wicket of West Indies batsman Shai Hope during the final day of the second Test at Old Trafford, Manchester yesterday. West Indies lost both their opening batsmen early and were 25-3 at lunch after England declared in the first session to set the visitors a target of 312. Earlier, England resumed on their overnight score of 37-2 and Ben Stokes (L) got straight into action, looking to cart the West Indies bowlers all around the empty stadium during his unbeaten 57-ball 78.

PHOTO: REUTERS





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

FLOOD SITUATION

Pregnant women in a pickle

Agri ministry says crops worth Tk 349cr lost

STAR REPORT

Flood-hit pregnant women in Kurigram are exposed to health risks as they are deprived of proper healthcare services.

With homes washed away, many of them have taken shelter on roads, dykes and rail line.

At least eight women have given birth at makeshift homes on the railway line between Balabari station and Ramna station in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila in the last one week, said Dr Nazrul Islam, deputy director at the Kurigram family planning office.

Minki Begum, a nine-month pregnant woman, has taken shelter on the rail line. Speaking to The Daily Star, she said, "Our house is flooded. We have been living here for the last couple of days. But the environment here is very unhealthy."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Two siblings fishing in the floodwater in Bolorampur village of Tangail's Bhuapur upazila. They have taken refuge with their family at a nearby flood shelter as their house has been under water for the last 15 days.

PHOTO: SHEIKH ENAM

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Guard against conspiracies



Bangabandhu speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the first national conference of Bangladesh Chhatra League on July 21, 1972.

July 21, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU INAUGURATES BCL CONFERENCE

Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today asks the student community to remain ever vigilant against conspirators who are working to undo the independence. He asks them to remain prepared to shed more blood, if necessary.



SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

He killed four over Tk 200 loan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Rickshaw puller Sagar Ali, 27, had asked Osman Gani for Tk 200 as loan, but Gani did not give him the money and rebuked him for not repaying the previous one.

Insulted, Sagar planned to kill Gani, 52, who used to give people loans and take interest on them.

On Wednesday night, he, along with an accomplice, went to Gani's Masterpara house in Madhupur municipality. They made Gani, his wife, and two children unconscious, putting a chloroform-soaked handkerchief to their noses and killed them one after another.

Police recovered the slit-throat bodies of Gani, his wife, and two children

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

UAE launches first Arab mission to Mars



AFP, Tokyo

The first Arab space mission to Mars, an unmanned probe dubbed "Hope", blasted off from Japan yesterday on a mission to reveal more about the atmosphere of the Red Planet.

The Japanese rocket carrying the probe developed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) lifted off from the Tanegashima Space Centre in

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

3 suspects killed in 'gunfights'

One accused of killing a cop

STAR REPORT

A prime accused in a police official murder case and two suspected drug peddlers were killed in "gunfights" with Rab and police in Brahmanbaria, Dhaka, and Cox's Bazar districts early yesterday.

In Brahmanbaria, Mamun Mia, 28, who allegedly stabbed to death Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Amir Hossain of Sadar Model Police Station on Friday to avoid being arrested, was killed in a "gunfight" with Rapid Action Battalion.

The "gunfight" took place in Chandpur Bazaar area of the district's Sadar upazila early yesterday,

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

HC fines Sikder brothers 10,000 PPE

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday fined Sikder Group Managing Director Ron Haque Sikder and his brother Dipu Haque Sikder for seeking anticipatory bail from abroad in a case filed over abducting, torturing and opening fire at two top Exim Bank officials over a loan permission.

Rejecting their bail petition, an HC virtual bench ordered the siblings, currently in Thailand, to give 5,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) each as fine

to the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund in two weeks in order to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ron and Dipu have also been asked to file a report with the Supreme Court registrar general's office after submitting the PPE to the fund.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashraful Kamal passed the order after holding hearing on the anticipatory bail petition filed by the two brothers.

Contacted, Attorney General Mahbubey

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



PRAYER TIMING JULY 21

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



The canal next to a residential area in the capital's Rayerbazar has turned into a landfill due to lack of maintenance. Throwaway plastic, garbage and other discarded items has choked the natural flow of the canal and made it an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Daily deaths stay high

50 more die from virus; 2,928 reported infected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty more people have died from Covid-19 and 2,928 people tested positive for the infection yesterday.

With this, the death toll rose to 2,668 -- 1.29 percent of the total 2,07,453 confirmed cases.

With yesterday's new cases, the positivity rate was 19.92 percent, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Nations struggle to stem flare-up

Masks made mandatory in HK, France, Melbourne as India records new single-day high of fresh cases

AGENCIES

Governments around the world struggle to stem the spread of Covid-19 amid soaring infection rates and death tolls as people in Hong Kong, France and Melbourne have been ordered to wear masks when outside their homes.

The virus has now infected more than 14.5 million people worldwide and killed over 606,000.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিদেশগামী যাত্রীগণের কোভিড-১৯ পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত

বিদেশগামী বাংলাদেশের নাগরিকগণের মধ্যে যারা ঢাকা মহানগরীতে কোভিড-১৯ পরীক্ষার জন্য নমুনা প্রদান করতে চান তাদের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, ২০ জুলাই থেকে প্রতিদিন সকাল ১০টা থেকে বিকাল ৪টা পর্যন্ত ঢাকার সিভিল সার্জন অফিসের উদ্যোগে মহাখালীস্থ জিএনসিসি মার্কেটে অবস্থিত অস্থায়ী কোভিড-১৯ আইসোলেশন কেন্দ্রে নমুনা সংগ্রহ করা হবে।

ঢাকার বাইরে ১০টি জেলায় সংশ্লিষ্ট সিভিল সার্জনগণের তত্ত্বাবধানে একই তারিখ থেকে নমুনা সংগ্রহ করা হবে। স্থান ও সময়সূচি সংশ্লিষ্ট জেলার সিভিল সার্জন অফিস থেকে জানা যাবে। যেসব জেলায় নমুনা সংগ্রহ করা হবে সেসব জেলাগুলো হলো বরিশাল, চট্টগ্রাম, কক্সবাজার, কুমিল্লা, নারায়নগঞ্জ, গুলনা, বুলশিয়া, ময়মনসিংহ, বগুড়া, রাজশাহী, দিনাজপুর, রংপুর ও সিলেট।

যাত্রীগণকে যাত্রার ৭২ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে নমুনা দিতে হবে। ৭২ ঘণ্টার পূর্বে নমুনা সংগ্রহ করা হবে না। নমুনা প্রদানের সময় পাসপোর্ট ও টিকেটের ফটোকপি জমা দিতে হবে এবং মূল পাসপোর্ট ও টিকেট প্রদর্শন করতে হবে। নমুনা সংগ্রহ কেন্দ্রে এসে নমুনা প্রদানের জন্য পরীক্ষার ফি হিসেবে প্রত্যেক যাত্রীকে সরকার নির্ধারিত ৩৫০০ টাকা জমা দিতে হবে। নমুনা প্রদানের পর থেকে যাত্রার সময় পর্যন্ত সংশ্লিষ্ট যাত্রী আবশ্যিকভাবে আইসোলেশনে থাকবেন। সংশ্লিষ্ট নমুনা সরকারি ল্যাবরেটরিতে পরীক্ষা করা হবে এবং যাত্রার ২৪ ঘণ্টা পূর্বে রিপোর্ট প্রদান করা হবে।

ঘরের বাইরে অবশ্যই মাস্ক পরুন

- যাত্রা বিধি মেনে চলুন। সামাজিক দূরত্ব বজায় রাখুন। অসাবধানতায় আপনিও করোনা ভাইরাসে আক্রান্ত হতে পারেন। মৃদু উপসর্গে বাসায় চিকিৎসা নিন এবং যে কোন সমস্যা দেখা দিলে সাথে সাথে হাসপাতালে ভর্তি হোন। প্রয়োজনে করোনা বিষয়ক হটলাইনে ফোন করুন: ১৬২৬৩৩; ৩৩৩৩; ১০৬৫৫৫; ০১৯৪৪৪৩৩৩২২২ নম্বরে।
- সরকারি/বেসরকারি হাসপাতালে চিকিৎসা সম্পর্কে অভিযোগ থাকলে covid19complain@mis.dghs.gov.bd-তে ই-মেইল করুন অথবা কল করুন: ০১৩১৩৭৯১১৩৩, ০১৩১৩৭৯১১৩৩৮, ০১৩১৩৭৯১১৩৩৯ এবং ০১৩১৩৭৯১১৪০ নম্বরে।
- যাত্রা অবদানের ওয়েবসাইট www.dghs.gov.bd এর CORONA কর্তৃক "করোনা বিষয়ক অভিযোগ প্রেরণ" লিঙ্ক অথবা http://app.dghs.gov.bd/covid19-complaint লিঙ্ক ব্যবহার করেও অভিযোগ প্রেরণ করতে পারেন।

স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর

স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়