



REDS GRAB COVETED TROPHY
Liverpool formally receive the Premier League trophy for the first time at an empty Anfield.
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Reshuffle slows Covid-19 response

High officials obsessed with posts don't have eye on the ball

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

As the government brings changes at the DGHS top end to improve the image of the health sector, tension among officials is apparently causing sluggishness in Covid-19 response and hampering daily activities of the directorate.

Many DGHS officials said some high-ups at the directorate were obsessed with "what was going to happen", "where they would be positioned", and were not completely focused on the job in hand.

Director General of the DGHS Prof Abul Kalam Azad resigned on Tuesday following a blame game between the DGHS and the ministry over signing a deal with Regent Hospital. He mentioned deteriorating health as reason for quitting.

The health ministry yesterday appointed Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, a professor of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, as the new DG of DGHS.

Yesterday, the health ministry also named Farid Hossain Miah, the current programme manager of National Tuberculosis Control Programme of DGHS, as the new director (hospitals and clinics) of the Directorate General of Health Service (DGHS).

He replaced Aminul Hasan, who was made Officer on Special Duty (OSD), on Wednesday.

According to insiders, there would be more changes in the DGHS soon and at least two more directors were likely to be shown the door within days.

"Obviously there is a deep but silent worry among different line directors. So, all activities have come to a halt here," a top official involved in Covid-19 containment activities told The Daily Star seeking anonymity.

The lack of work getting done at the directorate has become all too apparent.

DAILY TESTS DECLINE

Since the beginning, different expert committees, including the National

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



The three-storey building of Nuruddin Matborerandi Model High School is warped out of shape as the ground on which it stood is being washed away by the Padma. The building was barely visible soon after the photo was taken around 5:30pm yesterday in Bandarkhola union of Madaripur's Shibchar upazila. When schools reopen, students of at least 24 villages will have to travel to schools far away from their homes.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Govt to provide homes to the homeless in flood, erosion
PM says, opens govt shelters for 600 climate refugees

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government would arrange housing for those losing their homes in flood and riverbank erosion alongside rehabilitating the landless and homeless people across the country.

"This time the flood looks to be serious... more floods are likely to occur in August and September. We have preparations to face these. We will also arrange accommodations and land for those losing their homes in flood or river erosion," she said.

The PM was addressing
SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

BANGLADESH UPDATE

2,856 New cases in 24hrs

2,16,110 Total cases

2,801 Deaths

1,19,208 Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

624,370 Deaths

15,265,081 Total cases

Prof Khurshid made new DG of DGHS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, a professor of Dhaka Medical College (DMC), has been appointed as the new and 27th director general of the Directorate General of Health Services.

The Health Services Division of the health ministry issued a circular in this regard yesterday.

Prof Abul Bashar, chairman of the surgery department at DMC, has been asked to join the post immediately.

His appointment came a day after Prof Abul Kalam Azad resigned from the post on Tuesday.

His resignation came after a rift between the ministry and the directorate over the signing

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Reality doesn't bear out his claim

Health minister claimed pandemic tackled well, though govt's virus response is plagued by scams, mismanagement

WASIM BIN HABIB

Although government efforts to contain Covid-19 are plagued by various scams and sheer mismanagement, Health Minister Zahid Maleque thinks his ministry has performed well in handling the crisis.

Mortality rate is the yardstick he used for evaluating the performance.

"How well you fare in exams depends on the marks you get. I think the health ministry has got good marks," the minister told reporters on Wednesday.

"What is the number? Our death rate is only 1.5 percent, and that is the biggest mark. The number is 6 percent in the US, 10 percent in Europe and 6 percent in the whole world. This is the biggest yardstick to decide whether we have done well or not," Zahid said.

But as soon as he made the comment, a few questions began swirling around: How has the ministry really done and is the yardstick appropriate to measure its performance.

Ever since Covid-19 outbreak in the country, the virus has been exposing the systematic ills plaguing the already-fragile healthcare system. The ministry was blamed for failing to play a robust role in tackling the coronavirus outbreak.

The ministry, among other relevant authorities, had at least three months to prepare, but they apparently failed to grasp the gravity of the situation. They did very little to prevent the virus from entering the country.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Provide list of errant pvt hospitals, test centres

Health ministry asks DGHS on renewal of licence

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

With the government's efforts to contain Covid-19 already marred by scams and mismanagement, the health ministry appears to have finally woken up and started taking some steps to avert further controversies.

Apart from some reshuffling at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), the ministry gave several directives to its subordinate agencies to bring discipline in the otherwise unregulated private clinics and hospitals and their Covid-19 testing facilities.

It asked the DGHS, the implementing agency, to give a complete list of the private hospitals, clinics

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES' SUMMER SEMESTER

Enrolment far lower than usual

50-80pc fall despite waiver offers

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Student admission in the summer semester at most of the private universities has dropped by a staggering 50 to 80 percent, putting these higher education institutions on a razor edge.

This would make it more difficult for the authorities of these universities to pay salaries of their teachers and other staffers as tuition and other fees collected from students are the only source of revenue for these institutions.

Private universities authorities said the rate of enrollment fell as parents of the students either lost their income source or are experiencing a pay cut, while some of them might not have confidence in online education offered by private universities.

The authorities also said they were heading toward an uncertain future if the coronavirus situation lingers.

"Almost all private universities, but for a few reputed and old ones, are heading toward a catastrophic situation in absence of enough students", said Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) Chairman Sheikh Kabir Hossain, adding many universities may face closure if the situation does not improve.

Private universities enroll students in three semesters -- spring, summer and fall.

About 50 percent of the students get enrolled in the spring semester, around 20 to 25 percent in the summer while the rest in the fall semester.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

No decision yet on reopening of schools

Clarifies edn ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry is yet to make any decision on reopening schools, which has remained closed since March due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following a rumour that all educational institutions will reopen after Eid-ul-Azha, the ministry in a press statement issued on Wednesday late night clarified that the government did not make any decision in this regard yet.

A Facebook page is circulating that all educational institutions will reopen after Eid, this is baseless and rumour, said the statement, signed by Mohammad Abul Khair, public relations officer of the ministry.

The ministry also urged all students and guardians not to be confused.

"Whenever the ministry decides to this end, the students will be informed through the media," the statement added.

The government extended the closure of all educational institutions, which have been closed since March 17, until August 6 as a preventive measure against the further spread of the novel coronavirus.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Diseases spread in flood-hit areas

Brahmaputra, Dharala inundate more villages in Kurigram

STAR REPORT

The waterborne diseases are spreading in some areas while river erosion taking devastating turn in few other in the country's flood-hit northern region.

Fresh areas in some districts have been submerged as the third spell of flood hit the region.

In Kurigram, food situation further deteriorated yesterday as both the Brahmaputra and the Dharla rivers were flowing above the danger level.

It has caused rise of water level of 16 other branch rivers in the district.

Many people are still waterlogged, while many others have left their homes and staying on roads, dykes, flood shelters or other higher places.

At the same time, various waterborne diseases, including diarrhea, are spreading in the flood affected areas.

"I, along with my family members, have been living in a polythene-wrapped hut since July 10 as our house was submerged. We are passing days amid untold sufferings without sufficient food and drinking water," said Fatema Begum, 58, of Char Sonaigazi in Phulbari upazila.

Farhad Hossain of Char Sajai in the same upazila said, "Several members of our family, including my one-and-a-half-year-old child, are suffering from diarrhoea. Most of the families in this area are facing similar disease."

Aminur Rahman, 50, a volunteer from Char Kodalkati Mandalpara area in Char Rajibpur upazila, told The Daily Star that he had brought some saline and water purification tablets from local health complex and bought some at his own expense. He is distributing these among the victims.

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Macron denounces Turkey's 'violations' of Greek, Cypriot sovereignty

AFP, Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday denounced what he called Turkey's "violation" of the sovereignty of Greece and Cyprus, as tensions mount between Athens and Ankara.

"I want once again to reiterate France's full solidarity with Cyprus and also with Greece in the face of Turkey's violation of their sovereignty," the French leader said ahead of talks with his Cypriot counterpart Nicos

Anastasiades at the Elysee Palace.

"It is not acceptable for the maritime space of a member state of our Union to be violated or threatened. Those who contribute must be sanctioned," Macron said.

Greece's navy said Wednesday that it had deployed ships in the Aegean in "heightened readiness" after Turkey announced plans for energy exploration near a Greek island in an area it claims is within Turkey's continental shelf.

Reshuffle slows

FROM PAGE 1

Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC), have been consistently asking for increased number of daily tests.

On June 26, the highest 18,498 samples were tested.

Since then, the number of daily tests has been declining.

On Sunday, the number declined to 10,625 -- the lowest in July -- while yesterday's number was 12,398.

This is happening when around 80 Covid-19 testing laboratories have the capacity to test 25,000 samples a day, according to the DGHS officials.

"Every day the positivity rate is increasing. In this situation, we need more tests," Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist told The Daily Star.

Officials there have cited manpower shortage, imposition of a fee for the test, and people's unwillingness to get tested as reasons for the poor number of daily tests.

There has, however, been no visible step by the DGHS to rectify these problems. Some people were appointed but not the required number.

HIGH-FLOW NASAL CANNULA

In a meeting with the NTAC on June 10, the then additional secretary of health service division Habibur Rahman assured that high-flow nasal cannula, a device to ensure adequate oxygen supply to patients, would be set up at more than 30 Covid-19 hospitals within the following two weeks.

This life-saving equipment has not been set up at any hospital even though almost a month and a half have gone by.

"They [ministry and the DGHS] could not set up high-flow nasal cannula and central oxygen supply system in all hospitals yet. This is a managerial gap. Many deaths could have been prevented," Prof Nazrul Islam, member

of the NTAC, told The Daily Star.

SOP ON ZONE-BASED LOCKDOWN

According to a top DGHS official, after more than a month-long work, the final copy of the Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) of zone-based lockdown was submitted to the director general of DGHS last Saturday.

The SOP was scheduled to be published and put into effect within days.

However, this has also been halted after Prof Azad resigned.

Multiple government organisations including, PMO's a2i project, the local government ministry, health ministry, and the DGHS were involved in zone-based lockdown plan.

"Whatever happens, the first and foremost necessity is to continue with the Covid-19 activity in a full swing. The government high-ups should take action immediately, otherwise we have to suffer a lot," Prof Nazrul Islam said.

He expressed "dissatisfaction" over the inertia and anomalies in the health sector.

"It [health system] is like a machine; the activities are the result of coordination between the ministry and the health directorate. When there is a lack of this, the health system become fragile. And the current situation is the result of it," said Prof Nazrul, who served as the vice-chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

Experts, however, said the ministry high-ups, who were allegedly involved in recent scams, must also be held accountable to bring qualitative changes.

"It is urgent to assign skilled, efficient and honest people everywhere, especially in administrative posts," said Prof ABM Abdullah, noted medicine specialist.

Diseases spread

FROM PAGE 1

The district's civil surgeon Dr Habibur Rahman said, "So far, we have identified 55 diarrhoea cases and we have provided medical services. A 35-member special medical team has been deployed to offer medical facilities to the victims."

In Tangail, although water of the major rivers including the Jamuna, the Dhaleswari and the Jhenai have started receding, but floodwater kept destroying infrastructures in some areas.

In a third similar incident, a bridge was washed away by floodwater on Ghuni canal on Goihata-Singjore road in Nagarpur upazila on Wednesday morning.

As a result, road communication of six local villages through the bridge has been disrupted causing immense suffering to people.

The district's Deputy Commissioner Ataul Gani instantly visited the spot and directed authorities concerned to arrange alternative measures for facilitating movements of the villagers.

Earlier on Tuesday, a bridge on the Jhenai river in Basail upazila's Dapnazar area collapsed due to strong current of the river.

On July 16, another bridge on a canal at Basail-Natiapara road in Kanchanpur area in Basail upazila collapsed.

In Jamalpur, third phase of flood has started since Wednesday and the Jamuna has kept continuing swelling up above the danger mark, worsening overall flood situation in the district.

The Jamuna was flowing 97

cm above the danger mark at Bahadurabad point yesterday noon and it would continue rising. Around 10 lakh people of seven upazilas and eight municipalities have remained marooned, according to local officials concerned.

In Bogura and Gaibandha, fresh areas have been submerged as flood hits third time as the Bangal river is flowing above the danger level.

Thousands of people, living densely on both sides of the Bangal river, are likely to face flood for the first time in Bogura's Sariakandi, Gabtali, Shajahanpur, Dhunat and Sherpur upazilas.

The water will increase for next two days or more. Over 1.27 people in the district are affected by flood, said local government officials concerned.

In Gaibandha, water of the major rivers in the district are increasing. The Brahmaputra was flowing 87 cm above of the danger level at the Fulchari point, the Ghaghat was flowing 66 cm above of the danger level at the Gaibandha point and the Karatoya was flowing 40 cm above of the danger level at the Katakhal point yesterday.

In Munshiganj, water level in the Padma was flowing 67 cm above the danger mark in Bhagyakul yesterday.

Around 24,000 families under 130 villages have become flood victims.

The rise of water level will fluctuate in this week and it may cause serious river erosion, said local WDB officials.

Our Lalmonirhat, Tangail, Jamalpur and Bogura correspondents contributed to this report.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina unveiling the plaque of Khurushkul Ashrayan Project, a scheme in Cox's Bazar for climate refugees, at the Gono Bhaban yesterday. She inaugurated 20 five-storey structures constructed at Khurushkul on the outskirts of the beach town through videoconferencing.

PHOTO: PID

Govt to provide homes to the homeless

FROM PAGE 1

a programme marking the opening of special structures built under "Khurushkul Ashrayan Project" in Cox's Bazar for 600 climate refugees.

Hasina inaugurated 20 five-storey structures constructed in the first phase of the world's biggest climate refugee rehabilitation project at Khurushkul on the outskirts of Cox's Bazar town through videoconferencing from the Gono Bhaban.

A total of 600 families are getting their new abodes with all modern facilities in 20 structures, each having 32 flats, constructed on the bank of the Bakkhali river, just three kilometres off the beach town.

At the inaugural function, some beneficiaries were handed keys of the 456-square foot flats.

The premier said the government is taking measures for the rehabilitation of landless and homeless people across the country.

"In the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation, our goal is that not a single person in Bangladesh would remain homeless," she said, adding that the government would arrange home

for every person.

Hasina said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had a dream that Bangladesh would be a hunger- and poverty-free country and her government was on track to fulfil this dream.

About the Khurushkul Ashrayan Project, she said a separate nice township would be developed at the project site. A community clinic and dry fish market would also be set up there, the PM said.

She said her previous government first undertook "Ashrayan Project" during her first term in office (1996-2001) after she witnessed the miseries of people following a devastating cyclone that ravaged the country's coastline in 1997.

The premier said her government wants to develop Cox's Bazar as a beautiful tourist town as the world's longest sandy sea beach is there.

All the newly-constructed structures are equipped with a ramp system for people with disabilities, solar panels, safe drinking water, electricity, sanitation, waste management, drainage, cylinder gas and burner. As many as 4,409 families of climate

refugees will be rehabilitated at the site as 139 five-storey buildings under the Khurushkul Ashrayan scheme being implemented by Bangladesh Army on 253.59 acres of land at a cost of Tk 1,800 crore as part of the Ashrayan Project-2.

Since the Ashrayan Project was launched in 1997, Khurushkul scheme is the country's largest rehabilitation project. The Khurushkul project will have four zones -- residential, tourism, dry fish processing zone and a buffer precinct with greenery.

Its beneficiaries are mostly the victims of the 1991 devastating cyclone that forced them to take refuge at crammed shanties in Cox's Bazar airport area for several decades.

The ground floors of the new buildings have been kept vacant so that floodwater and tidal surge can damage nothing. There are also tube-wells and rainwater harvesting system.

Later, the PM exchanged views with beneficiaries of the project and local dignitaries through videoconferencing.

Chief of Army Staff General Aziz Ahmed also spoke at the function, moderated by PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikau.

Reality doesn't bear out his claim

FROM PAGE 1

They apparently failed to ensure isolation and quarantine facilities for those returning from abroad.

The health minister, in the meantime, kept assuring the countymen that all preparations were in place in this regard and that there was nothing to panic about.

But when the crisis began to unfold in early March, people became the ultimate victims. They continue to remain so till date, thanks to seamless inefficiencies on the part of the ministry and its subordinate agencies, said experts.

These bodies ended up taking inappropriate decisions, they came up with delayed actions; all contributing to further spread of the virus.

Till yesterday, 2,801 people died while the total number of coronavirus cases reached 2,16,110.

At the early stage of the outbreak, the authorities trailed behind in taking decisions on providing necessary protective gear to healthcare professionals. They also could not ensure that the infected ones remain in isolation and those coming to their contact are tracked down and quarantined.

They also left evidence of haphazard thinking while making decisions on imposing lockdowns and enforcing them.

The ministry has also been seen as culpable for not introducing aggressive testing and contact tracing, which are crucial in fighting the contagious virus.

On the contrary, the number of daily tests has declined over the weeks. All these only helped the virus spread. The numbers of people contracting it and the resulting deaths are mounting every day.

Also, right from the beginning, a lack of coordination among the

ministry, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) has been quite evident.

On April 6, less than a month after the first cases of coronavirus were reported, the health minister voiced his frustrations regarding the way the situation was being handled.

"I have been made the chairman of the national committee [on Covid-19] because I'm the health minister. The committee, however, takes decision without our [the health ministry's] knowledge," he had told a discussion of healthcare professionals during that time.

Then emerged an internal feud between the minister and the then health service division secretary Md Asadul Islam over allegations of supplying sub-standard N-95 masks to government hospitals during April. The feud led to transfer of the secretary.

A bigger feud, however, came to light this month after the disturbing discovery of Regent Hospital's involvement in issuing fake Covid-19 certificates.

A rift appeared between the ministry and the DGHS as the government bodies traded blames over taking responsibility for signing a deal with the private hospital.

Eventually, Prof Abul Kalam Azad resigned as the director general of DGHS on Tuesday.

Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, a professor at Dhaka Medical College (DMC), replaced Azad, according to circular issued yesterday.

THE YARDSTICK Health Minister Zahid used mortality rate as the yardstick to judge his ministry's performance. He said the rate was only 1.5 percent, but this

statement is also not correct.

According to World Health Organisation's Bangladesh Situation Report, the mortality rate in the country stood at 1.29 percent as of July 20, while the global rate was 7 percent.

The fatality rate is measured by dividing the number of deaths by the number of confirmed cases.

This means fewer people are dying due to the virus here in comparison to the other countries, particularly in the European nations.

While experts are not yet sure why it was happening, but one reason could be that fewer tests were exposing fewer cases, they said.

Countries like the US and the UK have carried out hundreds of thousands of Covid-19 tests, while the number is far below in Bangladesh.

As of yesterday, the US, the worst affected country, tested 50,739,053 samples. The death toll stood at 146,199, according to worldometers.info.

Let's look at the two worst-hit European countries -- Italy and Germany.

Germany has tested 7,418,812 samples so far. Some 9,182 people died so far. The country is now the 17th worst affected country in the world in terms of number of cases detected.

On the other hand, Italy tested 6,354,730 as of yesterday and 35,082 people died, according to worldometer.info.

Bangladesh is currently the 16th worst hit country, but only 1,079,007 samples have been tested so far.

And the number of tests is on the decline. The highest number of tests a day was done on June 26 when 18,498 samples were tested. The average number of tests has declined to 12,398 and it was to 10,625 on

FAKE COVID REPORTS

Rab takes Shahed in custody for probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Regent Hospital Chairman Mohammad Shahed was handed to Rab yesterday after the elite force was given charge of investigating a case filed over forging Covid-19 test reports.

The home ministry approved Rab's appeal for investigation on Tuesday.

"We took Shahed into our custody as we are now investigating the case," Lt Col Ashique Billah, Rab's legal and media wing director, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier, the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police was tasked with the investigation and Shahed was in the midst of 10-day remand in their custody.

The Rab arrested Shahed from Sathkira on July 15 when he was trying to leave the country through the border.

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

Since then, many fraudulent acts by him have come to light.

A home ministry letter about Shahed sent to the inspector general of police in 2016 mentioned, "He is a man of a dangerous fraudulent nature."

Shahed is facing over 50 cases filed since 2008, including money laundering and embezzlement of public money. He has already served a prison sentence for embezzling money. Most of the cases were filed under Section 420 of the Penal Code.

Shahed is also at the centre of a rift between the health ministry and the Directorate General of Health Services over a government deal with the private hospital. The agreement allowed the hospital to treat novel coronavirus patients although its licence expired in 2014.

Sunday, the lowest in July.

Health experts have pointed out time and again that if there had been enough tests, more patients would have been detected, since the population density is high. Besides, there are unreported deaths from Covid-19 across the country, especially in villages.

Some 1,776 people have died after showing Covid-19 symptoms from March 22 to July 11 in the country, said a report of Dhaka University's Centre for Genocide Studies.

All the deaths, however, might not have been related to Covid-19, as many of the deceased tested negative, it said.

The experts pointed to South Asia's young demographics as a potential reason why the total number of deaths is not as high as it could be.

European countries have a higher fatality rate because of its greater number of aged people.

The average life expectancy in some European countries such as Italy, Spain and France is above 80 years. They have a huge number of elderly persons.

But the average life expectancy is 72 years in Bangladesh and it has a huge chunk of median aged people.

The median age of a population is the point at which half the population is older than that age and half is younger.

The median age is 26.7 years in Bangladesh.

Although the health minister sounded complacent, there is no room for complacency. And it is better to compare situations among countries using projection models under the same parameters, including demography, disease trend and others, the experts added.

No decision yet

FROM PAGE 1

Many college teachers are taking classes via Facebook live. Many public universities are in fear of session jams caused by the closure of universities for around five months. Most private universities are conducting online classes to complete their ongoing semesters.

Education Minister Dipu Moni on several occasions said HSC exams would begin 15 days after return of normalcy.

The HSC and its equivalent exams were scheduled to start on April 1. More than one million students are expected to take the exams at over 9,000 educational institutions across the country.

Dipu Moni added that they were considering to expand the academic calendar for the secondary students to February next year to make up for academic losses caused by the school closure.

Other alternatives like reducing the school syllabus and shortening holidays were also under consideration, she said.

Ninety-seven out of 106 private universities in the country are currently operating academic activities.

According to Eastern University Vice-Chancellor (VC) Prof Shahid Akhtar Hossain, the university saw an 80 percent decline in the admission of new students in the summer semester.

"Usually we get around 500 students in the summer, but this year we have got only 100 students," Shahid Akhtar Hossain said.

The university offered a 10 percent waiver on the admission fees for all new student and 50 percent for those with better results.

Northern University acting registrar Prof Kazi Shahdat Kabir said they got 300 students as opposed to some 1,000 students during normal time.

Enrolment far lower than usual

FROM PAGE 1

Shahdat said they offered 20 percent waiver on tuition fees for new students, along with 5GB mobile data per month and a laptop for those who need it.

Southeast University authorities offered 50 percent waiver on admission fees and 25 percent waiver in tuition fees for the Covid-19 situation. But their effort seems to have failed to bear fruit.

University registrar Maj Gen (Retd) Kazi Fakhruddin Ahmed, said they got around 250 students in the summer semester in contrast with the regular admission of 600-700 students.

He said the students who did not have digital devices and internet access hardly showed interest to get enrolled at the university.

Primeasia University VC Prof Abdul Hannan Chowdhury said his university saw about 225 students

instead of the usual figure of about 475.

He said many students at private universities meet their education expenses by doing part-time jobs or private tutoring. "They are now more concerned about survival, so they are not thinking about enrolling at universities," he added.

According to the registrar offices of University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) and European University of Bangladesh, they also get 50 percent fewer students than their expectation for the summer semester.

Since April, many private universities are reportedly failing to pay full or even partial salaries to their teachers and staffers, plunging them into severe economic hardship.

Sheikh Kabir Hossain said they sought loan without interest from the government through the University

Grants Commission (UGC) so that private universities can survive the pandemic and pay salaries to 25,000 teachers and staffers working in these institutions.

"We also said we will repay the amount in instalments over three years when the situation stabilises," he said.

UGC Member Prof Muhammed Alamgir said they were in principle agreed with APUB proposal of soft loan as these universities contributed to expend higher education.

"We are discussing with education ministry regarding their demand," he said.

Currently, about 3,61,800 students are enrolled at private universities across the country. Over 1.24 lakh students got enrolled in different graduate and post-graduate programmes in these universities in 2018.

DU BUDGET 2020-21

Research gets low priority yet again

DU CORRESPONDENT

Despite repeated complaints from different sections of academics and students on Dhaka University's lack of research work, the university's newest budget still paints a bleak picture for the sector. Moreover, the authorities did not spend the full amount allocated in education and research sector for the last fiscal year (2019-2020), according to the revised budget.

Tk 869.56 crore budget for fiscal year 2020-21 was placed at the second chapter of annual Senate session, which was adjourned on June 14.

It was initially approved on June 28 by finance committee and later on by the syndicate on Monday.

In last year's budget, the total allocation for research was 40 crore 60 lakh 70 thousand taka. But in the revised budget, total spending in the sector last year was shown to be Tk 36.62 crore.

This is not a first-time occurrence, rather the university has not been able to spend the allocated amount for research several times in the last decade.

According to the university budget book, in 2016-17, 12.16 crore was allocated while Tk 8.16 crore was spent.

In 2014-15, Tk 2.36 crore was spent from the Tk 3 crore allocation; in 2012-

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Schools have been closed for months now. To escape the boredom of their homes and get some fresh air, these two teenagers have picked a serene spot beside the Kirtonkhola river to get some studying done. The photo was taken yesterday at Barishal Sadar upazila's Chorkaua area.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

ENSURING SECURITY FOR WORKERS

Vietnam to investigate Bangladeshi brokers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Vietnam government has ordered police to investigate the brokers from Bangladesh and ensure security for Bangladeshi workers in the Southeast Asian country, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

The move comes three days after 17 Bangladeshis traveled to Hanoi from Vung Tau, around 1,677 kilometres away from Hanoi, and had been sitting by a roadside some 200 yards off the Bangladesh embassy, demanding repatriation to Bangladesh. "The Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam issued an order to Ho Chi Minh City Police, Binh Duong Police and Vung Tau Police to investigate the brokers from Bangladesh and ensure security for foreign workers," said the statement.

Vietnam police are working with local companies which sponsored their visas to take responsibility of the 17 and take them back to Vung Tau City, give them accommodation, jobs and facilitate their repatriation when commercial flights resume, the foreign ministry said. Talking to The Daily Star over phone, one of the workers said they had gone to Vietnam early this month but were hardly given any job. Recently, their Bangladeshi brokers cut off water pipe connections to their accommodation in Vung Tau and threatened them of grave consequences after some of the workers had spoken to the media.

"We all have BMET [Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training] cards. We were promised good jobs... We faced various forms of exploitation by Bangladeshi brokers. We want to return home," said Faridul Islam, one of the 17 Bangladeshis. Contacted, Bangladesh Ambassador to Vietnam Samina Naz said the Vietnam authorities instructed the company of these 17 people to take responsibility.

"The company representative called us with assurances that they would take them back to work even though they fled the company, breaching their rules. The company will provide their return fare [to Vung Tau], accommodation and food. They have passports, visas and work permits

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

'Look after women migrant workers'

Rights groups urge countries of origin and destination at RMMRU e-symposium

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Migrant rights and advocacy groups from across regions yesterday called on countries of origin and destination to undertake a gender-responsive assessment of the Covid-19 crisis, recovery packages and plans with particular focus on low-skilled women and men migrant workers to guide investment priorities.

They urged the governments to invest in preserving women migrants jobs, facilitate recovery of unpaid wages and assets left behind, and allow women migrants the possibility of contracting other available jobs in destination sites.

They further urged to provide income support and ensure free testing and treatment for Covid-19 for all migrants in better equipped and infection controlled environments in both countries of origin and countries of destination. They made the call during an e-symposium titled "Drawing the Curtain: Experiences of Women Migrant Workers" organised by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).

It was part of RMMRU's series of such events under the banner "Build Back Better" on the Covid-19 situation and migration. As a long term initiative, the rights and advocacy groups urged the governments to frame

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

5 'online gamblers' arrested in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CIG

Detectives yesterday arrested five alleged members of an online gambling syndicate from different areas of Chattogram city.

The arrestees are Shakhawat Hossain Shaon (20), Monir Ahmed (40), Arif Uddin (40), Foyzal Khan (32) and Javed Mia (40).

Police seized Tk 2.22 lakh in cash, several laptops, and a private car from their possession.

Md Ali Hossain, deputy commissioner of Detective Branch of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (North Zone), said the syndicate used to swindle money from public through several online sites and mobile apps and they already accumulated a huge amount of money.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Asif Mohiuddin said Shaon, the kingpin in the gambling syndicate, already bought the brand new car through illegal earnings.

Shaon also managed several mobile banking accounts for money transaction, said the police official.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

In search of a millenium-old higher-learning centre

Archaeology department to start looking for Chandrapur; historians say it hosted an educational complex with nine mathas

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Ancient Bengal was a land of knowledge where institutional education flourished through vihara (monastery), mahavihara (monastic complex of viharas) and matha (cloister, institute or college). Thousand-year-old heritages like Nalanda, Shalban, Somapura, Vikramshila, Jagaddala and many others stand tall as a testament to our glorious past.

These ancient higher-learning institutions eventually laid the foundation of what later came to be known as universities.

Srihatta (present day Sylhet division) is home to such an institution, which is older than Jagaddala, as disciplined as Nalanda and was built in the early 10th century, according to historians.

King Srichandra of Chandra dynasty of south-eastern Bengal patronised constructing nine mathas at Chandrapur of Srihatta.

Details of these mathas were inscribed in a copperplate grant (historical legal records engraved on copper plates) found in Paschimbhag of Rajnagar upazila in Moulvibazar in 1958, which was later decoded and translated.

And after 62 years of this historical finding, the Department of Archaeology is all set to explore and excavate the long-lost heritage of the land, which lies beneath the ground -- once known as Chandrapur.

CHANDRA DYNASTY

The Chandra dynasty of south-eastern Bengal ruled these lands from approximately 900 to 1050 AD, spanning five generations of kings, according to eminent historian Prof Dr Abdul Momin Chowdhury.

According to his book "Dynastic History of Bengal", the kingdom was established by king Trilokyachandra and later ruled by his successors Srichandra, also spelled Sricandra, (930 to 975 AD), Kalyanchandra



A photograph of The Paschimbhag copperplate inscription, whereabouts of which are currently unknown.

PHOTO: COURTESY

(975 to 1000 AD), Ladhachandra (1000 to 1020 AD) and Govindachandra (1020 to 1050 AD).

"Under Srichandra, the kingdom prospered and reached its peak, which seemed to continue during the reign of his son and successor Kalyanchandra," he mentioned in the book.

King Srichandra's administrative centre was at Vikramapura -- present day Bikrampur of Munshiganj -- and the kingdom included most of the northern, eastern and southern Vanga or Bengal.

PASCHIMBHAG COPPERPLATE INSCRIPTION

King Srichandra ruled for 45 years, longest in the dynasty; and his achievements, prosperity, battles and generosity were engraved in the copperplate inscriptions or grants at the time.

So far, 12 inscriptions of the Chandra dynasty are found and eight of them are from during the reign of Srichandra.

These are: Rampal plate, Kedarpur plate, Idilpur plate, Madanpur

plate, Dulla plate, Bogra plate, a plate at Bangladesh Museum and Paschimbhag plate. All of them are land grants (a grant of public land, especially to an institution, organisation, or to particular groups of people).

Paschimbhag plate is the most notable and discussed.

According to Kamala Kanta Gupta Choudhury (commonly referred as Kamalakanta Gupta) -- a decoder of the inscription and author of "Copperplates of Sylhet" -- the inscription was accidentally found by one Binod Bihari Chakravarti in 1958 in a vacant land of Paschimbhag village of Rajnagar upazila in present day Moulvibazar.

The inscription was then passed into the custody of Pandit Syamapada Kavyatirtha Bhattacharya. Later in 1961, Sylhet Historical and Archaeological Society's member Aminur Rashid Chowdhury acquired it for the society and Kamalakanta Gupta decoded it by 1962.

"But whereabouts of the copperplate is unknown at present. It was primarily preserved by the society and some say it was later given to Kolkata Museum. But I visited all possible places in the last four years [in India and Bangladesh], but could not find it," Dr Md Zafir Uddin (Zafir Setu) of the Bangla department at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, told this correspondent recently.

WHAT THE INSCRIPTION SAYS

The Paschimbhag copperplate inscription was of 5th regnal (of a reign or monarchy) of king Srichandra, which was approximately during the year 935 AD.

Though family history of the king, his conquest and many other incidents were engraved in it, the main reason of the inscription was for land grant.

It was written in Sanskrit but the script is Devanagiri -- a left-to-right abugida (writing system) based on the ancient Brahmi script -- commonly

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Bangladesh calls for equitable access to Covid-19 vaccine

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has called for fair and equitable access to Covid-19 vaccine to make sure all countries, especially ones that need it the most, have access to the life-saving product.

Ambassador Rabab Fatima, Bangladesh's permanent representative to the UN in New York, made the call at a virtual conversation co-hosted by Lord Tariq Ahmad, UK minister of state for the Commonwealth and UN, and Ambassador Elizabeth Cousens, president and CEO at United Nations Foundation yesterday.

Kate O'Brien -- director of World Health Organization's (WHO) Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals -- and Marie-Ange Saraka-Yao -- managing director at Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (Gavi) -- briefed on the approaches towards universal access to potential Covid-19 vaccines.

Fatima said although developments centring various vaccine candidates are undoubtedly encouraging, strong global commitment and collaboration to treat Covid-19 vaccine as a "global public good" is essential.

MEDICAL ENTRANCE EXAM

Questions leaked from DGHS press: CID

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police said question papers of medical and dental admission tests were leaked repeatedly from the printing press under Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

They revealed the information after arresting five people of a crime ring, including one of its masterminds, Jasim Uddin Bhuiyan Munnu. The other arrestees are Parvez Khan, Jakir Hossain Dipu, Samiul Zafar and SM Sanwar Hossain. They were caught from the capital's Mirpur area on Sunday and Monday.

CID Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police Sumon Kumar Das disclosed the matter at a press briefing at CID headquarters in Malibagh yesterday.

"Initially, we came to know through multiple sources that these question papers were printed from the press under DGHS since 1988," he said. "Members of this ring were linked to this press or some of their family members were associated with it. We primarily suspect that the ring used their connections and leaked papers."

CID said the accused are members of an organised gang that used to supply these papers digitally before exams from 2013-18 in exchange for a hefty amount of money.

They found at least 50 people in the racket across the country. "Hundreds of students have been admitted to medical colleges through the racket. We have identified the whole racket during a long investigation," ASP Sumon said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Kishore, Mushtaq denied bail again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A virtual court in Dhaka yesterday rejected a bail petition of cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore and writer Mushtaq Ahmed in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after their lawyer submitted a petition seeking bail through email against the rejection order of the lower court.

On June 16, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Jasim rejected both the remand and bail petitions of Kishore, Mushtaq and two others and allowed police to interrogate them at jail gate for two days.

At yesterday's hearing, the defence lawyer told the court that their clients were arrested on May 5 and since then they have been in jail custody, adding that they were implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass them.

DMP's assistant commissioner Md Farid Ahmed opposed the defence pleas, saying charges brought against them were found to be true.

Eleven people -- including the four arrestees -- were charged with "spreading rumours and carrying out anti-government activities" on May 6. Rab-3 Assistant Director Abu Bakar Siddique said Swedish-Bangladeshi journalist Tasneem Khalil, US-based journalist Shahed Alam and blogger Asif Mohiuddin are also among those named in the case.

According to the FIR filed with Ramna Police Station, Kishore was picked up on May 5 from his Kakrail home.

It mentioned that upon interrogation, he disclosed the name of Mushtaq who was then apprehended from his Lalmatia's house in the capital on the same day.

However, Mushtaq's family alleged that he was picked up on the early hours of May 4. Kishore and Mushtaq landed in jail after they were produced before a Dhaka court on May 6.

Later, two more accused -- Didarul Islam Bhuiyan, an activist of a platform called 'Rastrachinta', and businessman Minhaj Mannan Emon -- were also arrested and are now in jail custody.



City residents are so used to seeing their roads entangled in overhead cables, many never give a second thought while looking above. But a camera pointed at the madness shows just how severe the mess is. On many occasions, authorities have tried to get rid of this menace, but to no avail. This photo was taken yesterday from the capital's Fakirapool.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Child dies, three others suffer burns in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-year-old boy died and three of his family members sustained burns after accumulated gas exploded and caused a fire in their house in Dhaka's Bangshal area yesterday morning.

The dead was identified as Mainul Islam. His parents Javed Hossain (30) and Sheuli Akter (25) and sister Jannatul Ferdous (5) were rushed to Sheikh Hasina National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute.

They sustained 37, 17 and 60 percent burns respectively.

Faisalur Rahman, senior station officer of Siddique Bazar Fire Station, said they suspected that gas emitted from a leak in the gas line accumulated in the house on the ground floor at Kasaituli area.

The explosion took place when the accumulated gas somehow came in contact with fire at around 8am, possibly an ignited matchstick, he added.

A portion of a wall collapsed on impact and debris fell on the boy, leaving him dead on the spot, he said.

The three others sustained burns as the fire engulfed the house, fire officials said. Quoting locals, Faisalur said some workers carried out repair work in the gas line and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Look after

FROM PAGE 3

policies in countries of origin so that women are absorbed in employment in various sectors.

They called for focusing on combating barriers that prevent female migrants from accessing justice and seeking remedies, to bring about substantive reform of the Kafala system, and develop alternatives to detention and deportation mechanisms. They urged to ensure labour law coverage in both countries of origin and destination, including for domestic workers and their effective enforcement in line with ILO and CEDAW standards.

Migrants and refugees are among the disadvantaged groups who have been bearing the brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic most, said RMMRU Executive Director Prof CR Abrar, while moderating the e-symposium. He said the pandemic provides scope to "look back and plan to build better".

Jean D'Cunha, senior global adviser on international migration at UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States in Cairo, said panic on Covid-19 in Arab countries has resulted in "increased xenophobia" against migrant workers particularly domestic workers as they have been seen as "vectors of the virus". She said amid the pandemic, migrant workers found themselves stranded with borders being shut down while they were at risks of arrest, detention and deportation.

Unable to pay, employers terminated many documented migrant workers from their jobs and without any compensation. Many workers have been forced to return to the countries of origin before their job contracts ended and even before the airports were closed, she added. Undocumented female domestic workers in countries like Kuwait, Lebanon and Jordan have been in difficult and extreme situation, not being able to find employment and food amid the pandemic, said Roula Hamati, coordinator of Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants in Beirut.

Alex Au, vice president of Singapore-based migrant rights group Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2), and Ellene Sana, executive director of Manila-based Center for Migrant Advocacy, among others, addressed the e-symposium.

Research gets

FROM PAGE 3

Tk 1.95 crore was spent from the Tk 2.95 crore allocation and 2.08 crore out of the allocated 2.71 crore was spent in FY 2011-12.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, Director of Centre for Genocide Studies, admitted that there has been surplus in research allocation several times.

"There are some reasons behind this, firstly we could not make this university a research-based institution rather it has become teaching-based. Secondly, teachers' promotion does not depend of research nowadays so they do not feel the urge to conduct research or publish it in peer-reviewed journals. Moreover, faculty deans who are entrusted with the duty of disbursing the research money, has to remain busy with admission test for which they could hardly pay attention to monitor research works of the teachers," he said.

Prof Imtiaz also said an admission-focused dean should be recruited to curb the admission test related workload on the deans.

Of the proposed budget, University Grants Commission (UGC) will provide Tk 748.56 crore (86.03%), some Tk 71 crore (8.17%) will be met from university's internal resources and the rest Tk 50 crore remains a deficit.

Like previous years, a major portion of the budget, 482.77 crores or 69.9 percent would be spent for salaries, allowances, and pensions of teachers and employees.

Questions leaked

FROM PAGE 3

According to CID, Abdus Salam, an operator of the press who is on the run, and his cousin Jasim had formed a nationwide circle.

Salam used to leak questions from the press for many years, with help from powerful department officials. Jasim's job was to spread questions all over the country. He had a strong network for this. Through it, they have embezzled crores of money, the investigators said.

The law enforcers seized savings certificates worth Tk 2.27 crore, cheques worth Tk 2.3 crore from Jasim, cheques worth Tk 84 lakh from Parvez, and cheques and FDR worth Tk 57 lakh from Dipu.

According to CID, 11 members of the gang, including Jasim, have been arrested.

In 2015, medical tests were marred with allegations of question leak, followed by weeks of protests demanding retakes. However, no action was taken.

ASP Sumon said CID started investigating question leaks of Dhaka University's admission test in 2017, and found another ring in 2018.

On Sunday, police arrested Sanwar, who provided information about leaked papers of medical and dental admission tests in 2013, 2015 and 2017.

Based on his information, a CID team raided different areas of Mirpur on the same day and arrested Jasim, Parvez and Dipu, and Samiul was arrested the following day. The trio was put on a seven-day remand each yesterday.

Following the drive, they filed a case against 150-200 unidentified persons, and 14 who are accused in cases filed with Mirpur Police Station.

ASP Sumon said they may file a money laundering case too, after looking into the arrestee's wealth.

5 online

FROM PAGE 3

Shaon, an HSC student, has been involved in the syndicate for five months, ADC Asif quoted him as saying. Shaon also bought a flat in his mother's name, he added.

A case was filed with Khulshi Police Station in this regard and it was handed over to Criminal Investigation Department for investigation.

Child dies

FROM PAGE 3

its riser adjacent to the house yesterday, and a leakage might have developed there.

Idris Ali, sub-inspector of Bangladesh Police Station, said they came to know that a gas line leak in an alley caused the fire and they are investigating it.

Javed's aunt Sheuli Begum said he used to work in a bag factory and maintained his family with his meagre income.

The family is worried about bearing the treatment costs of the injured.

Vietnam to

FROM PAGE 3

with temporary residence cards," she said.

The foreign ministry yesterday said the government is committed to upholding the rights of Bangladeshi migrant workers abroad and provide all necessary assistance. They also said the Bangladesh mission in Hanoi has been supporting the Bangladeshi nationals within the legal framework of the two countries. It said all international flights were suspended in Vietnam from March 25, 2020, but the group of 17 sitting in front of the embassy are demanding immediate repatriation.

The ministry said most of them went to Vietnam as visitors and not as legal workers -- a claim that contradicts that of the 17 Bangladeshis.

"The Embassy informed the 17 persons of the employer's commitment and assurance of the Government of Vietnam but they are not cooperating for unknown

In search of

FROM PAGE 3

one Haradasa. There are 28 lines in obverse and 37 lines in reverse.

According to Kamalakanta Gupta and articles written in Bengali, later compiled and edited by Dr Zafir Setu in the book "Tamrashashone Sylhet", the king granted 452 patakas (a measurement of land) of Chandrapura for different purposes of nine mathas.

Based on these books and "Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization" edited by Dines Chandra Sircar -- the first plot of land covering 120 patakas was granted in favour of matha of the god Brahman.

Of them, 10 patakas were granted for a upadhyaya (teacher or guru) of the Chandragomin's (Buddhist scholar) grammar and the rest were for 10 students, feeding five Brahmans, for makers of the temple, and other professionals. The second plot -- covering 280 patakas -- were granted to four "desantariya mathas" and four "vangala mathas".

For each matha, there was an upadhyaya who was also granted 10 patakas. Land was allotted to students, Brahmans, and other professionals as well as baidyas (doctors).

The third plot -- consisting the rest 52 patakas -- was given to six thousand Brahmans, in equal shares, mentioning names of 37 in the inscription.

CHANDRAPUR, 9 MATHAS, CONCEPT OF UNIVERSITY

Following his research, Kamalakanta Gupta believed that Chandrapur was a town in the Chandrapura Vishaya (subdivision) of Srihattamandala or Srihatta and the vishayapati (ruler) used to live there and the mathas were situated in the town.

The Chandra dynasty was of Buddhist monarchy and most Buddhist kings granted land for vihara in the name of Buddha.

Srichandra granted all land in the name of Buddha; these lands were granted to Brahmans and mostly to study Brahmanya (devoted to sacred knowledge) based on Chaturveda (collection of religious texts).

As a Buddhist monarch, he included only the grammar of Chandragomin and the main matha's upadhyaya was the teacher, as mentioned in the inscription, decoded by historians.

"The inscription and all the evidence lead us to believe that there was a large educational institute in the land, which was mainly a religious education centre, like Nalanda or Odantapuri," said Dr Zafir Setu.

"The educational concept, the land grant structure based on the level of

labour distribution of around 25 types of professionals point that this was a planned and disciplined institute -- functioning almost like a modern university," he added.

"It makes me wonder how such an institution could be forgotten from history," he said.

WHERE IS CHANDRAPUR?

Many say the place is situated in the Dighirpar area of Juri upazila in Moulvibazar. The archaeology department is planning to start their survey works from the spot.

Historians, however, never agreed on a specific spot till to date.

According to the "Paschimbhag Copperplate", Chandrapur Vishaya was bounded by the Mani-Nadi (present day Monu river) in the south, Kosiyara-Nadi (present day Kushiara river) in the north, large Kouttali in the east and Jangakhataka-Kastanyakhataka-Betraghanginadi in the west.

Kalamakanta Gupta believed that the Kouttali is a large garh or fort in the east and the west's Betraghanginadi is present day Chungi river and he always gave emphasis to the original location where the copperplate was found.

Writer and researcher Prof Nripendral Das said, "There are many possibilities where the town and the educational institute might be."

"The copperplate was found in Rajnagar upazila but there are many other places nearby like Nidhanpur or Kalapur where copperplates of other dynasties were found. It proves that the land holds many histories and mysteries, waiting to be unearthed."

WHY THE DELAY

Though the details of these mathas were found many years ago, no initiatives had been taken to conduct a survey in the area until now.

Dr Zafir Setu said, "Chandrapur is not just part of some local history... Government organizations like the archaeology department are meant to search for and protect our heritages. Yet they don't... most of the time."

"Historically, British detached Sylhet from Bengal and attached it with Assam... for that reason, Dhaka and Kolkata based historians or archaeologists didn't focus much on this part. Over the years, many local historians tried to raise voice over Chandrapur, but couldn't create larger impressions," he said. But finally, the search for the site will begin, he added.

Contacted, Prof Nripendral Das said, "The government institutions are mostly run by bureaucrats and for them it's just a job. That's why it takes

such a long time to do something. But searching for heritage is also about dedication. As they are going to start looking for the site, they should involve researchers, historians and eminent archaeologists as well."

Eminent researcher Dr Muhammad Sadique, also the chairman of Bangladesh Public Service Commission, said, "Historians like Ramesh Chandra, Jadunath Sarkar also mentioned Chandrapur."

"Archaeological expeditions are expensive but the capacity of our department is limited. Offices of the department must be extended to district level, headed by an archaeologist..."

He said, "After the Liberation War our major focus was on building the country. All these years, our history and heritages were left uncared for. Even till to date, no significant archaeological survey has been conducted in Bangladesh, which is essential."

Asked about the delay in starting the survey for the site, Dr Md Aatur Rahman, regional director of the Department of Archaeology, said archaeological exploration in Chattagram and Sylhet region continued till 1956 and then it was halted for a long time.

"Even after independence, archaeologists focused on the northern and southern parts of the country, maybe because structures were visible there. And Sylhet got left behind," he added.

The regional director said in the last 40 years, if people had worked on exploring the heritages of the eastern region based on numerous copperplates, many such sites would have been explored already. "But we are finally focusing on the region and hoping to find many notable archaeological heritages," he said.

SEARCH BEGINS FINALLY

On July 15, the archaeology department asked the regional director of Sylhet-Chattogram to look into the matter and file a detailed report after visiting the possible location at Juri upazila in Moulvibazar.

The regional director said, "Following the instruction, I've already started studying about the matter and am very excited to look for the historical educational institute."

Hannan Miah, director general of the department said, "If we find the heritage, it could be one of the greatest archaeological findings of recent decades in the country. Now, we're planning for research and survey at the first phase; if the result is promising, we will start a large scale excavation soon."

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PKSF has been implementing "The World Bank" funded project titled "Sustainable Enterprise Project (SEP)" since August 2018. The objective of this project is to increase adoption of the environmentally sustainable practices by targeting microenterprises following business cluster development approach. PKSF hereby invites applications from the suitable candidates for the recruitment of the following position under SEP:

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Golam Touhid
Deputy Managing Director

Justice Bhabani Prasad accorded farewell

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The attorney general's (AG) office and Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday accorded farewell to Justice Bhabani Prasad Singha, a judge of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, on his last working day in the office.

Justice Prasad will retire on August 8, but the court will be on annual vacation from today to August 8.

During the programme, Attorney General Mahubey Alam said Justice Bhabani Prasad Singha is a very competent and honest judge and is very expert in dealing with both the civil and criminal cases.

He prayed for long and healthy life of the justice.

SCBA President AM Amin Uddin said Justice Bhabani Prasad Singha has enriched the judiciary by delivering contribution in establishing justice and rule of law in the country.

He is a philanthropic soul, involved in running 11 orphanages, Amin added.

Justice Bhabani emphasised good relationship between the bar (SCBA) and bench (judges) for establishing justice in the society.

He thanked the SCBA leaders and AG office for according him the farewell during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

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Sl No.	Package No.	Description of works	Tender ID No.	Tender last selling (date & time)	Tender closing (date & time)	Tender opening (date & time)	Last date & time for tender security submission
01	e-Tender/UGDP/CUM-S/2020-21/01	Construction Buried Pipe for Water Supply works to Agricultural Field for the farmers of Barnaul General Village Development Society Ltd under Pachthubi Union Adarsha Sadar, Cumilla. (INF-2018-19-201967-01)	480663	17/08/2020 up to 17:00 HR	18/08/2020 14:00 HR	18/08/2020 14:00 HR	18/08/2020 13:00 HR
02	e-Tender/UGDP/CUM-S/2020-21/02	a. Construction Birthing Room at Majgacha Community Clinic under Amratali Union b. Const. of Birthing Room and Maintenance works at Golabari Community Clinic under Pachthubi Union Adarsha Sadar, Cumilla (INF-2018-19-201967-02)	480666	17/08/2020 up to 17:00 HR	18/08/2020 14:00 HR	18/08/2020 14:00 HR	18/08/2020 13:00 HR
03	e-Tender/UGDP/CUM-S/2020-21/03	Construction of 3 Wash Block for the members family of Hadukpara General Village Development Cooperative Society Ltd. under Kalibazar Union Adarsha Sadar, Cumilla (INF-2018-19-201967-03)	480667	17/08/2020 up to 17:00 HR	18/08/2020 14:00 HR	18/08/2020 14:00 HR	18/08/2020 13:00 HR

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The method of this tender is OTM (Open Tendering Method).

Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Jahed Hossain
Upazila Engineer,
Adarsha Sadar, Cumilla
us.comilla-s@lged.gov.bd

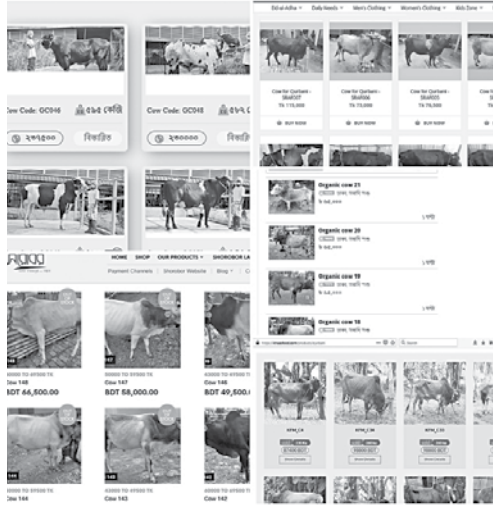
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Qurbani in the digital era

SHYKH SERAJ

Sacrifice is an important act in worship. Eid-ul-Azha represents the true essence of sacrifice. Amid the coronavirus outbreak, the threat of contagion is there at the Qurbani Haats (markets). We are assuming that social distancing would not affect people, but how much we have worked in this regard? Personally, I don't want to see the cattle farmers face loss at this peak time of selling. If the sacrificial animals are not sold, farmers will be the worst sufferer, anyone would agree with this.

In this digital world, anyone can open online markets to sell their livestock, especially sacrificial, and it is praiseworthy that some are already in operation. Eleven years back, a farmer called me and requested to buy a cow from him. I said, since I haven't seen the cow, how can I buy it? He then requested me to give him my email address and right away I received couple of photos of the cow from different angles, which made me convinced to buy the cow. As technology has improved, we are also moving onward in selling the sacrificial animals at the online platforms, supported by



Amid the coronavirus outbreak, digital Haats are becoming popular for selling and buying sacrificial animals ahead of Eid-ul-Azha this year.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

added there. The government is also concerned about running coronavirus test for the involved people, three days before the Eid-ul-Azha.

A few months back, I said the Union Digital Centres (UDCs) could play a vital role. There are 5,875 of them and they could be a local hub for the online haat. The Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Tajul Islam said sacrificial animal haat will be set up ahead of the holy Eid-ul-Azha, maintaining all health rules and ensuring social distancing. After my discussion with Tajul Islam and ICT State Minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak, couple months back, government took the recommendations very seriously and took the right measure. With the introduction of online animal market and regular haats, maintaining social distancing and hygiene, this would be a wonderful venture, if the plan really works out, as said by the minister. I believe this would be the greatest digital achievement for the farmers, traders, pious buyers, butchers and all related people, during the time of COVID-19. We know that if these plans were taken at least four months back, things could have been way different, but still at a rapid pace, government has very efficiently worked it out, which is really praiseworthy.

Coronavirus infections are more common among workers in various meat processing factories and slaughterhouses in Europe, America and Australia. Coronavirus infections have been reported in such organizations in various European countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Spain. During the last week of April, 50 people were found infected with the coronavirus at JBS SA Beef Facility in Colorado, USA. At the Cargill Inc. meat packaging plant in Pennsylvania, 160 people were infected. The virus was found in bodies of more than 1,300 workers at a slaughterhouse at North Rhine-Westphalia in

Germany's Guterleslo town, during the third week of June. Lawrence Young, a professor of molecular oncology at the University of Warwick, said, "Cold and damp places have the ideal environment for long-term survival and spread of coronavirus."

Last year, the two city corporations arranged animal sacrifices at a total of 75 in Dhaka. Apart from this, 400 more places were identified. Since 2015, the city corporation has been trying to get the city dwellers accustomed to animal sacrifice at designated places. The online platform for selling sacrificial animals initiated by the government has a list of names of butchers, located at the upazila level. As I said, I have learned that an initiative has been taken to test corona of those butchers three days before Eid. Using the local government structure, an assessment can be made of the amount of sacrifices to be made in each ward. Individuals can be made aware of hygiene in advance to conduct sacrifices and sacrificial activities in ward-based designated places. We must ensure that people who will be physically travelling to the cities to sell sacrificial animals should be tested prior to their visit to the cities.

I am certain that well-planned measures for cleaning after the sacrifice has already been taken by the city corporation. We know that Qurbani and the cattle market has a great bondage with the rural economy, as well as our emotion. Let the digital Haats keep most of us connected to this bondage this year. Our leather industry also depends a lot on this sacrificial event. Therefore, in order to protect every related sector and people involved with it, emphasis should be laid on this aspect. Meanwhile, the flood situation is getting worse day by day. It has been reported that cattle are being forced to be sold at a very low price due to rise of floodwaters in Haor areas. Different online shops have come forward to solve the problem of selling sacrificial animals. These websites have started selling cows at different prices as per demand of the customers. Dhaka North City Corporation has launched a platform called 'Digital Haat' to sell cows online, along with the government's ICT division, e-commerce association of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Dairy Farm Association. According to media reports, three ministers of the government have already bought sacrificial cows from the online platform 'Gorur Haat'.

Dear readers, in this perilous time of the pandemic, let us all make an extra special effort to be kinder, more compassionate and attentive to the needs of others than ourselves. The pandemic itself is a sign, a wider avenue for us to be empathetic in a meaningful way. Eid-ul-Azha, amid the coronavirus outbreak, not only brings forth a light of celebration, but also amplifies the logistical challenges in the process of Qurbani. It will take the true meaning of sacrifice this year. A sacrifice that must ensure purity, good intention and holiness. A sacrifice that will be illuminated by maintaining safe distancing, proper handling and disposal, and test our strength as a community.

Pirojpur boat sellers in utter despair

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

The fall in production of guavas and hog plums has affected the sale of boat significantly, leaving the boat sellers in utter despair amid coronavirus outbreak in Nesarabad upazila of the district.

Locals said every year during monsoon, floating markets on canals crisscrossing hundreds of guava and hog plum orchards in Kuriana and Jolabari unions under Nesarabad upazila become alive with visitors, buyers and traders from different parts of the country.

But this time, the production of guava and hog plum in the area has fallen drastically due to the havoc wreaked by cyclone Bulbul and Amphan. The storms have damaged a large number of orchards in the unions. The guava trees have also been attacked by the disease anthracnose this year. Apart from this, the sale of guava and hog plum falls drastically in the markets due to coronavirus outbreak.

Local people of Nesarabad upazila in Pirojpur and nearby Barishal and Jhalakathi districts mainly use small boats to collect guavas and hog plums from the orchards and carry them to the floating markets.

They buy the boats from the age-old Noukar Haat (boat market) on Atgar canal in Nesarabad upazila. The weekly haat is held on every Friday for three months from mid-May to mid-August every year during

the rainy season. The price of each boat is between Tk 3,000 to Tk 6,000 depending on wood quality.

Boat seller Faruq Hossain from Chami village in the upazila said almost all the guava and hog plum farmers buy at least one boat every year to collect, carry and sell guavas and hog plums that grow in abundance in the area during monsoon. But this year the scenery is totally opposite.

"I am involved in selling boat for over 40 years. But I have never faced such acute shortage of buyers like this year," said another boat seller Nadir Hossain of Banaripara upazila in Barishal.

He further added that around 200 boats would be sold at every haat during the previous years. But the number does not cross over 50 this year.

Md Shakib Hawlader, a leasee of the boat market, said now people are not showing interest to visit the market due to fear of getting infected with coronavirus. It is another reason behind the falling sales.

Sukhlal Halder, sub-assistant agriculture officer of Nesarabad upazila, said the production of guavas has fallen as mostly farmers did not spend extra money for pesticides or fertiliser during the peak season of harvesting the fruit. As a result, its price has fallen drastically.

This year, guava has been cultivated on 657 hectares of land while hog plum on 350 hectares of land, said the officer.



Boats are kept in a row for sale at Noukar Haat on Atgar canal in Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila. Boats of different sizes are sold at the haat every Friday during monsoon. Farmers buy the boats to collect, carry and sell guavas and hog plums in the floating markets. But this year, the sale of boats falls drastically due to coronavirus outbreak.

PHOTO: STAR

ROUNDTABLE

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW 2020 AND YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

The Daily Star in association with Citizen's Platform for SDGs and Plan International Bangladesh organised a virtual policy dialogue titled "Voluntary National Review 2020 and Youth Perspectives" on July 16, 2020. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.

PANELISTS:

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Convener, Citizens Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh and Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and the Moderator of the Session

There are three major motivations for countries in joining the VNR process. Firstly, countries want to showcase their development success in front of the global community and learn from their peers. They want credit for their efforts in implementing the SDGs. Secondly, they want to encourage the global community to support their efforts. Finally, some countries look for political and developmental legitimacy.

We need to reach the disengaged youth in certain ways. This disengagement has been aggravated due to COVID-19 and the digital divide. Women and girl children in particular have been affected gravely. Small ethnic groups, Dalits, and the third gender have been very visible as groups left behind. The government has quite a lot of facilities and initiatives regarding these issues so we must take full advantage and make them more effective.

Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher, The Daily Star and the Chair of the Session

How closely the non-state actors are involved in the SDGs and VNR process depends on the environment in which the non-state actors operate. The non-state actors are supposed to give a different perspective from the state actors, but this cannot be possible if the environment is such that different perspectives are not welcome and those with different perspectives have their work deemed problematic, or their activities do not get as much support as before. Non-state actors are fundamentally expected to echo the overall view of the state actors. The fundamental prerequisite of the non-state actors' effective involvement in the SDG process is an environment of acceptance, tolerance of divergent views and the assurance that the different perspectives ultimately get incorporated into collective thinking.

Orla Murphy, Country Director, Plan International Bangladesh



Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya

Mahfuz Anam

Orla Murphy

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, Honorary President, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Kashfia Feroz

Reneka Ahmed Antu

Mishal Bin Salim

Asa Britta Torkelson

Md Rashedul Islam

Dr Shamsul Alam

Saber Hossain Chowdhury

Reneka Ahmed Antu, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (PNGO-GAA) Section 155 (4) of the Evidence Act, 1872 states: "When a man is prosecuted for rape or an attempt to ravish, it may be shown that the prosecutrix was of generally immoral character." This law has already been amended in India and Pakistan and I believe, it should be amended in Bangladesh as well so that we can attain more in terms of gender equality.

Mishal Bin Salim, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (PNGO-GAA)

Asa Britta Torkelson, Country Representative, UNFPA Bangladesh

the country's development. Practices such as child marriage and adolescent pregnancies cannot continue. We need to engage young people as community leaders who can shape the future for the better. It is only by putting youth at the centre of our work that we can achieve the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

Kashfia Feroz, Head of Influencing, Plan International Bangladesh

The youth aged between 18 and 35 years represent 33 percent of the total population. Therefore, it is not possible to achieve the SDGs without their contribution and participation and without addressing their needs and challenges. Therefore, in collaboration with Citizen's Platform for SDGs and other civil society organisations, Plan International Bangladesh undertook a series of initiatives focusing on youth positioning. Last March, in National Consultation, we, the CSOs and youths, presented some recommendations and we pursued them to be addressed by government report. It is time to explore to what extent the recommendations of the youth are reflected in the VNR report of Bangladesh.

Reneka Ahmed Antu, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (PNGO-GAA) Section 155 (4) of the Evidence Act, 1872 states: "When a man is prosecuted for rape or an attempt to ravish, it may be shown that the prosecutrix was of generally immoral character." This law has already been amended in India and Pakistan and I believe, it should be amended in Bangladesh as well so that we can attain more in terms of gender equality.

In 2015, 14 percent of women used sanitary napkins, which has increased to 20 percent now. We can achieve further growth not only through policymaking but also by raising awareness since topics such as menstruation are still considered taboo. I would request both the public and private sectors to help raise awareness to increase the usage of sanitary napkins.

Mishal Bin Salim, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (PNGO-GAA)

The National Youth Policy 2017 states that our youth will be involved in decision-making at local, national and international levels and also take part in the SDG implementation processes. Since the VNR report states that youth are the prime movers, we need to give more recognition to the youth. We require separate policies for the underprivileged children to safeguard their education. Besides, we

We must empower the young girls so that they can achieve their full potential and actively contribute to

are aware of the increasing violence against women. Further steps need to be undertaken to ensure the safety of the victims. To ensure that our young people can secure jobs in the future, we must take initiatives to improve their extracurricular skills. This can be done through online training programmes.

OTHER PARTICIPANTS:

Halima Akhter, EDUCO Bangladesh

We need a separate Department of Children. Another important recommendation is to create a space for the vocational training of women.

Ferdousi Begum, Uddipon

Although vocational skills training is being provided to youths, their business start-up costs after the training are not being considered. Some steps should be taken to bring down these costs to a more affordable range for entrepreneurs.

Kothok Biswas, National Children's Task Force

The pandemic has made the trial processes more difficult. For incidents of child abuse, the complaint process must be made easier and the government needs to ensure swift justice.

Swapan Kumar Guha, Rupantar

When the education system returns to normal after the pandemic, we will notice a large number of these students dropping out. These dropouts will become labourers, victims of child marriage and child trafficking, etc. Therefore, psychosocial care for people below 18 years old is crucial.

Mahmudul Hasan, UNDP

In 2017, our government had accepted the National Youth Policy 2017. It was supposed to be converted to a National Action Plan but that has not happened yet.

Reefat Bin Sattar, Save the Children Bangladesh

We need to create a space for the political development of youths.

Asif Ibrahim, Core Group Member, Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

Even after countless efforts, there is still a lack of data from the private sector.

Rafiqul Islam, Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh (FNB)

The government can work with the NGOs to ease the conditions of the youth, especially in the remote areas.

Professor Mustafizur Rahman, Distinguished Fellow, CPD and Core Group Member, Citizen's Platform

I want to emphasise on the representation of youth leadership in the government's high-level SDG implementation committee.

India woos Bhutan with Connectivity and trade

TNN, New Delhi

From identifying more border trade points to carrying out a feasibility study for a railway link between the two countries, India is going all out to thwart China's attempts to wean Bhutan away from India's sphere of influence.

After opening a new trade route last week, India is likely to approve Bhutan's request for another permanent land customs station (LCS) to facilitate more Bhutan exports to India and Bangladesh. India is also considering opening another integrated check post (ICP), sources here said.

These initiatives are significant as Bhutan dodges attempts by China to establish formal diplomatic relations with India's only neighbour which is yet to join Beijing's BRI initiative. India realises though that Bhutan could still be susceptible mainly because of its border dispute with China which recently saw Beijing making a new territorial claim in Bhutan's east and close to the border with Arunachal Pradesh.

Sources in New Delhi said that while a feasibility study is being carried out for a railway link between Mujnai in West Bengal and Nyoenpaling in Bhutan, Land Ports Authority of India has also identified Jaigaon in West Bengal's Alipurduar district for development of an integrated check post (ICP).

After a request from Bhutan, India is also considering notifying the Jitti-Nagrakata LCS as a permanent LCS which has until now been a seasonal station for trade in crops like orange, ginger and cardamom.

According to Indian authorities, Bhutan requested for it mainly to facilitate export of boulders and river bed materials to India and Bangladesh.

Reduce dependence on Beijing

Pompeo urges India as tensions boil between Beijing and Washington

AGENCIES

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has called on India to tamp down its dependence on Chinese goods, amid growing tensions between Washington and Beijing, which has its own issues with New Delhi.

In remarks to a US-India virtual business summit, Pompeo said New Delhi was a natural partner to Washington as "one of a few trusted, like-minded countries".

"India has a chance to attract global supply chains away from China and reduce its reliance on Chinese companies in areas like telecommunications, medical supplies, and others," he told the meeting organised by the US-India Business Council.

"India is in this position because it has earned the trust of many nations around the world, including the United States."

Trump hints at closure of more Chinese consulates after Houston

Report says China still has 40,000 troops in Eastern Ladakh despite agreeing de-escalation after deadly clashes

Indian FM says country will never be a part of an alliance system



US-China relations -- already strained over the coronavirus pandemic, the situation in Hong Kong and trade -- took a turn for the worse Wednesday when Washington ordered that Beijing shut its consulate in Houston.

President Donald Trump said in answer to a question at a news briefing it was "always possible" other Chinese missions could be closed too.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the consulate was operating normally.

The ministry said Washington had abruptly issued the demand to close the consulate on Tuesday and called it an "unprecedented escalation."

Nuclear-armed neighbours China

and India, the world's two most populous nations, also have long had a prickly relationship.

But ties deteriorated significantly following a border clash on June 15 that left 20 Indian soldiers dead as well as an unknown number of Chinese casualties.

An ANI report yesterday said despite promises after rounds of talks, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China has continued the deployment of around 40,000 troops in its front and depth areas of the Eastern Ladakh sector indicating unwillingness to de-escalate the situation.

Pompeo said the clashes were "initiated by" China's armed forces and

were another example of "unacceptable behaviour" from China's ruling Communist Party.

He praised India for banning 59 Chinese mobile apps, including TikTok, saying the video-sharing app "presents serious security risks for the Indian people".

However, despite the push by US, India is unlikely to join any alliance in the near future.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar recently said India will never be a part of an alliance system.

Speaking about the consequences of global shifts, including the United States and the assertiveness of China, he said they were opening spaces for middle powers like India, Japan, the European Union and others.

"The consequence of repositioning of the United States, that the big umbrella is now smaller than it used to be, has allowed many other countries to play more autonomous roles. It doesn't affect us as much because we were never part of an alliance system and we will never be. But countries who depended more on the US are finding they have to take a call themselves on many issues," he noted.

India must now take more "risks", as the world expected it to take a more proactive stance on the "big issues" of the day, including connectivity, maritime security, terrorism, climate change and terrorism, he stated.

Ex-Nazi camp guard, 93, gets two-year suspended sentence



A 93-year-old former Nazi concentration camp guard was handed a suspended sentence of two years yesterday for complicity in World War II atrocities, in what could be one of the last such cases of surviving SS guards. Bruno Dey was convicted for his role in the murder of 5,232 people when he was a teenaged SS tower guard at the Stutthof camp near what was then Danzig, now Gdansk, in Poland. Judge Anne Meier-Goering said Dey had helped to "dehumanise human beings and turn them into numbers". In his last statements to the court, Dey had apologised to victims but stressed that he had been forced into his role at the camp. Dey was given a juvenile sentence because he was 17 or 18 years old when he served at the camp between April 1944 and April 1945.

Wife seeks 'compassion' for bi-polar Kanye West



Kim Kardashian West on Wednesday opened up about her husband Kanye West's bipolar disorder, calling on the media and public to show "compassion and empathy" in light of the rapper's recent erratic behavior. West launched his presidential campaign Sunday in a rambling speech where he made bizarre comments his life and broke down in tears. He has continued grabbing headlines in recent days for his tweets, later deleted, that accused his wife and mother-in-law of trying to lock him up, and suggested he is seeking a divorce. Bipolar disorder is a mental illness characterized by extreme mood swings. Patients experience both mania, where they feel euphoric and often act recklessly, and bouts of severe depression that can leave them unable to function and fixated on suicide. For reasons that aren't fully clear, bipolar disorder is often associated with creative people and high-achievers.

Humans were in America 30,000 years ago: study

Tools excavated from a cave in central Mexico are strong evidence that humans were living in North America at least 30,000 years ago, some 15,000 years earlier than previously thought, scientists said Wednesday. Artefacts, including 1,900 stone tools, showed human occupation of the high-altitude Chiquihuite Cave over a roughly 20,000 year period, they reported in two studies, published in Nature. No traces of human bones or DNA were found at the site. The stone tools -- unique in the Americas -- revealed a "mature technology" which the authors speculate was brought in from elsewhere. The saga of how and when Homo sapiens arrived in the Americas -- the last major land mass to be populated by our species -- is fiercely debated among experts, and the new findings will likely be contested. "That happens every time that anybody finds sites older than 16,000 years -- the first reaction is denial or hard acceptance," said Ardelean, who first excavated the cave in 2012 but did not discover the oldest items until 2017.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Trump is first racist US president: Joe Biden

THE STATESMAN/ANN

US Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said on Wednesday that Donald Trump is the first racist to become president in remarks his opponent's re-election campaign quickly rebuked.

Biden, who was vice president under Barack Obama, the first Black US president, fielded a question at a Service Employees International Union roundtable from a healthcare worker concerned about the Republican president calling the coronavirus pandemic the "China virus."

He responded by saying it was "absolutely sickening" how Trump "deals with people based on the colour of their skin, their national origin, where they're from."

"No sitting president's ever done this. Never, never, never. No Republican president has done this", the former vice president said.

In response to that, Trump campaign senior adviser Katrina Pierson called Biden's

comments "an insult to the intelligence of Black voters" given the onetime senator's past work with segregationist lawmakers. She said Trump "loves all people" and "works hard to empower all Americans."

Race became an even more central issue as protests raged over unarmed African Americans being killed by police in the aftermath of the May death of George Floyd, a Black man who died after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his neck into the pavement for more than eight minutes.

Biden has effectively been his party's leader since his last challenger in the Democratic primary, Bernie Sanders, ended his campaign in April.

Biden is currently leading in national polling, as well as in surveys conducted in several swing states like Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, battlegrounds that were critical to Trump's victory in 2016.

The 2020 US presidential election is scheduled for Tuesday, November 3.

I am ready to fight again

Says Afghan girl who shot dead two Taliban gunmen for killing her parents

AFP, Ghazni

An Afghan girl who shot dead two Taliban fighters after they gunned down her parents said she was ready to confront any other insurgents who might try to attack her.

Qamar Gul, 15, killed the militants when they stormed her home last week in a remote village in the central province of Ghor.

"I no longer fear them and I'm ready to fight them again," Gul told AFP by telephone from a relative's home, where she was being watched by guards.

A photo of Gul posing with a gun has circulated online, with many praising her actions and calling for her safe passage out of the country.

It was about midnight when the Taliban arrived, Gul said, recounting the events of that night. She was asleep in her room with her 12-year-old brother when she heard the sound of men pushing at the door of their house.

"My mother ran to stop them but by then they had already broken the door," Gul said. "They took my father and mother outside and shot them several times. I was terrified."

But moments later, "anger took over."

"I picked up the gun we had at home, went to the door and shot them," said Gul, who was taught by her father how to fire an AK-47 assault rifle.

Her brother stepped in when one of the insurgents, who appeared to be the group's leader, tried to return fire. "My brother took the gun from me and hit (shot) him. The fighter ran away injured, only to return later," Gul said.

By then, several villagers and pro-government militiamen had arrived at the house. The Taliban eventually fled following a lengthy firefight.

Officials told AFP the Taliban had come to kill Gul's father, who was the village chief, because he supported the government.

"I am proud I killed my parents' murderers," she said.



Flames rise as a wildfire burns near the village of Kechries, Greece, on Wednesday. Greek firefighters brought in reinforcements from across the country to help control a large forest fire fanned by strong winds near the seaside village of Kechries in the eastern Peloponnese, fire brigade officials said. Authorities said they had been forced to evacuate a residential settlement as the blaze, burning through pine trees, came close to a military camp where explosives were stored.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Don't expect first vaccine until early 2021: WHO

REUTERS, Geneva

Researchers are making "good progress" in developing vaccines against COVID-19, with a handful in late-stage trials, but their first use cannot be expected until early 2021, a World Health Organization (WHO) expert said on Wednesday.

WHO is working to ensure fair vaccine distribution, but in the meantime it is key to suppress the virus's spread, said Mike Ryan, head of WHO's emergencies programme, as daily new cases around the globe are at near-record levels.

"We're making good progress," Ryan said, noting that several vaccines were now in phase 3 trials and none had failed, so far, in terms of safety or ability to generate an immune response.

"Realistically it is going to be the first part of next year before we start seeing people getting vaccinated," he told a public event on social media.

WHO was working to expand access to potential vaccines and to help scale-up

production capacity, Ryan said. "And we need to be fair about this, because this is a global good. Vaccines for this pandemic are not for the wealthy, they are not for the poor, they are for everybody," he said.

The US government will pay \$1.95 billion to buy 100 million doses of a COVID-19 vaccine being developed by Pfizer Inc and German biotech BioNTech if it proves safe and effective, the companies said.

Ryan also cautioned schools to be careful about re-opening until community transmission of COVID-19 is

under control. Debate in the United States over restarting education has intensified, even as the pandemic flares up in dozens of states.

"We have to do everything possible to bring our children back to school, and the most effective thing we can do is to stop the disease in our community," he said.

"Because if you control the disease in the community, you can open the schools."

Afghan air raids kill 45

REUTERS, Herat

Afghan government forces killed 45 people, including civilians, in airstrikes against Taliban fighters in a western province bordering Iran on Wednesday, drawing condemnation from the US envoy trying to start peace talks involving all sides.

Ali Ahmad Faqir Yar, the governor of Adraskan district in Herat province counted at least eight civilians among the dead as he gave the death toll, but it was unclear if all of the other casualties were Taliban.

"Forty-five people had been killed so far in airstrikes by security forces in the Kham Ziarat area, Taliban were among those killed," he said. Other local government officials in the province gave the same death toll.

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স্মারক নং-প্রশাসন(প্রকিঃ)-৪৪.০১.০০০০.০০৯.০২.০২৬.(২০২০-২০২১)২৫০ তারিখঃ ২২/০৭/২০২০

নিলাম দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ঢাকা ২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বছরের পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন-২০০৬ এবং পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ ও তৎসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট মোতায়েক অন্যান্য যন্ত্রপাতি সংক্রান্ত মালামাল (পট-০১), আসবাবপত্র ও অন্যান্য মালামাল (পট-০২) নিলামে বিক্রয়ের জন্য প্রিন্সিপাল/ইন্সপেক্টর/প্রকিউরমেন্ট নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে উল্লিখিত নিলাম দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

১৯.	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	ঃ স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়।
২০.	সংস্থা	ঃ বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।
২১.	প্রকিউরমেন্ট ইন্সপেক্টর নাম	ঃ ইলপাষ্টার কেন্দ্রায়েল, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ঢাকা।
২২.	প্রকিউরমেন্ট ইন্সপেক্টর জেলা	ঃ ঢাকা।
২৩.	আবেদনের উদ্দেশ্য	ঃ নিলামে মালামাল বিক্রয়।
২৪.	সেবাশ্রেণি নং	ঃ স্মারক নং প্রশাসন(প্রকিঃ)-৪৪.০১.০০০০.০০৯.০২.০২৬.(২০২০-২০২১)-
২৫.	তারিখ	ঃ ২২/০৭/২০২০।
২৬.	প্রকিউরমেন্ট পদ্ধতি	ঃ উল্লিখিত নিলাম দরপত্র।
২৭.	নিলাম দরপত্র জন্মের তারিখ	ঃ ২২/০৭/২০২০ তারিখ হইতে ০৯/০৮/২০২০ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়।
২৮.	নিলাম দরপত্র জন্মের স্থান	ঃ প্রশাসন শাখা (প্রকিউরমেন্ট), ফ্যাসিলিটিজ ডভন (৩য় তলা), রুম নং-৩০৮, পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ৬, ফিল্ডিং রোড, ফুলবাড়িয়া, ঢাকা।
২৯.	নিলাম দরপত্র জন্মের তারিখ	ঃ ১০/০৮/২০২০ তারিখ সকাল ০৯.০০ হইতে ১২.০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে।
৩০.	নিলাম দরপত্র জন্মের স্থান	ঃ মূল ভবনের নিচ তলায় (রিসিপিং) এবং অতিরিক্ত পুলিশ সুপার (প্রশাসন), পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ঢাকা এর অফিস রুম (৪র্থ তলা), পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ঢাকার বাহিরে রক্ষিত বস্তুর জমা প্রদান করতে হবে। নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যে জমা প্রদান করতে হবে।
৩১.	নিলাম দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ ১০/০৮/২০২০ তারিখ ১২.৩০ ঘটিকায় অতিরিক্ত পুলিশ সুপার (প্রশাসন) এর অফিস রুম (৪র্থ তলা), পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ঢাকা। (দরপত্র খোলার কার্যক্রমের সম্মুখে যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন)।
৩২.	অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা	ঃ এমআইজি (প্রশাসন), বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ঢাকা।
৩৩.	নিলাম দরদাতার যোগাযোগ	ঃ (ক) হাদনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স (২০১৯-২০২০ অর্থ বছর) (খ) হাদনাগাদ আয়কর পরিশোধের সার্টিফিকেট (২০১৯-২০২০ অর্থ বছর) (গ) স্মার্ট প্রেক্ষিতপত্র সার্টিফিকেট (খ) ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি সার্টিফিকেট (ঙ) সদ্য ব্যাংক স্টেটমেন্ট (চ) জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র (ছ) দরপত্রের শর্তাদি প্রদান করা হবে।
৩৪.	কার্যের সর্বোচ্চ বিবরণ	ঃ অন্যান্য যন্ত্রপাতি সংক্রান্ত মালামাল (পট-০১) ও আসবাবপত্র ও অন্যান্য মালামাল (পট-০২) বিক্রয়।
৩৫.	নিলাম দরপত্র ক্রয় মূল্য	ঃ ১০০০/- (এক হাজার টাকা) মাত্র (অফেন্ডারযোগ্য)।
৩৬.	নিলাম দরপত্র জামানত	ঃ ১,০০,০০০/- (এক লক্ষ) টাকা।

বিশেষ নোটস
(ক) কোন কারণে বর্ণনামূলক ব্যক্তিগত কর্তৃত্বকৃত যে কোন নিলাম দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও বাস্তবের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
(খ) নিলাম দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলার সিল কোন কারণে ব্যর্থ থাকলে পরবর্তী কালীনবেলা একই সময়ে নিলাম দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলা হবে।
(গ) ২০১৯-২০২০ অর্থ বছরের ট্রেড লাইসেন্স এবং আয়কর সার্টিফিকেট সিলিং করতে পারবেন তবে ২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বছরের ট্রেড লাইসেন্স এবং আয়কর সার্টিফিকেট হাদনাগাদ গ্রাভ হওয়া মাত্রই নিলামদাতার কার্যালয়ে জমা প্রদান করতে হবে। অন্যথায় নিলাম দরপত্র বাস্তব করার ক্ষমতা কর্তৃত্বকৃত সংরক্ষণ করেন।
(ঘ) নিলাম সর্বোচ্চ দরদাতাকে ৭.৫% ভাড়া ও ৫% আয়করসহ নিলামদাতার কার্যালয়ে জমা প্রদান করতে হবে।

মোঃ মাসুদুর রহমান, পিপিএম
বিপি-৭০০১০২০৮৮৮
এমআইজি (প্রশাসন)
পাবলিক/ইলপাষ্টার কেন্দ্রায়েল, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ঢাকা
E-mail: aigadmin@police.gov.bd
সিডি-১১৮১



IYF team members and volunteers distributed books among their students earlier this year.



Muhammad Jahirul Islam at a youth development programme at Daffodil International College.



www.youthop.com

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

Future for Nature Awards 2021 (€50,000 grant)

Are you a young, talented, and energetic nature conservationist committed to protecting species of wild animals and plants? Do you combine passion with action to create concrete results in nature conservation? Don't hesitate to apply for the 2021 FFN Awards!
DEADLINE: September 15, 2020 | Grants



Igniting confidence across communities

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Ignite Youth Foundation (IYF) is a youth-led social organisation, founded by Muhammad Jahirul Islam in 2016. Jahirul is one of the recipients of the 2020 Diana Award. IYF aims at ensuring secure futures for underprivileged children across rural areas, through access to quality education. Their school in Baunia, officially established in 2017, currently has 67 students. It started rather informally in 2016, as initially, their volunteers conducted the classes at a park. IYF is committed to supporting their students until they are prepared for university. "We conduct classes on nutrition and hygiene and also arrange co-curricular activities for our students," Jahirul added. Owing to the lack of proper medical services around slums, thousands of children die of preventable diseases like malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia. Through their project, Niramoy, IYF conducts various medical campaigns and distributes medicines at community levels. Through their Ignite Blood Bank, they have donated over 2,000 blood bags till date. Their project, Craftnite, provides hand-craft training to underprivileged women. "We want to secure a source of income for



IYF team members and volunteers at their Ramadan event.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

these women, and ensure that their children attend school regularly," added Jahirul. This project also focuses on building self-help groups for the women, and has aided over 100 families since its inception. IYF also runs Project Shabolombi, which generates income sources for their beneficiaries through zakat funds from capable

donors. "Our team closely monitors the beneficiaries to ensure their sustainable livelihoods," shared Jahirul. The team also arranges various workshops and training programmes under their Youth Development Program. Through 35 workshops and events on computer science, internet, capacity building, coaching, coun-

selling, event management, environmental training, leadership training and career guidance, they aim to empower young people across the country. The organisation also runs various campaigns on hygiene across rural communities, distributes sanitation products and conducts awareness programmes on topics like education, family planning, gender and social discrimination. IYF also supplies bins to households, based on subscriptions, as a waste management solution. The garbage bin is divided into two separate compartments for organic and inorganic wastes. The organic matter is compressed and delivered to recycling vendors. Recently, Jahirul won the Global Students Entrepreneur Award for this project. Owing to the coronavirus crisis, the organisation's school is shut, and their regular activities are on hold. Nonetheless, even in these tough times, volunteers of the organisation distributed around 1,000 food packages to those in need, and extended medical support to more than 500 patients. With the help of twelve doctors, they are also providing online consultations. Moving forward, IYF plans to establish schools across all districts of Bangladesh.

Huawei HMS App Innovation Contest 2020 for Developers (Up to US\$1 million in prizes)

The Huawei HMS App Innovation Contest aims to inspire global developers to leverage HMS Core to create innovative apps, bringing smart life services to Huawei device users in 170+ countries and regions. The contest will be held in Europe, Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa, Latin America, and China, respectively.
DEADLINE: August 30, 2020 | Competitions

Seedstars Migration Challenge 2020

The global call for applications for the 2020 Migration Challenge is now open. In partnership with the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the Business Advisory Group of Migration, Seedstars is looking at rewarding innovative early-stage Human Resources, FinTech, CivicTech, and EdTech start-ups with solution-oriented products to improve migration systems that respond to labour market needs.
DEADLINE: August 25, 2020 | Competitions



Working for basic education and employment rights



Team members and volunteers of the foundation with the students of their school.

PHOTO: COURTESY

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA
SONGKOLPO Foundation, a non-profit organisation, supports orphaned and underprivileged children in Dhaka, in different ways. Founded in 2014, the organisation equips underprivileged communities with access to resources, quality education and livelihood skills, among other things. Their SONGKOLPO School, established in 2016, is a self-funded institute for children who have no access to basic education rights. Mehedi Islam Akash, an Economics student from United International University, is the founder and chairman of the organisation. The foundation has a 'Sponsor a Child' programme, through which individuals can provide a child's educational fees with only BDT 1,500 per month. As of now, the programme has 12 active sponsors. Their school, located in Mirpur 2, currently facilitates classes up to the second grade, with only one certified teacher. Volunteers of the organisation, most of whom are university students, teach different subjects at the school, in teams of five. The foundation launches an internship programme every six months. Currently, they have 10 working interns, some of whom want to teach classes at the school as well. Mehedi hopes to provide

technical education to the students. "The underprivileged children of our country need to be self-reliant to enrich their lives," he adds. The foundation launched several initiatives over the years, with 14 members and 100 active volunteers. They aided affected communities during the floods of 2016 and 2017. During Eid and winter, they distribute clothes to those in need. In monsoon, they provide raincoats to rickshaw pullers across Dhaka, through their 'Project Raincoat'. 'Feeding Bangladesh' and 'Project Survival', their initiatives to combat the coronavirus pandemic, are commendable. Their objective is to raise awareness among school children about proper hygiene and health guidelines. They started off with providing one month's supply of food and other necessary products to the families of their school's students. As hundreds of requests came in, they started distributing food and other items amongst the masses. Till June, they distributed food packages to 7,800 individuals and 525 families, including people from the transgender community. Working in different areas of Mirpur, they distributed 500 hand sanitisers, 3,500 masks, 300 hand wash packages and other essentials to under-

privileged communities. They also disinfected several public areas. In these unprecedented times, their teacher and their volunteers are visiting their students weekly, to ensure that they are studying and following health guidelines at home properly. During Eid-ul-Fitr, the foundation arranged food for 600 people on the streets. "Many rickshaw pullers and other daily wage earners are living on the streets, because they are struggling to pay their rents. We provided them with cooked meals," shares Mehedi. With their 'Project Qurban', the organisation aims to collect donations to buy cattle, and distribute cooked meat among underprivileged families this year. Under their initiative, 'ProjectPoriborton', they are collecting Zakat funds to provide unemployed individuals with rickshaws and sewing machines. Till now, they have collected funds for one sewing machine. "We aim to provide families with long term employment plans," shares Asif Khan, an active member of the organisation. Moving forward, SONGKOLPO Foundation is determined to keep working to restore the basic rights of the less fortunate communities.

Strong words and action needed to protect women's lives



AS world leaders attempt to tackle an unprecedented number of humanitarian crises, many of them deepened beyond imagination by the coronavirus pandemic, the United States is throwing

its weight around on the global stage to obstruct lifesaving aid efforts. The Trump administration appears intent on blocking international efforts and resolutions containing these critically important words: sexual and reproductive health.

Sexual and reproductive health care is essential health care. Yet it is often neglected, especially during emergencies. The health risks facing women and girls tend to multiply in times of crisis, and we can see the dangers clearly during Covid-19.

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) teams around the world see women struggling to obtain the health services they need. Health facilities are shutting down, transportation is restricted, supplies of medicines and contraceptives are running low, and time-sensitive services are delayed—with devastating consequences. Unless we act now, many women and girls will die of preventable causes or suffer lifelong injuries simply because they cannot access care.

And yet, the US is using its tremendous power as the largest funder of global health and humanitarian assistance to slash international support for these essential services.

Most recently, the US has sought to strike references to sexual and reproductive health in an important resolution before the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on strengthening emergency humanitarian assistance—at a time when it is needed most. Among the sticking points is a line urging member states "to

ensure reliable and safe access to sexual and reproductive health-care services... in order to effectively meet the needs of women and adolescent girls and infants and protect them from preventable mortality and morbidity that occur in humanitarian emergencies." Another key passage in the draft calls on states to meet the basic humanitarian needs of affected populations—"clean water, food, shelter, energy, health, including sexual and reproductive health," among other things.

A single line in red ink stands out: "US: Cannot support references to sexual reproductive health in this text."

It is not the first time the US has flagged these mightily significant words. In 2018, the US State Department issued a series of internal memos instructing UN diplomats to curtail support for sexual and reproductive health programmes and to oppose international resolutions that use the phrase "sexual and reproductive health."

In 2019, the US succeeded in striking any reference to sexual and reproductive health care in a UN Security Council resolution on sexual violence and conflict.

Last month, the US explained its position in a letter addressed to the UN Secretary-General objecting to the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan to Covid-19. The plan "cynically [places] the provision of 'sexual and reproductive health services' on the same level of importance as food-insecurity, essential health care, malnutrition, shelter, and sanitation," reads the letter by USAID Acting Administrator John Barsa. The letter states that the UN should not use the coronavirus crisis "as an opportunity to advance access to abortion as an 'essential service'."

The US is cynically using its power in the midst of this crisis to roll back decades of progress made to improve access to health care and protect the lives of women and girls. Sexual and reproductive health care is not code for abortion. It's a comprehensive set of services for women including prenatal check-ups, safe delivery care, neonatal care,

sexual violence care, treatment for sexually transmitted infections, contraception, and safe abortion care. These are absolutely essential services.

Recent studies show that even a small reduction in sexual and reproductive health care services during this pandemic will be catastrophic.

A study by the Guttmacher Institute predicts that just a 10 percent reduction in low and middle income countries could

scale will be hard to measure because women and girls with no access to care often suffer at home or hidden within communities.

The awful reality is that more women and girls could die due to the pandemic's disruption of sexual and reproductive health services than to the coronavirus itself.

We must avoid politicising health care and focus on the medical evidence: sexual and reproductive health programmes save lives. In 2018, MSF teams treated 24,900 cases

(Mexico City Policy) to prevent health providers around the world from even speaking about abortion or making referrals to other organisations that provide safe abortion care. The latest version of the Global Gag Rule applies restrictions on all US-funded global health assistance, not only aid to organisations involved in family planning. MSF does not receive US funding, but we see the harmful impacts of this policy on frontline health providers providing a range of services including mother and child health care, nutrition programmes, malaria treatment, and HIV care. A study published by The Lancet last year indicates that US policy to restrict funding for abortion services can lead to "more—and probably riskier—abortions in poor countries."

So what can be done? Governments and health providers must make it clear that sexual and reproductive health care is essential care, and prioritise these services accordingly. We must make every effort to mitigate the risks of movement restrictions, the shutdown of health facilities, and supply shortages. Communities urgently need clear guidance, as misinformation and fear also prevent women from getting the services they need.

This coronavirus crisis should push us to adapt and innovate to get care to the people who need it most. Right now, women and health providers are struggling with the inaccessibility of brick-and-mortar facilities. It's time to shift our focus toward community-based activities, remote support of services, and self-care models where possible. Global health actors, including MSF, need to engage more with women and their communities to adapt our responses.

We need strong words and strong action by world leaders, including the US, to meet the extraordinary humanitarian challenges ahead. We must ensure that women and girls have access to lifesaving health care—in the midst of a pandemic and always.

Avril Benoît is Executive Director of Doctors Without Borders in the United States.



We must avoid politicising health care and focus on the medical evidence: sexual and reproductive health programmes save lives.

PHOTO: UNFPA

mean an additional 15.4 million unintended pregnancies, more than 3.3 million unsafe abortions, and an additional 28,000 maternal deaths over the course of a year. At least 22,800 women already die each year due to complications from unsafe abortion, so the pandemic would more than double the death toll based on this conservative estimate of the impact. We are likely to see much more than a 10 percent loss in services, but the actual

of sexual violence. We treated 28,000 women with complications from unsafe abortions—including rape survivors, women forcibly displaced from their homes, and women trapped in poverty.

Actions taken by this US administration to limit access to abortion actually have much wider impacts on public health.

In 2017, the US reinstated and expanded the Global Gag Rule (also known as the

Covid-19, constitutional crisis and rise of authoritarianism

MD ABDUL ALIM

LIKE all other sectors and spheres of activity, elections and democracy have become the victims of Covid-19 since its outbreak earlier this year. Due to the unprecedented crisis caused by the global health emergency, leaders across the world are focusing mainly on people's lives and livelihoods, while setting elections and such democratic practices aside. Between January and June of this year, at least 10 national parliamentary and two presidential elections, six nationwide referendums and thousands of local elections and by-elections have been postponed due to the pandemic. Although fresh dates have been announced for some of the deferred elections, most of the elections have been postponed indefinitely. As a result, both elections and democracy are now "in quarantine" in many countries; no one knows when this prolonged quarantine will end.

In some countries, postponement of elections has created a constitutional crisis. Sri Lankan parliamentary elections, initially scheduled to be held on April 25, were rescheduled twice and are now expected to be held on August 5. Delaying elections due to Covid-19, the country faces a constitutional crisis as article 70 of Sri Lanka's constitution states that a general election must be held and a new parliament seated within three months of the dissolution of the former parliament. As its parliament was dissolved on March 2 but no election was held within three months, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is running the government without parliamentary oversight.

At least 84 countries have declared a state of emergency in response to the pandemic, leading not only to suspension of democratic rights but also to fears about misuse of power. In Thailand, the government not only declared a state of emergency and imposed curfew, it also issued several orders and announcements that curb freedoms, rights and liberties of its citizens. The opposition, Move Forward Party, did not oppose the state

of emergency in order to curb Covid-19 cases. However, the party proposed a bill to amend the 2005 state of emergency decree to make the government accountable, to be checked by the legislative and judicial branches. Several rights activists are against the state of emergency declaration and continue to protest outside the Civil Court in Bangkok, seeking an order requiring the government to adhere to normal laws to control Covid-19 instead of an executive emergency decree.

powers to fight coronavirus, fear grows for democracy." Similarly, an April 28 Foreign Policy article posited that "the pandemic provides ample opportunity to accelerate an evident trend toward authoritarianism." There are illustrative examples in support of these statements.

Hungary declared a state of emergency due to Covid-19 on March 11. Later, despite courageous protests from local human rights groups, the Bill on Protection

of coronavirus autocracy. Israel's prime minister has shut down courts and instituted intrusive surveillance of citizens. Chile has deployed the military to clear public squares once occupied by protesters. Russian President Vladimir Putin has firmly consolidated his power as he expanded his formidable apparatus of state repression in many ways including changes to the constitution that enable him to stay in power up to 2036. This was passed with public support. However, the election was marred by numerous voting irregularities.

While postponement of elections and suppression of civil liberties are problematic, holding elections during this time is also troublesome. A few countries have gone ahead with elections in the time of Covid-19, but the credibility of these elections is questionable. Held on June 21, the Serbian parliamentary election was the first national poll in a European country since the Covid-19 lockdown. It was boycotted by most of the opposition saying that taking part in the vote amid the coronavirus pandemic and without a free media around would only legitimise the government in what they called a "hoax vote." However, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) visited a limited number of polling stations and found voting processes appearing to be smooth and administered efficiently, despite challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The turnout was roughly 48 percent, the lowest since the establishment of a multi-party system in Serbia in 1990.

But South Korea is a country that showed the world how to hold elections and continue democratic processes during a pandemic. The Korean legislative election, which was held on April 15, saw a 66.2 percent voter turnout—the highest since 1992. Along with voting at the polling stations, the country arranged mail voting as well as early voting at special polling stations for Covid-19 patients, voting for self-quarantined voters at certain times on the election day. All the polling stations were disinfected, and voters were

instructed to stand at least three feet apart, with lines carefully marked on the floor. All voters had their temperature taken, and those with temperatures above 37.5 degrees Celsius were taken from the regular line and directed to separate booths. In India, a series of Rajya Sabha elections were held on June 19, 2020.

Holding elections during a pandemic is not new. In 1918-20, during the height of the Spanish flu, which killed hundreds of thousands of Americans—with a total of 195,000 Americans dying in the month of October alone—elections were held on November 5, 1918 with around 40 percent turnout. During campaigning, candidates maintained social distancing, and on election day, voters and poll workers were required to wear masks.

Regular, credible democratic elections are fundamental to the proper functioning of a modern representative democracy. Therefore, election experts around the world are encouraging holding elections adjusted for the new normal with the suggestion to focus on how to protect the health of the democracy while protecting the health of the people. For saving both democracy and people's lives, pandemic-time elections can be held by including online nomination, virtual campaigning through social and print media, radio and TV, even using banners, posters and leaflets, instead of door-to-door physical campaigning that might increase infection. For election day, along with fumigating the polling stations, voting hours may be extended and additional polling stations may be set up to avoid large gathering of voters. Some countries are also using mobile voting, postal voting, advance voting, etc.

Bangladesh, considering its political and social contexts, could consider some of these practices and make the required changes to the legal framework to hold genuine, legitimate democratic elections during the pandemic, which are of paramount importance to the democratic process.

Dr Md Abdul Alim is an election specialist. Email: alim.abdul3492@gmail.com



A woman wearing a mask to prevent contracting the coronavirus leaves a voting booth to cast her absentee ballot for the parliamentary election at a polling station in Seoul, South Korea, on April 10, 2020.

PHOTO: REUTERS/HEO RAN

Along with postponement of elections and declaration of state of emergency, a few countries "witnessed an unmistakable authoritarian surge, in which leaders around the globe have manipulated the coronavirus threat to consolidate their own political power and to run roughshod over democracy and human rights." Therefore, *The Washington Post*, on April 13, wrote that "as leaders seize

Against Coronavirus, which has no sunset clause, was passed by parliament giving Prime Minister Viktor Orban the right to rule by decree for as long as he deems fit. The bill not only suspended elections and referendums indefinitely, it also authorised the government to decide when, or if, to end the state of emergency, which has turned the country into the European Union's first

QUOTABLE Quote

B RAMBEDKAR
(1891-1956)
Indian political leader

So long as you do not achieve social liberty, whatever freedom is provided by the law is of no avail to you.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Chickens and turkeys
- 5 Misbehave
- 10 Land measure
- 11 Moon feature
- 13 Place for snorkeling
- 14 Nemesis of Ness
- 15 Banish
- 17 Skillet
- 18 Get excited
- 19 Country lodgings
- 20 Refinery supply
- 21 Track event
- 22 Spanish farewell
- 25 Worker with a pick
- 26 Soft shot in

DOWN

- 1 Door-slamming comedy
- 2 Pacific, for one
- 3 Take by force
- 4 Boxing hit
- 5 Point a finger at
- 6 Packing box
- 7 Keg need
- 8 Perfect
- 9 Act of contrition
- 12 Jeremy of "The Avengers"
- 16 For us
- 21 Boxing hit
- 22 Floating aimlessly
- 23 Personal logs
- 24 Powerful
- 25 A lot of
- 27 Stephen King novel
- 29 Appraised
- 30 Kitchen come-on
- 31 Yard tools
- 32 Fabric workers
- 36 Mineral suffix

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

First consignment

FROM PAGE 12 and Tk 20,431 for the TMT bars (rods). Harunur Rashid, revenue officer at Akhaura customs station, told The Daily Star that Chattogram Customs House was in charge of collecting the fees.

Governments of the two countries have yet to decide how much will be paid for road use. "So, we have not collected the road tax from them," said Harunur.

Joydeep Mukherjee, superintendent of Agartala Customs, told reporters from both countries at No Man's Land that Tripura Chief Minister Biplob Kumar Dev formally received the goods-laden trailers from Agartala port around 9:00 am on Thursday.

Aktar Hossain, owner of Adnan Trade International in Bangladesh, which transported the goods in Bangladesh, said two trailers carried 49.83 tonnes of TMT bars and the other two 53.25 tonnes of lentils.

He added that the goods were shipped by Dercel Logistics LTD of India and Mango Line Limited of Bangladesh.

Since 2016, 17 Indian cargoes have been transported using the Chattogram-Akhaura route. Bangladesh started giving transit to India in June 2016.

In 2011, India used the Ashuganj river port to carry goods for the construction of the Palatana power plant in Tripura through the Akhaura. India built diversion roads along 36 bridges and culverts in three upazilas of Brahmanbaria to carry these heavy goods.

AL leader

FROM PAGE 12 dead. The OC further said that there has been a long-running dispute between Barauri UP chairman Habibur Rahman and Kamal Mia's group. Last year, one of Kamal Mia's cousins was killed by the opposition. The chairman is also among the accused in the case filed in this incident.

Police and locals believe that the rival group may have been involved in Kamal's murder. No case was filed at the time this report was filed, the OC said.

Hoteliers

FROM PAGE 12 Hotel Lakeshore has also seen staff infected with Covid-19, despite taking precautions. Kazi Tareq Shams, managing director of Lakeshore Hotels, said around 109 doctors stayed in its two hotels in Gulshan and Banani. "Around 300 employees work here and around seven percent got infected while they were providing services," he added.

Shams said, "We maintained hygiene properly and all staff wear PPE while serving the doctors." MJ Rahman Jahid, general manager of Hotel Shalimar Group, said a total of 270 medical workers are staying in the four hotels of the group. "Around 60 staff work in those hotels and 25 percent got infected with coronavirus. Apart from this, some staff had mild symptoms but they have now recovered," he said.

Neaz Morshed, front desk manager of Hotel 71, said 43 doctors have been staying at the hotel since April 20. "We are very careful and till now, there has been no infection," he added.

Contacted, Md Aminul Hasan, who was until yesterday director (hospitals and clinics) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said doctors and nurses are staying at around 35 hotels across the country and hotel staff are providing services risking their lives.

"Although they are providing services taking precautions -- even after that it is risky and the hotel staff came forward to provide this service. It is praiseworthy."

We can now

FROM PAGE 12 Bangkok that his talks with Thai Under-Secretary Affairs might lead to establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Thailand was the first ASEAN country to recognise Bangladesh.

Asked whether Bangladesh would join the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) Abudus Samad points out to the newsmen that Bangladesh follows the principle of non-alignment. He adds, "We are a new and small nation. SEATO didn't help us. SEATO is already a dead body. We are not interested in it."

SOURCES: July 25, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Serial rapist

FROM PAGE 12 eight rounds of cartridges and 500 yaba pills from the spot. The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify the police claims.

Meanwhile, some locals also alleged that Belal was involved in several incidents where young girls of Bayezid Bostami area were picked up and raped in CNG-run three wheeler.



Protesters make the three-fingered Hunger Games salute while taking part in an anti-government demonstration inside a university in Thailand's southern province of Pattani yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Provide list of errant

FROM PAGE 1 and diagnostic centres that did not renew their licences on time. It also directed all civil surgeons to take legal action if allegations of irregularities and forgery are found against any healthcare facility over the testing or treatment of Covid-19 in their respective areas.

The developments came after Rab raided several hospitals in the capital, which were issuing fake Covid-19 certificates and operating without renewed licences.

Besides, the fraudulent activities by Regent Hospital and JKG Health Care over Covid-19 testing coupled with reports of irregularities and mishandling of the pandemic by the DGHS added fuel to the fire.

This was followed by the resignation of embattled Director General of DGHS, Prof Abul Kalam Azad, with the government hinting at making some changes in the top tier of the directorate.

There are over 15,000 private clinics and diagnostic centres in the country, two thirds of which have been running without any valid licence since 2018, facing almost no consequences, according to a previous report of The Daily Star.

The DGHS did nothing but send notices to these facilities and make public announcements in newspapers, officials said.

DIRECTIVES TO DGHS

In a letter to the Director General of the DGHS on Tuesday, the ministry said that Rab conducted a raid at Shahabuddin Medical College Hospital and found that the hospital was taking samples for antibody tests without the taking necessary permission and giving out Covid-19 test reports without conducting any test.

"It was also found that the Directorate General of Health Services has given approval to four private coronavirus testing centres, including that of Shahabuddin Medical College, without visiting the venues and before they [the hospitals] completed necessary preparation," read the letter.

During the raid, Rab's executive

magistrate Sarwoer Alam said that although the authorities suspended the approval given to the hospital for Covid-19 testing, it was conducting antibody tests of the virus illegally, it said.

The letter also mentioned that the hospital was giving test results after carrying out Covid-19 tests outside the hospital, which is illegal.

"Different newspapers ran reports and television channels aired the news over the matter, which has tarnished the government's image," the letter said.

In this situation, the ministry asked the DG of the DGHS to give an explanation as to why it has given approval to Shahabuddin Medical College for Covid-19 testing without updating its licence and visiting the hospital.

The ministry also asked the DG to give a full list of the private hospitals, clinics and diagnosis centres -- with and without updated licences.

DIRECTIVES TO CIVIL SURGEONS

The ministry letter sent to all civil surgeons on Tuesday said the recent raids conducted by Rab in different hospitals, including JKG Health Care, and Regent and Shahabuddin hospitals, which have become infamous for cheating and forgery in Covid-19 treatment, and news of irregularities and corruption published in newspapers, drew huge attention and prompted discussion.

"Allegations of irregularities in issuance of Covid-19 [test] certificates and its treatment at district and upazila levels are also surfacing," the letter added.

In this given situation, you [civil surgeons] are asked to take legal action, in coordination with the respective deputy commissioners, if there are any allegations of irregularities or forgery against any hospital, clinic or diagnostic centres over the issuance of Covid-19 test certificates or treatment," reads the letter.

The copy of the letter was also sent to the DGHS DG and all deputy commissioners.

Govt facilities, not hotels for their stay

FROM PAGE 12 accommodation, food and transportation of health workers involved in treating Covid-19 patients.

He said Tk 20 crore was spent for food and hotel stay of DMCH doctors and health workers, which was doubtful.

Speaking on the issue, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in parliament said the Tk 20 crore bill for hotel rent and food for medical college employees seemed a bit unusual to her.

After a couple of days, DMCH Director Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin at a press conference said they rented rooms at 30 hotels in the capital for between Tk 350 and Tk 5,500 per night for 1,894 healthcare workers.

On the other hand, there is an allegation against the authorities of Muga Medical College Hospital about misappropriating money allocated for accommodation of doctors, nurses,

and staffers at a hotel.

On July 9, Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Assistant Director Mohammad Sahajahan Meraz in separate letters asked the acting director of the hospital, Dr Rowson Anwar, and the management of Hotel 71 to submit documents to the commission on the accommodation expenses of doctors, nurses and staffers.

Sources confirmed that "irregularities" took place in the contract award process involving Muga hospital and Hotel 71.

Talking to the Daily Star, Meraz said he received documents from the hospital and hotel authorities and was examining those.

Asked about the reasons for sending the proposal on accommodation of doctors, health workers, and staffers, the HSD additional secretary said they were doing it with a view to saving public money.

"Won't it save our money? We have already given verbal orders to some hospital directors to provide accommodation for doctors, health workers, and staffers at government installations," Muhibur told The Daily Star.

He declined to give details of accommodation allowances. "You will know about it once the proposal gets approval. You will have to wait until then."

He, however, said some doctors were already staying at the Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM) in the capital's Eskaton.

According to statistics of the Directorate General of Health Services, 5,726 doctors, 10,000 nurses and 7,516 health workers are involved in providing treatment to Covid-19 patients across the country.

UN for basic income to help the poorest

FROM PAGE 12 The UN call for helping the poorest came at a time when the pandemic has killed at least 627,307 people worldwide since it surfaced in China late last year, with more than 15.2 million people infected.

Europe yesterday recorded more than three million cases, as EU lawmakers examined a massive aid

package for their pandemic-ravaged economies.

The continent now accounts for a fifth of the world's total cases and remains the hardest hit in terms of deaths, with 206,633 out of 627,307 worldwide.

The European Parliament was meanwhile examining a massive recovery package hammered out at a

hard-fought summit that saw fiscally disciplined nations oppose huge aid grants to coronavirus-hit countries such as Spain and Italy.

The 750-billion-euro post-coronavirus recovery plan is tied with the EU's long-term budget.

EU chief Charles Michel said the total stimulus would reach 1.8 trillion euros (\$2.2 trillion).

Prof Khurshid

FROM PAGE 1 of a memorandum of understanding with Regent Hospital, which was found issuing fake Covid-19 test reports.

Azad mentioned his deteriorating health as the reason behind his resignation.

On July 7, a Rab mobile court led by Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam raided Regent Hospital's Uttara branch and sealed it off on charges of issuing fake Covid-19 test results and illegally collecting money from patients.

The hospital issued more than 10,000 coronavirus test reports. Around 4,200 of the tests were real. The rest of the reports were issued without testing, Rab said.

off the hospital's Mirpur branch.

The hospital's licence expired in 2014 and was never renewed.

On July 11, the DGHS in a letter said it took the initiative to sign the MoU with Regent Hospital after being directed by high officials of health ministry.

The directorate also said that despite the two branches of the hospital having expired licences, it signed the MoU and gave them permission to treat Covid-19 patients with the condition of renewing the licences.

Later, the ministry, however, asked for an explanation from the DG for why he blamed the health ministry.

On July 14, the health minister responded by saying he attended the

contract signing ceremony upon request from the DG.

On July 15, the immediate-past DG Azad replied to the health ministry's letter saying that its MoU with Regent Hospital on treating Covid-19 patients was signed following directives of the former health secretary.

The ministry, however, asked another explanation as it was not "satisfied" with the response.

Amidst this blame game, Prof Azad submitted his resignation to the public administration ministry, which was effective from the same day (July 21).

After cancelling Azad's, the government appointed Khurshid as the new DG yesterday.

50 more die from Covid

FROM PAGE 12 country is now 2,16,110.

Of the samples tested in the 24 hours preceding yesterday afternoon, 20.03 percent tested positive, according to the DGHS.

Bangladesh is currently the 16th country in terms of the number of confirmed cases.

The position is one step ahead of Germany and one step behind Colombia, according to worldometer.info.

A total of 12,398 samples were tested across the country in the 24 hours, Prof Nasima said.

Meanwhile, 2,006 patients recovered,

taking the total recoveries to 1,19,208.

The rate of recovery is 55.16 percent. Six hundred and ninety-seven people were put in isolation in the 24 hours.

Of those reported dead yesterday, 41 were male and nine female. Three of them were aged between 31 and 40, seven of them 41 and 50, twelve of them 51 and 60, sixteen of them 61 and 70, eight of them 71 and 80 and four of them 81 and 90, Dr Nasima also said.

Of them, 20 were from Dhaka, five from Chattogram, seven from Khulna, six from Rajshahi, one from Sylhet, seven from Rangpur and four from Barishal divisions.

China launches independent

FROM PAGE 12 the planet for 90 days.

If successful, the Tianwen-1, or "Questions to Heaven", which is the name of a poem written two millennia ago, will make China the first country to orbit, land and deploy a rover in its inaugural mission.

There will be challenges ahead as the craft nears Mars, Liu Tongjie, spokesman for the mission, told reporters ahead of the launch.

"When arriving in the vicinity of Mars, it is very critical to decelerate," he said.

"If the deceleration process is not right, or if flight precision is not sufficient, the probe would not be captured by Mars," he said, referring to gravity on Mars taking the craft down to the surface.

Liu said the probe would orbit Mars for about two and a half months and look for an opportunity to enter its atmosphere and make a soft landing.

"Entering, deceleration and landing (EDL) is a very difficult (process). We believe China's EDL process can still be successful, and the spacecraft can

land safely," Liu said.

Eight spacecraft - American, European and Indian - are either orbiting Mars or on its surface with other missions underway or planned.

The United Arab Emirates launched a mission to Mars on Monday, an orbiter that will study the planet's atmosphere.

The United States has plans to send a probe in coming months that will deploy a rover called Perseverance, the biggest, heaviest, most advanced vehicle sent to the Red Planet by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa).

China's probe will carry several scientific instruments to observe the planet's atmosphere and surface, searching for signs of water and ice.

China previously made a Mars bid in 2011 with Russia, but the Russian spacecraft carrying the probe failed to exit the Earth's orbit and disintegrated over the Pacific Ocean.

A fourth planned launch for Mars, the EU-Russian ExoMars, was postponed for two years due to the coronavirus pandemic and technical issues.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, পুলিশ টেলিকম সংস্থা, রাজারবাগ, ঢাকা. তারিখ: ২৩/০৭/২০২০খ্রিঃ. ঠিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তি/নবায়নকরণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি. ২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বছরে "পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন-২০০৬", "পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট (সংশোধন) আইন-২০০৬" এর বিধি ৫২ এবং "পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট (সংশোধন) আইন, ২০১৬" মোতাবেক পুলিশ টেলিকম কর্তৃক বিক্রি পূর্ব মেসারস ও সংরক্ষণ এবং ফল ও অবকাঠামো নির্মাণ প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নের নিমিত্তে ঠিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তি/নবায়নকরণের জন্য আহ্বানী ও সর্বশেষ বিক্রি প্রকল্পের প্রকিউরমেন্ট সিকিউরিটি হতে নিম্নবর্ণিত হতে শর্ত সাপেক্ষে নবায়ন আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

'We won't stop'

AGENCIES

Premier League Liverpool's first English title for 30 years had been sealed almost a month ago with seven games remaining and the players finally got their hands on the trophy on Wednesday in a muted presentation ceremony in front of an empty Kop after a thrilling 5-3 victory over Chelsea in their last home game of the season.

Kenny Dalglish, the last Liverpool manager to deliver the title, presented the medals wearing a red face mask before handing the trophy to captain Jordan Henderson who raised it to the night sky as fireworks and tickertape filled the air. Sadly, because of the pandemic that interrupted Liverpool's charge to the title, the fans missed out on what would have been a momentous night at Anfield stadium.

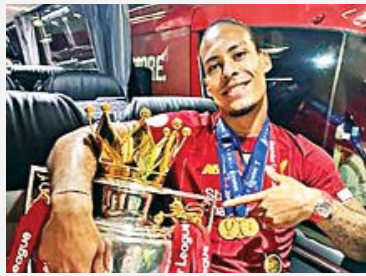
Despite the sanitised ceremony in the 53,000-seater stadium, Liverpool's players did their best to fill the void, belting out a rendition of the club's anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone" along with manager Jurgen Klopp and his staff.

Klopp's side won the Champions League, Super Cup and Club World Cup titles last year, but the German said that their rivals will look to close the gap.

"We're champions of England, of Europe and the world. I know what that sounds like, but it's the truth. It's unbelievable, to be honest," Klopp told reporters.

"We'll not stop. We have internal challenges and each player can improve. "Five years ago I asked the supporters to believe us. I told the doubters to become believers, they made it happen."

Liverpool can take their league points tally for the season to 99 with victory at Newcastle United on Sunday.



Just a kid from Breda, becoming a Premier League Champion. This is a dream come true but also an opportunity for me to remind every kid in the world that anything is possible. Hard work & perseverance! Don't let anyone's ignorance, hate or negativity stop you from being the best you can be! Thanks to my family, fans, teammates and the whole staff! Liverpool this is for YOU!

LIVERPOOL'S SUCCESS IS PROBABLY BEST DESCRIBED ON VIRGIL VAN DIJK'S TWITTER POST.



Domestic cricketers, who are outside the national team, have become somewhat outcasts, with no matches, training or income since the coronavirus pandemic brought a halt to sport in the country in mid-March. Meanwhile, players within the national fold, like Taskin Ahmed (R), have been given the green signal to return to individual training at BCB facilities. PHOTO: STAR



A matter of livelihood for domestic cricketers

RAMIN TALUKDER AND ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI

"I feel the situation will improve little by little but if you think that things should resume when situation becomes very good, by that time cricketers won't be able to survive," Shamsur Rahman Shuvo said while talking to The Daily Star when asked about the difficulty that the pandemic has brought.

Cricket is coming back to life in the country amidst the coronavirus pandemic even if it is on a small scale. A few of the national team players have begun individual training last week at the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) training facilities across the country. Plans are being considered to reschedule the postponed tour of Sri Lanka while the U-19 and HP sides are understood to be gearing up for camps. There is however a big portion of professional cricketers outside that spectrum of aforementioned teams. These players are eager for

domestic cricket's return as many use it as a platform to get a national team call-up while almost all depend on it financially.

What situation do they find themselves in?

It is not only the financial burden of having to run families, but from a cricketing aspect too, players outside the sphere of the national team have been left in the lurch.

"The situation is such that you won't be able to give everyone opportunities [to train] like before and it's natural that the national team will be given the highest priority," Shamsur said. "Maybe after Eid if you take some time to assess the situation and make the national team academy available for players outside the national team who play in the domestic circuit, we will be greatly benefited."

"Because when matches start, we will be lagging behind those in the national team in terms of skill and fitness levels since they are getting the opportunity but we are not. We understand the situation is difficult but hope the BCB will consider our

situation and find some balance. If the gym, indoor facilities and the academy grounds could be used after Eid, since most of the national players who resumed training are done by 3:00pm, it will be better.

"Even national players depend on domestic matches in the BPL and DPL for year-round income. We are all dependent on the Premier League. We might make do till Eid but after that it will be difficult," Shamsur reiterated.

"I don't have any first-class contract. After NCL payments last year, I have not earned a single taka in the last seven or eight months," Brothers Union medium-pacer Alauddin Babu said.

"It's been a very difficult time," he added. "Fitness too is so important for a pacer, cardio logical fitness especially. We are doing some small-level work but a break like this creates many issues."

The BCB had handed guidelines to national players on how to work on fitness at home. While those outside have not received such guidelines, some have started work

outside or are considering it.

"Since national players' training has begun, we are hoping to get permission to train soon. We have done fitness work at home as was possible. We didn't have any guidelines but started with what means we have. Hopefully after Eid a government directive will arrive so clubs can start proceedings. The BCB are positive and some of us have talked to the CEO and they assured that things will start with the Premier League first. If it doesn't happen then for most it would be difficult bear our families' expenses," said Enamul Haque Jr, who plays for Sylhet Division in the NCL.

"If the Premier League doesn't happen this year we will be in great danger," veteran first-class batsman Tushar Imran said. "We are hopeful but the situation is difficult. If we don't have cricket for a year the clubs won't be keen on paying us. Maybe if we can have a deal to negotiate for some payments this year and compensate with next year's payments, we can make do," he added.



Although they were already crowned champions, Liverpool were presented with the Premier League trophy after their game against Chelsea on Wednesday. Their breathless 5-3 win over the Blues made their celebrations even sweeter. PHOTO: REUTERS

No backup for Haaland

REUTERS, Berlin

Borussia Dortmund will not sign a backup for main striker Erling Haaland, sports director Michael Zorc said, pointing to a record goal haul in the league last season as proof of their strength in attack.

The 20-year-old joined managed 13 goals, contributing to a club record of 84, as Dortmund finished in second place.

"We did not score few goals last season," Zorc told Kicker magazine on Thursday.

The club would need to act, however, should Sancho, whose contract runs until 2022, leave now.

Can West Indies make history?

AGENCIES

The cricket fraternity around the world will keep a close eye on the third and final Test between England and West Indies, starting today at Old Trafford, after both sides put on spirited displays so far for the coveted Wisden Trophy.

The three-match series, cricket's first international series in the new normal, has been an enthralling affair between the two sides. With the series firmly locked at 1-1, the finale promises to be an edge-of-the-seat contest.

West Indies started the series with a four-wicket win against England in Southampton but England fought back strongly in the second Test and equalled the series with a thumping 113-run win.

West Indies, the Wisden Trophy holders, remain in the hunt for their

first Test series victory in England since 1988.

"We're constantly reminding them that they've got a chance to change something that hasn't happened for 32 years," said West Indies assistant coach Roddy Estwick.

England must decide whether to recall Jofra Archer for the decisive third Test after the fast bowler suffered online racist abuse. Archer is available after missing England's series-levelling win at the same ground following a breach of coronavirus protocols.

Veteran England paceman James Anderson said skipper Joe Root and coach Chris Silverwood would have to assess whether Archer was "in the right place to play".

The West Indies could field the same pace quartet of Shannon Gabriel, Kumar Roach, Alzarri Joseph and captain Jason Holder.

Both Gabriel and Joseph left the field with minor injuries during the second Test but Estwick said: "Shannon was ready to go into the nets today (Wednesday) to have a bowl. The rain curtailed that but I think they'll be fine."

Batting, however, remains the visitors' major problem in a series where they are yet to post an individual hundred, although several batsmen have shown talent with attractive fifties.

Ben Stokes went to the top of the Test all-rounder rankings and number three in the batting charts with 176 and 78 not out, as well as taking three wickets, in the penultimate match of this series. "To have that talent in our team and to be able to watch it first-hand is amazing," said Anderson.

And without any doubt England expect another masterclass from the all-rounder to seal the series.



West Indies captain Jason Holder (L) will be willing to pull out all the stops to keep the Wisden Trophy in their hands when his visiting side take on Joe Root's England in a decisive third Test at Old Trafford from today. PHOTO: REUTERS



Former Australia captain Steve Smith was seen performing fitness drills under brilliant sunshine with Luke Zocchi, one of the leading trainers in the health and fitness industry, at Byron Bay, a coastal town and popular holiday destination in the southeastern Australian state of New South Wales. PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Ambitions limited as Online Chess Olympiad approaches

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Niaz Murshed believes studying up on openings is more important than practising online in rapid chess, even though there is very little possibility for Bangladesh to qualify for the top division of FIDE Online Chess Olympiad scheduled to take place from July 25 to August 30.

"It is not that you can produce good results by practising online as there are some matters to consider before playing chess online. Opening is very important in rapid chess. I will study openings over the next two weeks because I made a mistake in the opening moves of a game during Senior Asian Online Chess while trying to play hurriedly," said the subcontinent's first GM, who is all set to take part in the Online Chess Olympiad along with GM Reefat Bin Sattar, WIM Rani Hamid, WIM Sultana

Sharmin Shirin, IM Fahad Rahman and WCM Ahmed Walijah while six others players are in reserve.

"If I study such mistakes this time around, I can easily avoid them. Besides, if you want to save time, you need to review theory more than spending time on the board. You also have to study the opponents you are going to face. I have to face players with ratings ranging from 2500 to 2600, so what use will a few days' practice be? You have to prepare differently to put pressure on them," Niaz added.

Bangladesh is one of 35 teams to gain direct qualification to the second division, which contains 50 teams. The top 15 teams from the second division will qualify for the top division.

Although the Chess Olympiad is played in separate men's and women's divisions with four players playing each round, the Online Chess Olympiad will see a



different format with six boards -- two players each from men's and women's section and two U-20 players, one male and one female.

"With the new combination of boards, I think the results may be a bit poorer because we could not develop overall significantly and the development of women's chess is also less. In that respect, the women are still inexperienced, so they will fall behind. If Rani Apa can spring surprises at her age along with Shirin and Eva, then we can expect something good but the fact

is that they are less familiar with online chess. The two junior players are also inexperienced," Niaz said.

"It will be a bit of a miracle if we qualify for the top division. If we want to qualify, we have to perform outstandingly against the top four to five teams, who are stronger than us and it is all but impossible to fight against them in all sections as we lag far behind. Our target should be to offer a good fight against those top teams and beat the weaker sides. And it will be satisfactory if all players can perform well," said Niaz, who recently faced the problem in internet connect that forced him to leave Senior Asian Online Chess unexpectedly.

Bangladesh Chess Federation is mulling bringing all players under one roof in a bid to provide better internet facilities but the rules of competition are still not clear about whether FIDE allows to do so or play all players in separation room.



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

HOSTING DOCTORS Hoteliers do their part

Staff getting infected yet service continues

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Arif Motahar, the founding chairman of Hotel Regency, was recently diagnosed with Covid-19 though he has not left his hotel for the last two months.

Not just him -- at least five of his employees were also infected with Covid-19.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, we began hosting doctors and nurses. We [he and his staff] are also not going out of the hotel to keep our family members safe. Now, we got infected," Arif told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

A total of 220 doctors have been staying in the hotel since May 1.

"Almost 50 percent of our total staff got infected and most of them recovered. Even after this, we are providing services to our clients," Arif said.

Each staff member works for 15 days and remains in isolation for the next 14 days, he said, yet the hotel is paying full salaries.

The government has arranged hotels for doctors and nurses, who are on the frontline of the fight against the novel coronavirus, to stay in.

This arrangement was made as hospitals do not have any residential facilities and medical workers going home after completing duty every day pose the threat of infection to their family members.

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Tying pipes and cables of different utility services to bamboos, Dhaka South City Corporation is installing underground sewerage pipes to widen the lines at Dhanmondi-27. Locals allege that they are suffering immensely as the work progresses slowly. Rainwater also adds to their woes. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Govt facilities, not hotels for their stay

Says govt proposal on health workers treating Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health ministry is planning to provide accommodation for doctors, health workers and staffers involved in treating Covid-19 patients at government installations instead of private hotels.

Those unwilling to stay at government installations will be given allowances to bear the accommodation expenses.

The ministry's Health Service Division (HSD) has already sent a proposal to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in this regard, said Muhibur Rahman, additional secretary (hospital wing) at HSD.

The move comes following recent media reports of controversy over hotel bills.

Speaking in parliament on June 29, Deputy Leader of the Opposition GM Quader raised the issue of spending Tk 20 crore by Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for

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TRANSHIPMENT OF INDIAN GOODS

First consignment reaches Tripura, Assam thru' Ctg

No road tax paid in trial run as two sides yet to settle it

MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

India has for the first time sent cargo from Kolkata to Tripura and Assam using Bangladesh's Akhaura land port in Brahmanbaria.

Officials said this was an experiment.

All charges, except the one for using the roads, were collected by Bangladesh authorities.

The foreign affairs ministry informed India earlier this month that road fees would not be charged during the trial runs.

A vessel called MV Sejuti left Kolkata on July 14 and reached Chattogram sea port on July 21. Its cargo of lentils and rods were then loaded on four trailer trucks. The trailers carrying the goods reached Akhaura land port on Wednesday afternoon, land port officials said. The goods were then loaded into Indian trailers that carried them further inland.

India has paid a transshipment charge of Rs 500 for each 20-foot trailer carrying 25 tonnes of goods. The total payment to Bangladesh was Tk 21,575 for the lentil

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

'We can now pay for our imports'

July 24, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

MEDICAL BOARD EXAMINES BANGABANDHU

The three-member medical board under the leadership of Professor Nurul Islam, personal physician to the prime minister, examines Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today. The board is of unanimous opinion that the prime minister should undergo an operation at an early date. Professor Nurul Islam asks that none should visit the prime minister, who has been suffering from stone in the gallbladder.

MORE LIBERAL IMPORT POLICY IN FUTURE

Import policy will be liberalised and more items will be included in the next shipping period. This will be possible because of the availability of sufficient amount of foreign exchange, says Minister for Trade and Commerce MR Siddiqui addressing the members of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry today. He adds that Bangladesh would get Tk 100 crore credit from East European Countries and hence there will be no shortfall in import of essential commodities. Siddiqui further says that our export performance has been satisfactory and in near future we would be able to meet our import need sufficiently from our export earnings. He categorically declares that no new foreign firms would be allowed to do indenting business and only old foreign firms would be allowed this scope.

SEATO DEAD, IT WILL NOT HELP US: SAMAD

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad today says in

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'GUNFIGHT' WITH COPS

'Serial rapist' killed in Chattogram

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An alleged serial rapist was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Bayezid Bostami area of Chattogram city early yesterday.

The dead Belal Hossen, 40, was accused in at least 10 cases filed over rape and molestation with Bayezid Bostami and Akbar Shah police stations, said the law enforcers.

Ashkur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner (north) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP), said they went to Shanti Nagar-Samabay residential area to arrest Belal.

Sensing their presence, Belal's cohorts opened fire, forcing the law enforcers to retaliate. Later, police recovered Belal's bullet-hit body from the spot, he claimed.

Police also claimed to have recovered a light gun,

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China launches independent Mars mission



REUTERS, Wenchang

China successfully launched an unmanned probe to Mars yesterday in its first independent mission to another planet, a bid for global leadership in space and a display of its technological prowess and ambition.

China's largest carrier rocket, the Long March 5 Y-4, blasted off with the probe at 12:41 pm (0441 GMT) from Wenchang Space Launch Centre on the southern island of Hainan.

The probe is expected to reach Mars in February where it will attempt to deploy a rover to explore

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50 more die from Covid

2,856 infected in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 50 people were reported dead from Covid-19 and 2,856 others tested positive for coronavirus yesterday, officials said.

The death toll now stands at 2,801 and the death rate at 1.30 percent, said Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), during the daily briefing.

The total number of confirmed cases in the

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PRAYER TIMING JULY 24

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-15 12-30 5-00 6-54 8-15
JAMAAT 4-50 1-15 5-15 6-58 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

AL leader hacked to death in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

An AL leader was hacked to death on Wednesday night in Nabiganj upazila of Habiganj.

Kamal Mia, labour secretary of Bariuri union Awami League, was a resident of Haldarpur village of the same union.

Mohammad Azizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Nabiganj Police Station, said Kamal Mia came to Shibganj Bazar of Nabiganj upazila on Wednesday evening to perform the namaz-e-jaana of a person. On his way back, a group that police and locals believe are political rivals attacked him near Shibganj.

They hacked him and seriously injured him. Kamal Mia was later rescued by locals and taken to Habiganj Sadar Modern Hospital and later to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, where the duty doctor declared him

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This stork-billed kingfisher is spotted on the Carmichael College campus in Rangpur recently. The bird frequents this calm campus as it is closed due to the pandemic. The kingfisher, widely seen in the subcontinent and southeast Asia, lives in a variety of well-wooded habitats near lakes, rivers, or coasts.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TUHIN WADUD

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC UN for basic income to help the poorest

Says measures needed for survival of 2.7b people; India, LatAm see record cases

AGENCIES

Nearly three billion of the world's poorest people should receive a temporary basic income to help slow the spread of the coronavirus, a United Nations body said.

As infection numbers spike in developing countries, measures to protect vulnerable populations are "urgently needed", according to a report released Wednesday by the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

Funding of \$199 billion per month would provide 2.7 billion people with a temporary basic income and the "means to buy food and pay for health and education expenses", the report said.

The virus has brought havoc to the developing world where millions work in the informal economy with little access to government welfare or other support.

"Unprecedented times call for unprecedented social and economic measures," said UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner.

"Bailouts and recovery plans cannot only focus on big markets and big business. A Temporary Basic Income might enable governments to give people in lockdown a financial lifeline."

UN projections have warned the virus could kill 1.67 million people in 30 low-income countries.

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