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BANGLADESH UPDATE

2,611
New cases in 24hrs

2,55,113
Total cases

3,365
Deaths

1,46,604
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

725,863
Deaths

19,636,484
Total cases

ONLINE CLASSES BY PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Many students out of the frame

Poor internet coverage, lack of access to digital devices, floods are to blame

STAR REPORT

Most of the major public universities are taking online classes with only half or even fewer students mostly because of poor internet coverage in rural areas and people not having access to a digital device.

Besides, attending an online class is probably not the first thing in the mind of many who lost almost all of their belongings in the flood over the last few weeks.

As if to make matters worse, mobile data has become more expensive with the new taxes. Internet service providers said the students who spent Tk 1,000 for the internet two months ago, now have to pay Tk 1,300-Tk 1,400 for the same volume of data.

Bokhtiar Ahmed, associate professor

of anthropology at Rajshahi University, said the problem of digital divide has just become more pressing since the classes moved online.

Dhaka University (DU) started online classes from July.

At its masters programme, the university's public administration department saw an average attendance of 50 percent, officials said.

Fourth year philosophy classes, which have over 150 students, were attended on an average by 60 students. And only one fourth of the students attend the master classes of Islamic studies department.

Meanwhile, students in large parts of the country are faced with more pressing problems.

"There is water everywhere in my village

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



A woman standing on her rooftop watches people on a boat pass by what should be her back yard. Everything downstairs is soaking wet as floodwater ravages the neighbourhood in Makkahnagar area of Savar. Thousands of villages have gone under water and millions have lost everything over the past few weeks. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

She helped change the political history

Says PM *Fazilatunnesa Mujib*

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangamata Sheikh



Fazilatunnesa Mujib's decision to reject Bangabandhu's release on parole changed the course of the country's political history.

"The most desirable thing regarding my mother's contributions to the political arena was that my mother had taken correct decisions at the right time. But I'm sorry to say many big leaders had failed to do it or approached the wrong decision at that time," she said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

CASE AGAINST SHIPRA

Two witnesses 'forced' to sign on blank papers

MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAT, Cox's Bazar

Witnesses in a narcotic case, filed against Stamford University student Shipra Debnath, claimed they were forced to sign on blank papers.

Shipra and two other students of Stamford University -- Shahedul Islam Sifat and Tahsin Rifat Nur -- had gone to a cottage with slain ex-army major Sinha Mohammad Rashed Khan. Police arrested Shipra and Rifat from Nilima Resort on August 1, recovered liquor and marijuana and filed a narcotics case against them.

Meanwhile, police and witnesses appear to be at variance over what was seized from the cottage that night.

According to the First Information Report, filed by Sub-Inspector (SI) Shafiqul Islam of Himcharai police outpost, they recovered five bottles of foreign liquor, one litre of local liquor and a small pack of marijuana from the D-1 building of Nilima Resort around 12:45am on August 1.

Md Lokman Khan, caretaker of the resort and a witness, on the other hand, said police also seized Tk 2 lakh cash, a

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

ADP IMPLEMENTATION IN 6 YRS

Health ministry fares badly

REZAUL KARIM BYRON and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Calls pour in to increase budget for the health sector but the health ministry, despite being a top recipient of the government's development expenditure, could not even reach the national average of ADP implementation rate in the last six years.

As a result, the allocation to the sector go down in the revised Annual Development Programme (ADP) every year. Still, the ministry fails to meet its expenditure target.

Experts see a lack of capacity to run projects as planned, skilled manpower and corruption as other reasons behind the situation. They said the health sector was already in a fragile state with systemic weaknesses and the Covid-19 pandemic only exposed it.

Until the fiscal 2016-17, Annual Development Programme (ADP) was allocated to the Health and Family Welfare Ministry as one unit. After that, the development fund has been allocated separately to two divisions of the ministry -- Health Service Division (HSD) and Medical Education and Family Welfare Division.

The HSD was the seventh highest ADP recipient among all ministries and divisions in the last fiscal year, but it was a low performer among 15 top ADP-recipient ministries and divisions, show relevant documents.

When the average ADP implementation rate was 80.45 percent in the just-concluded fiscal year, the progress of HSD was only 73.96 percent. For the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division, it was 64.19 percent.

Of the 15 ministries and divisions, three ministries -- Railways (57.39 percent), Primary and Mass Education (71.89 percent) and Housing and Public Works (70.51 percent) -- performed even more poorly, show ADP

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Relations with Delhi, Beijing must not be compared

Says foreign minister *UNB, Meherpur*

Mentioning that Bangladesh emphasizes on its development through cooperation and collaboration, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the country's relations with India and China should not be compared.

"Bangladesh's relations with India is rock-solid and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

No alternative to healthcare reform

Say speakers at an online discussion, blast govt for its handling of the pandemic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Covid-19 outbreak has exposed the ineffectiveness of the country's healthcare system which needs reforms, experts said at a discussion yesterday.

By imposing liability on the people for not maintaining health safety rules, the government has attempted to avoid its responsibility, they said at the online discussion.

The event titled "Health Rights During Corona" was organised by Committee for

the Protection of Fundamental Rights.

Speaking at the discussion, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said, "Coronavirus has shown us how bad is the condition of our healthcare system. Although there is a huge lacking [in the system], the government is trying."

Criticising the role of the Awami League as the ruling party, he said, "If this health minister [Zahid Maleque] is the fittest health minister, then it proves that Awami League as a party is in a very bad situation."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



The locked gate of Muroichhara village in Moulvibazar's Kulaura. By strictly following the coronavirus restrictions, residents of most of the 90 such indigenous villages in the region have managed to control the infections. Researchers in many countries found that indigenous peoples are at higher risk from infectious diseases like Covid-19. Today is the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Competition stiff for getting into reputed colleges

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

A tough competition awaits students who are seeking admission in class-XI at reputed colleges in the capital while many educational institutions in rural areas might struggle to get students.

The first phase of online form collection for admission begins today amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Meritorious students with good grades from across the country usually come to Dhaka and try to get enrolled in renowned colleges in the capital.

Form distribution for admission at

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Examples worth following

How 90 indigenous villages in Sylhet region keep coronavirus at bay

MINTU DESHWARA


No Covid-19 patients have been found so far in 90 punjis (villages) in Sylhet, with each completely isolating itself from outsiders and following strict hygiene protocols.

In the rest of the division, 8,497 Covid-19 cases were reported and 153 patients died as of yesterday.


Dr Anisur Rahman, assistant director of the health department in Sylhet division, told this correspondent that there have been no Covid-19 cases so far in the punjis unlike the rest of division.

He termed the complete lockdown and hygiene protocols being

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



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EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

Lack of effective measures against impunity: HRFB

Rights body terms law enforcing agencies 'irresponsible'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Incidents of torture, custodial death and extra-judicial killings continued and no visible progress happened although the UN Committee against Torture reviewed Bangladesh's report to this end a year ago, Human Rights Forum Bangladesh said yesterday.

In a media statement, the rights organisation said law enforcement agencies have become irresponsible due to lack of effective measures against impunity.

To end this, the forum called upon the government to take effective steps for immediate implementation of the recommendations made by the UN committee.

It demanded that the government form an independent body for neutral investigation into allegations of all incidents of torture and other cruel, inhuman and undignified behaviour

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



For the uncountable basic and civic rights that these underprivileged children are deprived of, being able to be in the arms of nature is probably the one thing that the 'privileged' of society can envy them for. This heartwarming photo was taken from the capital's Chandrima Udyan yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

ARREST OF STAMFORD UNIV STUDENTS

Protesters question role of law enforcers

Baton charged at Barguna human chain

STAR REPORT

"People are no longer afraid of muggers on the streets, they are afraid of police. People are afraid of being framed for carrying yaba or cannabis as police insert those into their pockets."

Leaders of Bangladesh Shadharon Chhatra Odhikar Parishad made the remarks while protesting the arrest of students Shahedul Islam Sifat and Shipra Debnath, who were the crew members accompanying the slain Major (Retired) Sinha Mohammad Rashed Khan.

While the rally was going on in front of Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka, Banna Police in Sifat's ancestral district Barguna, baton-charged a peaceful human chain and beat up students and locals demanding his release.

At least 10 people were injured in the incident, protesters said.

Banna Police Officer-in-Charge Elias Ali termed the protest anti-government. "I came to know that a group of miscreants were forming a human chain against the state without our permission. I dispersed them and told them that the government's image will be tarnished [if they continue]."

Witnesses said that Sifat's classmates arranged the human chain programme at college road area around 12pm. They had announced the programme earlier.

"Suddenly a police team came and snatched the banner during a peaceful human chain," they said.

"Even then the human chain continued peacefully, but the OC ordered policemen to charge with sticks," they added.

Rubel, who was injured in the police baton-charge, said they have known Sifat as a "good boy" and don't believe the drug allegations brought

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Don't hold gatherings on Janmashtami

Hindu leaders urge members of community

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hindu community leaders yesterday requested all of its members to refrain from arranging any mass gathering like procession and rally on the occasion of Janmashtami, the celebration of Sri Krishna's birth.

This year's Janmashtami, one of the major festivals of the Hindu community of the country, will be celebrated on August 11.

The leaders made the request to prevent the risk of spreading coronavirus. They were speaking at a views-exchange meeting with journalists at Dhakeswari National Temple yesterday, said a press release.

They also urged management committees of all the temples across the country to take sufficient safety measures in celebrating any religious programme.

Besides, all the devotees, who will visit temples, are requested to maintain social distance and to follow government's safety guidelines during this pandemic.

The Hindus also demanded that the government celebrate the Janmashtami as a national programme.

Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad president Milon Kanti Datta and general secretary Nirmal Kumar Chatterjee, addressed the views-exchange meeting, among others.

VIRTUAL FUNCTIONS

SC chamber bench to sit on Aug 12, 18, 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court's chamber bench will continue conducting virtual judicial functions for three days virtually till further notice, to contain ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Chamber judge of the Appellate Division of the SC Justice Md Nuruzzaman will dispose of cases on August 12, 18 and 25, according to a notification issued by SC administration yesterday.

Justice Md Nuruzzaman will start dealing with the cases from 11:30am on that days, the notification said.

Meanwhile, a six-member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain has been virtually holding hearing

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

A time to look out for one another

Indigenous volunteers on a mission to help their communities

MATHEWS CHIRAN

In the middle of March, when Covid-19 started sweeping across the nation, Mithun Raksam, a poet and publisher from the Garo community, got a heart-breaking phone call from an acquaintance.

A Garo woman, who had lost her job at a beauty parlour, was on the other end. She told Mithun that not only her, but the pandemic took away jobs of her husband as well.

"The woman, a mother of two, said her family couldn't eat rice for a week and survived on only bread. Their area, Mirpur, was suddenly locked down, and they kept stretching their finances," Mithun said.

Seeing the helplessness of others, with what money he had, Mithun decided to jump into voluntary work to provide relief to such Garo families across the capital. He personally gave relief to 50 families and teamed up with other initiatives within the community.

Like him, there are several



Indigenous youths are going from one community to another, providing relief materials to those in need during the pandemic. This photo was taken from Bandarban.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

indigenous youths who came forward to help those in need, as a duty towards their community and humanity.

Alik Mree, a prominent member of an indigenous students' rights platform, along with other Garo

youths started helping out in the crisis.

They distributed relief among 300 families in Tangail's Madhupur and 200 families in Mymensingh's Fulbaria upazila. For the initiative, they collected money from well-

wishers.

Sharing his experience, Anik said, "Garo people have never faced such a situation. They aren't used to taking relief, and at first, even refused to receive anything. Many didn't inform us about their financial condition out of shyness."

"Although volunteers' safety was a major concern, we tried to involve responsible individuals and provided masks and gloves. Many of them went to infected families to distribute relief, taking proper safety measures," he added.

Tarun Munda, a key member of a students' platform in Rajshahi, also volunteered, but due to lack of funding and support, his efforts could not reach many families.

"In the northern region, we basically work with marginalised communities, including Munda, Santal and Orao. We could only reach 150 families so far in Naogaon, Dinajpur, and Natore," Tarun said.

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14 Tabligh Jamaat members return home from India

STAR REPORT

Fourteen Bangladeshi Tabligh Jamaat members returned home last night after languishing in an Indian jail for 40 days.

Indian immigration police handed them over to the Bangladesh authorities through Benapole check-post around 11:30pm on Friday, said Mohsin Khan, officer-in-charge of Benapole Check-post Immigration Police, yesterday.

The 14 are residents of different areas including Dhaka, our Benapole correspondent reports, quoting the OC.

All the returnees were sent to Gazir Dargah institutional quarantine in Jhikargachha upazila of Jashore for 14 days, said Habibur Rahman, a medical officer of the health department of Benapole check-post.

According to immigration police, 265 Tabligh Jamaat men went to India in February this year. They were staying there during the coronavirus outbreak.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

ANTI-MOSQUITO COMBING DRIVE

DNCC fines 20 house owners Tk 1.28 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday conducted the first day of a combing operation to destroy mosquito breeding grounds in order to check the spread of Aedes mosquito.

On the first day of drive, the team visited at least 12,736 houses and establishments and found Aedes mosquito larvae in 87 houses and establishments, according to a press release.

The 10-day drive began simultaneously in all 54 wards under the city corporation to contain the mosquito menace, said a press release.

Additionally, suitable conditions for Aedes mosquito -- such as stagnant water -- were found at 7,301 establishments, including residential houses and under construction buildings in the city area.

During the operation, the DNCC mobile court also fined owners of 20 establishments around Tk 1.28 lakh for hosting Aedes larvae. The team also cautioned several more establishments.

Aedes larvae were found in abandoned tyres, buckets, flower tubs, bottles, water-meters, garages, water houses, broken mugs, floors, water-tanks, plastic containers, roof-drains, yogurt pots, abandoned commodes, coconut shells, broken pots, basement and spaces between two houses, said an official of DNCC.

The 10-day operation will continue every day except August 11, 14 and 15, dividing a ward into ten sectors and a sector into 10 sub-sectors, said the official of DNCC.



With the Dhaka University campus being off-limits for its thousands of students over the last four months due to the Covid-19 outbreak, it's only natural for some to yearn for the greenery and camaraderie the premises brought. A student, passing by the Curzon Hall, takes a picture from behind the locked gate, maybe to share with friends, or maybe for himself only. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



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LIBYA KILLINGS

Two human traffickers on seven-day remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court has placed two members of a human trafficking gang on a seven-day remand each in a case filed over the trafficking of 26 Bangladeshis who were killed in Libya on May 28.

The accused are: Monir Hossain (35) and Selim Sikder (36), both from Palong area in Shariatpur district. A team of Detective Branch (DB) of Police of Gulshan division arrested two listed human traffickers Monir Hossain and Selim Sikder from the capital's Jatrabari area on August 6.

Metropolitan Magistrate Satyabrata Sikder passed the order after Detective Branch (DB) of Police Inspector Mohammad Mohsin -- also the investigation officer (IO) of the case -- produced them before his court on Thursday with a seven-day remand prayer.

On June 6, Josna Begum of Patuakhali filed the case with Motijheel Police Station against 27 people including the two arrested and 10 to 12 unnamed people for their alleged involvement in trafficking her son Jasim Mridha to Libya in 2019.

No lawyers appeared before the court to defend the accused human traffickers.

According to prosecution, Josna alleged that the accused, in association with the other accused, took Tk 4.20 lakh promising to send her son Jasim Mridha to Libya as a construction worker.

Upon their demand, she gave them the money and they sent her son to Libya. But she alleged the accused used to torture her son for more money and showed her the video.

On top of this, she did not get any information about her son since May 28, the case statement said.

Monir, who was a construction worker in Libya, tempted people from Shariatpur, Madaripur, Feni and Tangail, police sources said.

They used to charge Tk 4-5 lakh from each person. They also operated torture cells in Libya, said DB Deputy Commissioner of Gulshan Division Moshir Rahman.



This couple was spotted returning to Dhaka from Tangail yesterday on a motorcycle, with their infant secured to the father's body with a scarf, in an attempt to stay safer on the roads. The photo was taken at Chandra area in Gazipur.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Lack of

FROM PAGE 3
or punishment, besides departmental actions, to ensure justice and sufficient compensation.

It also demanded to ensure safety of victims and their family members and asked for creating a favourable environment so that they can seek and receive legal remedy.

On August 9, 2019, the UN Committee Against Torture came up with 77 recommendations on 20 issues, said the statement.

HRFB is a platform of 20 of the country's leading human rights and development organisations including Ain O Shalish Kendra, Transparency International Bangladesh, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Acid Survivors Foundation, Association for Land Reform and Development, Bangladesh Adibashi Forum, Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Nijera Kori, and Nagorik Uddyog.

The demands come in the wake of protests surrounding Maj (retired) Sinha's murder in Teknaf and the subsequent arrest of two Stamford University students by police.

Protesters question

FROM PAGE 3

against him by the police.

"That is why I participated at the rally demanding his release. But the police have branded us as miscreants," he said.

Witnesses said, even the OC himself charged batons on the protesters.

Sifat's grandfather Ayub Ali Hawladar, who is a local BNP leader, also took part in the programme. Police have threatened him as well.

"What police did today was not right at all," Ayub Ali, also a former chairman of Banna Union, said.

This correspondent attempted to reach Barguna Superintendent of Police Maruf Hossain multiple times but he did not receive phone calls.

Major (Retd) Sinha, who used to make travel videos, went to Cox's Bazar for filming with Stamford students Shipra, Sifat and Tahsin Rifat Nur. Sinha was shot dead by police at a checkpoint on July 31.

Police charged both Sifat and Shipra with possession of drugs while Sifat was also charged for murder. Rifat was

handed over to his parents.

PROTEST IN DHAKA

Calls for the students' release is getting louder as different organisations and individuals including noted filmmakers and students and teachers of Stamford University are raising their voices demanding the release of the two young film students.

At a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday, organised by Chhatra Adhikar Parishad's private university committee, the student leaders heavily criticised the police.

"One is down, sir...another captured -- what kind of language is this from our policemen? Is this why we pay taxes for their salaries?" asked Tarek Rahman, a joint convener of the platform.

He said there should be equity and justice prevailing in a country like Bangladesh which was liberated through a bloody war.

They said the prime witness of Sinha's murder case, Sifat, to whom the state should provide security, is locked

up in jail after police accused him of murder and drug possession.

Muhammad Rashed Khan, another leader of the student platform, said the extra-judicial killings by police are all state-sponsored.

"Such OC like Pradeep is not only at Teknaf... everywhere, from Teknaf to Tetulia, there are officers like OC Pradeep who have been involved with extrajudicial killings. The state has made them so," Rashed said.

Criticising police's role, he said those who kill people indiscriminately law cannot be supported.

Meanwhile terming the cases "fictional", students of Stamford University held a rally in front of their Siddheshwari Campus yesterday. They demanded unconditional release of their fellow students.

Besides, directors Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, Dipankar Dipon, Wahid Ibn Reza, and actor Jaya Ahsan also demanded release of the young filmmakers using social media platforms.

Govt to form 'Delta Fund' for long-term integrated master plan

UNB, Dhaka

The government is going to form a special fund, "Bangladesh Delta Fund", for implementing its long-term integrated master plan, "Delta Plan 2100", to harness the huge potentials of Bangladesh through water resource management, ensuring food and water security and tackling disasters.

According to an official document obtained by the news agency, it would require implementation of a good number of new projects apart from development and maintenance of the existing infrastructures for accomplishing the Delta Plan 2100.

"To make that happen, a special fund, 'Bangladesh Delta Fund', will be constituted," the document says.

To implement the Delta Plan, a 2.5 percent of the Gross National Income (GNI) will be required till 2030. Currently, the expenditure in this

sector is only 0.80-1.0 percent, shows the document.

Under the plan, 80 projects have been proposed for implementation within 2030. Of the projects, 65 are related to physical infrastructures while 15 to institutional capability, skill development and research, involving Tk 2,978 billion (around USD 37 billion).

The implementation of these projects, the document mentions, will start in different years.

The National Economic Council approved the "Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100" in September 2018, to be implemented over the next 100 years, aiming to raise the GDP growth to 9 percent by 2030.

According to the document, various types of natural calamities like flood, hightide, drought, cyclone and riverbank erosion are the close companions of Bangladesh due to its

geographical position.

In the Delta Plan, there are three higher level of national goals and six specific goals.

The higher-level goals are: eliminating extreme poverty by 2030, elevation to upper-medium income country by 2030 and becoming a developed one by 2041.

The specific goals are: ensuring protection from the devastation of floods and climate change, water safety and attaining more skills in water use, building an integrated and sustainable riverine area and estuary management, preservation of wetlands and ecology and ensuring their proper utilisation, building effective organisation and justified good governance for ensuring intra- and inter-countries water resources, and ensuring optimum level of integrated use of land and water resources.



City corporation workers remove sludge from drains on the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, with no safety gear. The lack of protective covering exposes them to harmful pathogens and toxic fumes, which may lead to severe health complications. This photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A time to

FROM PAGE 3

"There are families that still didn't get government support and neither could we reach them due to lack of finances," he said, describing their challenges.

Pramee Khisa, belonging to the Chakma community, is a second-year student at Dhaka University. She started working under the platform "Sabuj Kham" -- initiated on April 23 by Chakma, Marma and Tripura youths.

According to her, the platform's team visited several villages of three different districts -- Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari. So far, they have distributed food to 640 families, and provided sanitary napkins and soap to 150 women.

Their funding was crowdsourced: many youths who could not join the fieldwork donated.

"When we went to a village of Rangamati, we saw lots of rotten papayas in a field. They couldn't sell those as the nearby bazaar was closed and movement was restricted," she said while describing the villagers' situation.

Aktar Uddin, country coordinator of United Nations Volunteers, Bangladesh, said, "Volunteering is ingrained in indigenous communities, especially in youths. During this pandemic, when people are suffering, this spirit prompted hundreds of indigenous youths to support their communities using innovative ways, despite the health

risks."

"In most cases, these youngsters serve as first responders during a crisis. The current pandemic again proved how important youth volunteering is. Their contribution needs to be recognised to motivate them," he said.

Today is International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. According to UN, researchers have linked pandemics to environmental damage, and the knowledge these communities possess is invaluable to prevent such future events. With this year's theme "Covid-19 and indigenous peoples' resilience", the day aims to enlighten all about how essential such communities are for protecting the environment.

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117 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

14 Tabligh

FROM PAGE 3

Indian police arrested them at the end of March for violation of the Foreigners Act, visa rules and Covid-19 lockdown rules, according to our New Delhi correspondent.

They were sent to central jail in Uttar Pradesh of India after their arrest, said the immigration police, adding that a court of the state later sentenced them to 40 days' jail term.

The decision to return them was taken following discussion between high officials of the two countries after their jail term ended.

SC chamber

FROM PAGE 3

and disposing of cases for five days every week since July 19.

On August 6, the chief justice decided to run both regular and virtual proceedings of the High Court from this week for the interest of lawyers and litigants.

He took the decision at a full court meeting with the judges from both the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the SC.

The lawyers, who are interested, will move cases before the HC benches physically, while others will move cases before virtual HC benches.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Emergency Multi-Sector Rohingya Crisis Response Project
Workshop Bhaban (Level-3), Agargaon
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.0000.954.07.029.2019.512
Date: 06/08/2020

e-Tender Notice (3rd Call) (1st Corrigendum)
Tender Notice No. 13/2019-2020

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal System (<http://eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works. Details are given below:

Sl. No.	Tender ID & name of the project	Description of works	Tender last selling (time & date)		Tender closing & opening (time & date)	
			Previous	Corrected	Previous	Corrected
1.	479007 EMCRP	Construction of 11 Nos. New School-cum-Disaster Shelter Building (Steel Frame) under Ukha & Teknaf Upazila, District: Cox's Bazar, Package No. EMCRP/W-11	11.00am 10-Aug-20	11.00am 17-Aug-20	03.00pm 10-Aug-20	03.00pm 17-Aug-20

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders 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 System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for the e-GP downloading e-Tender documents from National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 17 August, 2020 up to 11.00am.

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

SD/
Javed Karim
Project Director
Phone: 8143334
pd@lged.emcrp@gmail.com

GD-1234

COVID-19 FALLOUT

Even educated farmers are not spared

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Summer fruits like watermelon sell very well during normal times, when sweeter and vibrant coloured fruit varieties usually sell better. But this year's summer is like no other.

Even a succulent watermelon with a punch of yellow coloured flesh did not stand a chance this summer when the country has remained under the grip of Covid-19 pandemic fear.

Alauddin Muhammad Tawfiq, a master's degree holder, who introduced this yellow-fleshed variety to Srimangal this year, said he lost around Tk 4 lakh to the pandemic despite a bountiful harvest.

With the hope to sell most of his harvest to customers he had lined up in Dhaka, Alauddin spent Tk 7 lakh to plant seven thousand seedlings of the Thai watermelon variety, known as 'Kania'.

His yellow watermelon garden is spread out on eight bighas of land in Isabpur village of Moulvibazar's Srimangal upazila.

But by the time all the hard work and money he invested on the garden, Covid-19 got a hold over the country. And the time to harvest the watermelons came amid various precautionary health measures -- including restrictions on public transport -- imposed across the country.

Alauddin eventually lost the prospective sales in Dhaka and the ripe fruits started rotting in his garden as local fruit traders also turned away from buying the fruits from him.

He said even the most hesitant person who tried the yellow watermelon from his garden liked it very much, but the local fruit traders did not show any interest in buying it from him due to the pandemic fear.

As such, Alauddin has been selling the produce below its cost of production in an effort to keep the losses to a minimum. Now he is selling each watermelon, weighing between five and six kilograms, for Tk 100 to Tk 360 to local individual buyers.

When he first undertook this farming project, his primary plan was to recover the investment mainly from sales in Dhaka. He would later on concentrate on local sales for additional earnings.



Alauddin Muhammad Tawfiq at his garden in Isabpur village of Moulvibazar's Srimangal upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

With that objective in mind, he learned grafting techniques at local agriculture office and produced all the yellow watermelon seedlings by himself. After about 75 days, the plants started bearing fruits.

Selling the fruits online did not cross Alauddin's mind as he had confidence in the sales prospect he had developed with wholesale traders in Dhaka. But plummeting demands in Dhaka due to the Covid-19 restrictions ruined everything for him.

Afterwards, his attempts to entice the local traders into buying the yellow-fleshed tastier watermelon also failed as none of them were even procuring the native watermelon over the past few months, Alauddin said.

Sales volume of any commodity will not increase unless out-of-town wholesalers and tourists start visiting different growers across the country, he said adding that regardless how much obstacle the nature throws at him, he will grow the yellow-fleshed watermelon again next year, said a resolute Alauddin.

Rathindra Deb, deputy assistant agriculture officer in Sreemangal, said when educated youths like Alauddin get involved in farming, educated

but unemployed locals also get inspired.

Soil in Srimangal is suitable for watermelon cultivation and the agriculture office in Srimangal upazila helped Alauddin with necessary advice when he expressed his intention in cultivating the yellow watermelon, a new variety of the fruit for the upazila, said Nilufar Yasmin Munalisa Sweety, agriculture officer in Srimangal.

While it is expected that under the changed scenario of pandemic scare, government departments concerned would come up with effective online initiatives to help grassroots farmers connect with buyers in different parts of the country, the activities of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) seem to be limited only in issuing travel passes for vehicles transporting produce to Dhaka or other towns during travel restrictions.

Asked what they were doing for farmers like Alauddin, who does not know how to find buyers for his produce, Kazi Lutful Bari, deputy director of DAE in Moulvibazar, said they have been helping farmers sell their produce in upazila towns and, if anyone needs to transport their produce to Dhaka, they issue travel passes.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

Jhenidah eel hunters in utter despair

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

The eel hunters in the district have been passing hard days due to coronavirus outbreak.

Local hunters said some 1000 people of Das community (low-caste Hindu) live by catching and selling eel. A huge quantity of Eels are exported to China. But eel export from Bangladesh has come to a halt due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

The hunters added that consequently, its price has fallen drastically. Before the pandemic, they sold per Kg of eel fish at Tk 300 but now per Kg is sold at Tk 100. They cannot maintain their family with the low income.

Eel hunter Rup Kumar of Bejpara village in Kaliganj upazila said around 80 men in the area live by catching the fish. They sell the eels to local trader Gopal Chandra Das.

Kumar further said that Gopal purchased per kg of eel at Tk 300 from them before March 8, but he is now not buying the fish as its demand has fallen sharply in the market.



Eel exports to China have been suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak, leaving the hunters of Jhenidah in utter despair.

PHOTO: STAR

As a result, he has to pass most of his days either remaining half-fed or unfed, said the eel hunter.

Another hunter Bablu Das of Mahadebpur village in the same upazila said he is passing very hard days with his family.

He caught three to four kg of eels every day and sold at Tk 250 to Tk 300 per Kg before the pandemic, said Bablu, adding that but at present, he sells per kg of eel at Tk 100. This scanty income is too small to meet the daily needs.

His son is a student of Class VII, said Bablu, adding that how will I spend his education expenses with the low income from now?

Eel trader Gopal Chandra Das said the family members of the hunters are completely dependent on eel catching.

Gopal added that he usually provides two tonnes of eels to Dhaka per week and other traders provide about four tonnes. But at present, they are incurring losses as the demand of the eel has fallen drastically in the market. The eel hunters are passing miserable days in the challenging time.

He further said the government is providing financial support to every sectors in this time of crisis. So, the government should come forward to help the hunters financially as they are extremely very poor. The eel hunters have no other alternative jobs to earn their livelihood and maintain their families.

Kaliganj upazila fishery officer Saidur Rahman Reza said they have a project on eel farming. If it is implemented, the eel hunters will be benefited.



Like many other areas, Sadar Road in Patuakhali town remained under knee-deep water for the last couple of days.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

TIDAL SURGE, LOW IN BAY

Patuakhali town flooded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The low-lying areas of the district have remained under water for the last couple of days as different rivers flowed over the danger level during high tide amid heavy monsoon rain due to a low in the Bay of Bengal.

At least 25 villages of Rangabali, Kalapara, Baulf and Mirzaganj upazilas as well as many places in Patuakhali town have been flooded with tidal surges.

Visiting Patuakhali municipality on Thursday noon, this correspondent saw different areas including Government Women's College Road, Old SDO Road, Post Office Road, Natun Bazar Area, Roads and Highways Road, Nawab Para, Centre Para, and Puran Bazar under knee-deep water.

As a result, the movement of people and vehicles is badly disturbed.

Patuakhali municipality Mayor Mohiuddin Ahmed said, "The problem remains as the previous mayor of the municipality did not properly implement the town protection embankment project. Action is being taken to solve this problem."

According to the Patuakhali Met Office, Payra seaport showed signal No 3 as the

sea is rough due to adverse weather under the impact of strong monsoon wind.

Senior meteorologist Mahbuba Khushi said 140 mm of rainfall was recorded in 24 hours from 12 noon on Wednesday to 12 noon on Thursday.

Ansar Mollah, president of the Alipur Fishermen's Association, said many trawlers have taken shelter at Alipur and Mohipur fish landing stations in the district as the Bay has become rough.

Hridayeshwar Dutta, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Patuakhali, said, "It has been raining for several days. The crop fields in low-lying areas were flooded with tidal water. This will not cause much damage to the Aman crop as water receded during low tide. However, there is risk of damage to vegetable fields."

Khan Mohammad Waliuzzaman, executive engineer of the Patuakhali office of the Water Development Board, said the water of different rivers in the district, including Payra, Agunmukha and Andharmanik, flowed around eight centimetres above the danger level on Thursday noon.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

শিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়

মাধ্যমিক ও উচ্চ শিক্ষা বিভাগ

আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট

১/ক, সেগুনবাগিচা, ঢাকা-১০০০

স্মারক নং-৩৭.২৬.০০০০.১১৪.৪০.০০১.২০-২৩৪ তারিখঃ ০৩ আগস্ট ২০২০

আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা জাতীয় পদক ২০২১ প্রদান

মহান শহিদ দিবস ও আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস ২০২১-এ গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী কর্তৃক "আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা জাতীয় পদক ২০২১ (International Mother Language National Award 2021)" এবং "আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা আন্তর্জাতিক পদক ২০২১ (International Mother Language National Award 2021)" প্রদান করা হবে।

২। শিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়ের মাধ্যমিক ও উচ্চ শিক্ষা বিভাগের ২৪ ডিসেম্বর ২০১৯/০৯ পৌষ ১৪২৬-এর ৩৭.০০.০০০০.০৮২.২২.০০৫.১৬.১৫৫১ সংখ্যক পদক নীতিমালা প্রজ্ঞাপন অনুযায়ী জাতীয় পর্যায়ে ২ (দুই)-টি "আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা জাতীয় পদক ২০২১ (International Mother Language National Award 2021)" প্রদানের জন্য বাংলাদেশী নাগরিক অথবা বাংলাদেশে অবস্থিত প্রতিষ্ঠান/সংস্থা-র নিকট থেকে নির্ধারিত ছকে (ছকটি আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা পদক নীতিমালা ২০১৯-এর পরিশিষ্ট ক/খ অংশে পাওয়া যাবে) আবেদনপত্র/প্রস্তাব আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। উপর্যুক্ত নীতিমালা এবং ছকটি আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট-এর ওয়েবসাইট www.imli.gov.bd থেকে ডাউনলোড করা যাবে।

৩। উপর্যুক্ত পদক নীতিমালা প্রজ্ঞাপনের অনুলেখ ৭.০-এ পদক প্রাপ্তির যোগ্যতা এবং অনুলেখ ৮.০-এ বর্ণিত নির্দেশনার আলোকে প্রাপ্ত আবেদনপত্র/প্রস্তাবাদি বিবেচনার জন্য বাছাই কমিটির সদস্য-সচিব বরাবর আবেদনপত্র/প্রস্তাব-এর তিন প্রস্ত হার্ড কপি ৩১ আগস্ট ২০২০ তারিখের মধ্যে ডাকযোগে/সরাসরি প্রেরণের অনুরোধ করা হলো এবং একই সঙ্গে আবেদনপত্র/প্রস্তাব-এর সফটকপি (এমএস ওয়ার্ড ও পিডিএফ আকারে) imli.moebd@gmail.com ই-মেইলে প্রেরণপূর্বক imli.msmeobd@gmail.com ই-মেইলে অনুলিপি প্রেরণ করতে হবে। ৩১ আগস্ট ২০২০ তারিখ অফিস সময়ের পর প্রেরিত আবেদনপত্র/প্রস্তাব (হার্ড ও সফট কপি) কোনভাবেই গ্রহণ করা হবে না। উল্লেখ্য, পদকের জন্য বিবেচ্য প্রার্থীর ডিসেম্বর ২০১৯ পর্যন্ত কর্মকর্তা এবং বিশেষ ক্ষেত্রে প্রাপক ব্যক্তির সমগ্র জীবনের বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের সার্বিক অবদান বিবেচনায়োগ্য হবে।

৪। ডাকযোগে প্রেরণের ঠিকানাঃ

সদস্য-সচিব

আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা পদক বাছাই কমিটি

ও

পরিচালক (ভাষা, গবেষণা ও পরিকল্পনা)

আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট

১/ক, সেগুনবাগিচা, ঢাকা-১০০০

৫। পদকের মান

পদক হিসেবে ১৮ (আঠারো) কারেট মানের ১৫ (পনেরো) গ্রাম ওজনের একটি স্বর্ণপদক (Gold Medal), সম্মানপত্র এবং ৪,০০,০০০/- (চার লক্ষ) টাকা প্রদান করা হবে।

৬। পদক প্রাপ্তির যোগ্যতাঃ

৬.১ বাংলাদেশে বিভিন্ন মাতৃভাষা সংরক্ষণ, পুনরুজ্জীবন ও বিকাশে অবদান;

৬.২ মাতৃভাষাচর্চায় প্রমাণিত বিশেষ অবদান (প্রমাণঃ প্রকাশিত মানসম্পন্ন গ্রন্থ);

৬.৩ মাতৃভাষার গবেষণায় বিশেষ অবদান;

৬.৪ মাতৃভাষার সংরক্ষণ, প্রমিতায়ন, পুনরুজ্জীবন এবং মাতৃভাষাচর্চায় বিকাশে ডিজিটাল প্রযুক্তি উদ্ভাবনে বিশেষ অবদান;

৬.৫ বহির্বিষয়ে মাতৃভাষা প্রচার ও প্রসারের বিশেষ অবদান;

৬.৬ মাতৃভাষায় রচিত সাহিত্য ও অন্যান্য বিষয়ে রচিত মৌলিক গ্রন্থাবলি বিদেশি ভাষায় অনুবাদে বিশেষ অবদান (প্রমাণঃ প্রকাশিত মানসম্পন্ন গ্রন্থ);

৬.৭ বিদেশি ভাষায় রচিত সাহিত্য ও অন্যান্য বিষয়ে রচিত গ্রন্থসমূহের বাংলা ভাষায় অনুবাদে বিশেষ অবদান (প্রমাণঃ প্রকাশিত মানসম্পন্ন গ্রন্থ)।

৭। আবেদন বা প্রস্তাবের জন্য বিবেচ্য বিষয়াদিঃ

৭.১ নির্ধারিত ছকে (পদক নীতিমালার পরিশিষ্ট - ক/খ) ও পূর্ব-উল্লিখিত তারিখের মধ্যে আবেদনপত্র বা প্রস্তাবের ০৩ (তিন) কপি ফরম যথাযথভাবে পূরণ করে বাছাই কমিটির সদস্য-সচিবের নিকট ডাকযোগে বা সরাসরি প্রেরণ করতে হবে এবং এর সফট কপি চাহিদামত নির্ধারিত ই-মেইলে পাঠাতে হবে;

৭.২ আবেদনপত্রে বা প্রস্তাবে অসত্য বা অসম্পূর্ণ তথ্য বা অস্পষ্ট বর্ণনা এবং অভিজ্ঞানপত্র/সনদ/প্রশংসাপত্র (টেস্টিমোনিয়াল/সার্টিফিকেট) সংযোজিত না হলে আবেদনপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে;

৭.৩ কোনো প্রেক্ষিতে (জাতীয় ও আন্তর্জাতিক) উপযুক্ত ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান খুঁজে পাওয়া না গেলে সেক্ষেত্রে পদক প্রদান সংশ্লিষ্ট বছরের জন্য স্থগিত থাকবে;

৭.৪ একই ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠান/সংস্থা "আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা পদক"-এর জন্য দ্বিতীয়বারের জন্য বিবেচিত হবেন না;

৭.৫ এই পদক মরণোত্তর (posthumous) প্রদেয় নয়। কিন্তু প্রাপক হিসেবে নাম ঘোষণার পর কোনো ব্যক্তির মৃত্যু হলে তাঁর পক্ষে পরিবারের উত্তরাধিকারী/উত্তরাধিকারিণীদের মধ্য থেকে নির্ধারিত কেউ অথবা উত্তরাধিকারী/উত্তরাধিকারিণী না থাকলে উপযুক্ত কেউ তা গ্রহণ করতে পারবেন। এজন্য প্রচলিত নিয়মে প্রাপ্ত উত্তরাধিকার বা ওয়ারিশান সনদে সংশ্লিষ্ট জেলা প্রশাসকের/সংশ্লিষ্ট দূতাবাসের প্রতিষ্ঠাক্রম থাকতে হবে;

৭.৬ বাংলাদেশের নাগরিক স্বদেশে অবস্থানকালে পদক প্রাপকরূপে চূড়ান্তভাবে নাম ঘোষণার পর যদি বাংলাদেশের বাহিরে গমন করেন অথবা সেখানে অবস্থান করেন এবং তাঁর পক্ষে বাংলাদেশে এসে পুরস্কার গ্রহণ সম্ভব না হয়, সেক্ষেত্রে সংশ্লিষ্ট দেশে অবস্থিত বাংলাদেশ দূতাবাস (যদি থাকে) থেকে পদক গ্রহণ করতে পারবেন। তবে বিষয়টি আমাই কর্তৃপক্ষকে পূর্বে অবহিত করতে হবে। অনুরূপ ব্যবস্থা পদক প্রাপক হিসেবে নাম ঘোষণার পর মৃত ব্যক্তির ক্ষেত্রেও প্রযোজ্য হবে। সেক্ষেত্রে মৃত ব্যক্তির উত্তরাধিকারী/উত্তরাধিকারিণীর যথার্থতা সংশ্লিষ্ট দেশে অবস্থিত বাংলাদেশ দূতাবাস কর্তৃক যাচাইপূর্বক পদক প্রদান করা হবে। এ সংক্রান্ত পদক বিতরণ অনুষ্ঠান দূতাবাসে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে এবং দূতাবাস প্রধান পদক প্রদান করবেন।

৮। বিজ্ঞপ্তি নিম্নোক্ত ওয়েবসাইটসমূহে দেখা যাবে। অনিবার্য কারণে বিজ্ঞপ্তির সংশোধন অথবা বিজ্ঞপ্তির কোন বিশেষ অংশ সংশোধনকরণের ক্ষেত্রে সংশোধিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি অথবা বিজ্ঞপ্তির সংশোধিত অংশ কেবল নিম্নোক্ত ওয়েবসাইটসমূহে আপলোড করা হবে।

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ড. জিনাত ইমতিয়াজ আপী

সভাপতি

আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা পদক বাছাই কমিটি

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মহাপরিচালক

আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট

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'Clowning actions'

HK vows it won't be intimidated by US sanctions

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Beijing's top representative office in Hong Kong yesterday said that sanctions imposed by Washington on senior Hong Kong and Chinese officials were "clowning actions" that would not frighten or intimidate Chinese people.

Separately, the Hong Kong government said the sanctions were "shameless and despicable" and represented "blatant and barbaric" interference in China's internal affairs.

"We will not be intimidated," a government spokesman said.

The United States on Friday imposed sanctions on Luo Huining, the head of China's Liaison Office, as well as Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam and other current and former officials that Washington accuses of curtailing political freedoms in the global financial hub.

The move accelerates rapidly deteriorating Sino-US ties, more than a month after Beijing imposed sweeping national security legislation on Hong Kong that drew condemnation from Western governments and sent a chill across the city.

"The unscrupulous intentions of the US politicians to support the anti-China chaos in Hong Kong have been revealed, and their clowning actions are really ridiculous," the Liaison Office said in a statement. "Intimidation and threats cannot frighten the Chinese people."

Luo, the most senior mainland political

official based in the Chinese-controlled territory, said US sanctions on him indicated he was doing what he "should be doing for my country and Hong Kong", according to the statement.

Luo has oversight over the implementation of the contentious security law that allows mainland security agents to be officially based in China's freest city for the first time.

As well as Luo and Lam, the sanctions target Hong Kong police commissioner Chris Tang and his predecessor Stephen Lo; John Lee, Hong Kong's secretary of security, and Teresa Cheng, the justice secretary. Xia Baolong, the director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office in Beijing, was also named.

The sanctions freeze any US assets of the officials, prohibit them from carrying out business in the country and generally bar Americans from doing business with them.

Beijing-backed leader Lam has previously told local media she has no assets in the United States.

The US sanctions come a week after Hong Kong postponed a Sept. 6 election to the Chinese-ruled city's legislature by a year, citing a spike in coronavirus cases, prompting democracy activists to question whether the pandemic was the real reason.

Washington said the election delay was the latest example of Beijing undermining "the democratic processes and freedoms that have underpinned Hong Kong's prosperity."



An aircraft approaches to land over the wreckage of an Air India Express jet at Calicut International Airport in Karipur, Kerala, yesterday. Inset, The Air India plane that crash landed amid rough weather killing 18 people.

PHOTO: AFP

'Step down or hang'

Lebanese vent rage against their leaders after blast

AGENCIES

As Beirut mourned its dead and grappled with the scale of rebuilding after this week's massive blast, some Lebanese angered by their government's response called on foreign states yesterday to topple their leaders and run the country.

Several hundred protesters began gathering in Martyrs' Square in the city centre for a demonstration to criticise the government's handling of the biggest explosion in Beirut's history. The blast in the port killed 154 people, injured 5,000 and destroyed a swathe of the city.

The protesters had mock wooden scaffolds with nooses, and one placard read: "Step down or hang".

Some residents, struggling to clean up shattered homes, complain the government they see as corrupt - there had been months of protests against its handling of a deep economic crisis before this week's disaster - has let them down again.

"We have no trust in our government," said university student



Celine Dibo as she scrubbed blood off the walls of her shattered apartment building. "I wish the United Nations would take over Lebanon."

Several people said they were not at all surprised that French President Emmanuel Macron had visited their gutted neighbourhoods near the epicentre of the blast this week while Lebanese leaders had not.

"We are living in ground zero. I hope another country would just take us over. Our leaders are a bunch of corrupt people," said psychologist Maryse Hayek, 48, whose parents' house was destroyed in the explosion.

Lebanon's Kataeb Party, a Christian group that opposes the government

backed by the Iran-aligned Hezbollah, announced on Saturday the resignation of its three lawmakers from parliament. That brought to five the number of lawmakers who quit since the blast.

The prime minister and presidency have said 2,750 tonnes of highly explosive ammonium nitrate, which is used in making fertilisers and bombs, had been stored for six years without safety measures at the port warehouse.

President Michel Aoun said on Friday an investigation would examine whether it was caused by a bomb or other external interference. 21 people had been detained so far, he added.

Officials have said the blast could have caused losses amounting to \$15 billion. That is a bill that Lebanon cannot pay after already defaulting on a mountain of debt - exceeding 150% of economic output - and with talks stalled on a lifeline from the International Monetary Fund.

A virtual international donor conference launched by Macron, and in which US President Donald Trump and other top leaders will take part, is scheduled for today.

'I don't want to fly again'

Survivor of Kerala plane accident recalls ordeal

REUTERS, New Delhi/Kochi

Seated on the last row of the plane, Muhammed Junaid sensed something was amiss when Air India Express flight IX 1344 from Dubai was jerked around by strong winds as it approached the southern Indian city of Kozhikode late on Friday.

After an aborted attempt, the aircraft swung around and touched down on the runway, said Junaid, who like many others onboard worked in the Middle East but was forced to return home when his salary halved because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Instead of slowing down, Junaid said, the Boeing-737 appeared to pick up speed, overshooting the runway slickened by heavy rains, hurtling down a sharp slope and breaking in two.

"All these things happened in 15 seconds," he told Reuters by phone yesterday.

Eighteen of the 190 passengers and crew, including both pilots, died, officials said, in India's worst passenger aircraft accident since 2010. Sixteen people were severely injured.

But Junaid and several other passengers, seated at the back of the aircraft, walked

away from the wreckage at Calicut International Airport near Kozhikode almost unscathed.

By midnight, Junaid said, he had driven himself home to Elathur, an hour from the airport.

Only his head was sore from bumping into the ceiling and his lips bled a little after he bit into them. "Nothing happened to me, thank God," he said.

Junaid, 25, moved to Dubai three years ago to work as an accountant at a trading firm. He was returning home after two years as he took leave due to coronavirus fallout.

As he sat dazed near the tail of the wrecked aircraft, Junaid said he remembered even after the disaster cabin crew tried to calm down passengers and helping those crunched between mangled seats.

After a 45-minute wait, during which emergency workers helped passengers out of the wrecked front of the plane, Junaid and the rest at the back were helped down.

Now resting at home and awaiting a coronavirus test, Junaid said he wants to stay away from aircraft.

"I am really afraid," he said. "I don't want to fly again."

Russia, China, Iran trying to meddle in polls

Says US top counterspy



REUTERS, Washington

The top US counterintelligence official on Friday warned that Russia, China and Iran will all try to interfere in the 2020 presidential election, with Russia already trying to undercut Democratic candidate Joe Biden.

In an unusual public statement, William Evanina, director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, said the three countries were using online disinformation and other means to try to influence voters, stir up disorder and undermine American voters' confidence in the democratic process.

"It would be difficult for our adversaries to interfere with or manipulate voting results at scale," Evanina said.

Multiple reviews by US intelligence agencies have concluded that Russia acted to boost Trump's 2016 campaign and undercut his rival Hillary Clinton's chances in that election.

Evanina warned on Friday that Russia is already going after former Vice President Biden and what it regards as an anti-Russia US "establishment."

He said his agency assessed that China would prefer that Trump not win re-election, because Beijing regards him as too unpredictable.

Evanina said Iran is likely to use online tactics such as spreading disinformation to discredit US institutions and President Trump and to stir up US voters' discontent.

COVID-19 SCIENCE

The following is a brief roundup of some of the latest scientific studies on the novel coronavirus and efforts to find treatments and vaccines for Covid-19, the illness caused by the virus.

CONVALESCENT PLASMA LOWERS DEATH RISK

Infusions of antibody-rich blood plasma from people who have recovered from the new coronavirus, known as convalescent plasma, can lower the risk of death for hospitalized Covid-19 patients, according to a pooled analysis of data from eight earlier studies of more than 700 hospitalized patients around the world. Researchers found that mortality rates were roughly 13% in patients who received convalescent plasma versus about 25% for those who did not get the treatment. Convalescent plasma was shown to be safe in an earlier study of 5,000 hospitalized adults with severe or life-threatening Covid-19. In that study, fewer than 1% of patients had any serious adverse effects in the first four hours after transfusion.

EXPOSURE TO COMMON COLDS MAY IMPACT COVID-19 SEVERITY

In patients with Covid-19, the immune system's T cells learn to recognize and target the new coronavirus. But some people who were never infected with the virus nonetheless have T cells that also recognize it. Researchers had suspected that in these individuals, past exposure to other coronaviruses, such as those that cause the common cold, had somehow primed their T cells to recognize and attack this new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), and new research appears to confirm that. In studies of human blood samples collected well before the new coronavirus was discovered, researchers found T cells that were equally reactive against the new virus and four types of common cold coronaviruses. The strongest T cell responses to the new coronavirus were associated with the spike protein the virus uses to enter human cells.

SEVERE COVID-19 MAY BE LESS DEADLY IN CHILDREN

Children with Covid-19 rarely become critically ill, and when they do, they tend to have better outcomes than adults, based on early data from an ongoing study. The Critical Coronavirus and Kids Epidemiology (CAKE) study involves 65 pediatric intensive care units in 18 countries. In a paper published on Wednesday in the journal Pediatrics, the study team reported on the first 17 children with severe COVID-19 from 10 hospitals in Chile, Colombia, Italy, Spain and the United States. Most required respiratory support, with nearly half needing to be put on ventilators. Overall, one child died, four developed inflammation of the heart and three remain hospitalized.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A protester holds a sign while doing a three-fingered salute during a demonstration to demand the release of activist leaders arrested on Friday and held overnight in connection with recent anti-government protests, in Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday. Dozens of protesters gathered in front of a Bangkok court yesterday to demand the release of the activist leaders, vowing to escalate anti-government demonstrations with a call for a protest in the Thai capital.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Matador gored in the buttocks after stabbing bull

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A leading Spanish matador has been gored in a bullfight after the animal he stabbed rammed its horns into his buttocks, sending him flying.

When Enrique Ponce, 48, went in for the kill at the El Puerto de Santa Maria stadium, the bull flipped him over, causing him to lie on his front shielding his head.

Despite the scare, the Valencian bullfighter was not seriously injured, with Spanish media reporting only torn knee ligaments and bruising. The bull was eventually killed, and Ponce went on to slay a second. The fight saw thousands gather a historic stadium in Cadiz, Andalusia on the bullring's 140th anniversary.

It is not the first time Ponce, who is one of the country's top matadors, has had to deal with the bull fighting back. Last year, a more severe goring left him requiring knee surgery and a 10cm (4 inch) injury to his buttock.

In 2014, while opening the Las Fallas festival in Valencia, a bull broke his collarbone and several of his ribs.

The pandemic appears to have hit the controversial tradition's popularity, as the first, sparsely attended fight in July after lockdown saw increasing calls for the bloodsport to be banned.

"Have we not already had an overdose of death and pain in these past months?" Carmen Ibarlucea of animal rights group La Tortura No Es Cultura (Torture Is Not Culture) said at the time. "They return to the bullrings and they mercilessly and tearlessly demand more public money to torture and see a peaceful herbivore dying. Meanwhile we, a social majority, are now calling for a true culture of peace and solidarity."

INDIA-CHINA BORDER DISPUTES

Rivals hold major general-level talks

NDTV ONLINE

Talks between senior army commanders of India and China were underway yesterday to take forward the disengagement process along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at a number of friction points including in Daulat Beg Oldi and Depsang in eastern Ladakh, people familiar with the developments said.

The major general-level talks are being held at a border personnel meeting point in Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) area on the Chinese side of the LAC, they said.

The meeting comes a week after the two armies held the fifth round of Corps commander-level (Lt Gen) discussions in an effort to expedite the disengagement process.

At the military talks, the Indian side has been insisting on complete disengagement of Chinese troops at the earliest and immediate restoration of status quo ante in all areas of eastern Ladakh prior to May 5 when the standoff began following a clash between the two armies in Pangong Tso.

The Chinese Army has pulled back from Galwan Valley and certain other friction points but have not withdrawn its troops from the Finger areas in Pangong Tso, Gogra and Depsang as demanded by India, according to sources.

The formal process of disengagement of troops began on July 6, a day after a nearly two-hour telephonic conversation between National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on ways to bring down tensions in the area.

REDUCTION IN AMAZON DEFORESTATION

Brazil hails July success

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil on Friday hailed figures showing a reduction in July of deforestation that has spooked international investors, though environmentalists warned it was too early to proclaim success.

Official data showed a swath of Brazil's Amazon rainforest about the size of London -- more than 1,600 square kilometers (620 square miles) -- was cleared in July, down from the 2,250 km2 lost in July 2019.

That shows government efforts have achieved an "inversion of the trend," said Vice President Hamilton Mourao, who heads Brazil's National Amazon Council.

An analysis of longer-term figures for the world's largest rainforest is more worrying, however.

The 4,730 km2 of deforestation in the Amazon from January 1 to July 31 was slightly above the 4,700 km2



from the same period in 2019, the country's National Institute for Space Research (INPE) said.

The difference is much greater when examining 12-month figures: The 9,200 km2 lost from August 2019 to July 2020 was sharply higher than the 6,800 km2 cleared in the previous 12 months.

The administration of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro is under pressure to stop Amazon deforestation and forest fires, after

international investment funds that collectively administer close to \$4 trillion in assets wrote an open letter to the leader in June, urging the end of projects that accelerate the area's destruction.

Bolsonaro's policies have opened up protected and indigenous areas to mining and farming, but the investors' call has been taken seriously by a government that needs capital to reignite an economy ravaged by the coronavirus.

Do's and don'ts during COVID-19 pandemic

DR ZUBAIR KHALED HUQ

COVID-19 is wreaking havoc worldwide. The pandemic is not going to go overnight; we should learn to live with it. To do that, we should know what things we should do and what to avoid.

Do wear a mask covering face at all times when you are outdoors. Be careful about touching your face as this could increase your risk. Do not stop social distancing because of a false sense of security as this is still important to protect you. Do wash your hands before you wear your mask. Only touch the ear loops while wearing and opening it.

Do stay informed of the situation as events and advisories are rapidly evolving. Credible resources include the Centres for Disease Control and the World Health Organisation. Do practice good hand hygiene and wash your hands frequently, especially before you eat, after using the toilet, blowing your nose or coughing and before you touch your face.

If you cannot wash your hands, use alcohol-based sanitiser with more than 60% alcohol. Frequently wash your hands with soap water, since the fat layer of the virus could be



broken if you come in contact with soap for at least 20 seconds.

Do cover your cough or sneeze. The best way to cough or sneeze is into your elbow and not your hands. Do work from home if you can. Do leave your home only for essential reasons, such as buying food or medications. If you have to go out, protect yourself and your family members from close contact (stay more than 6 feet away). Do not share water or utensils with family members. Do cancel elective dental, medical and non-essential appointments to

hospitals and clinics as these can expose one to high virus load.

Move away from others who cough or sneeze. Wipe down all surfaces you come into contact with. Do wipe down doorknobs, countertops, stairway railings and switches in your home every 2-3 days. For kids, do wipe down their toys or wash them in soap and water. Wash your hands after you handle a package. Virus particles can survive for days on hard surfaces so it is important to keep these clean.

One should avoid crowded places since they can have high

virus load. A large number of persons can be asymptomatic carriers who transmit the disease unknowingly. Persons suffering from an influenza-like illness must be confined to home. Adequate sleep and rest is a must.

Take immunity-boosting drugs, like vitamin C and D3, zinc and high protein diet with regular exercise. Keep senior citizens separated from others. Persons who have comorbidities like diabetes, heart, kidney or liver disease must take extra precautions.

This virus cannot remain alive

without human contact. If we do not let them enter into our body by locking down all entries like nose, mouth and eyes, it has to die outside without infecting anyone. Since it is a respiratory virus, it has a predilection towards nose and mouth. While talking, coughing or sneezing one transmits this, but the vicious cycle ends by keeping oneself covered with a mask.

Hugging, kissing and shaking hands should be avoided. We should permanently stop the habit of public spitting, to prevent aerosols and small particles contaminating the environment. Proper disposal of masks, gloves, and napkins after use is a must to stop transmission. Various drugs that are non-specific and under trial should not be tried by anyone without a doctor's prescription.

Any specific food and medication will not give a complete cure from the virus. Solace of mind with restricted lifestyle, exercise and abiding the rules and regulations given by your doctor can boost immunity and protect the body by itself.

The writer is a gerontologist and a public health specialist.
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COVID COLLATERAL

Acute depression, stress, anxiety higher during peak of the pandemic

Rates of elevated psychological distress, including depression and anxiety symptoms, were found among Australian adults during the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia, according to a new study published in the open-access journal PLOS ONE by Jill Newby of the University of New South Wales at the Black Dog Institute, Sydney, Australia, and colleagues.

In the new study, researchers used an online survey, administered March 27 through April 7—now considered to be the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia—to examine mental health responses to the pandemic among 5,070 Australian adults. The online questionnaire asked participants about their fears, behavioural responses to COVID-19, psychological distress, alcohol use, and physical activity. A similar survey had already been carried out among 2,174 Australians in early March, when cases in the country were still low.

While the questionnaires could not be used to make any diagnoses, most participants reported that their mental health had worsened during the outbreak, with 55% saying it had worsened a little and 23% saying it had worsened a lot. Around half of all participants reported moderate to extreme loneliness and worry about their financial situation. Between 20.3 and 24.1% of people surveyed had been experiencing severe or extremely severe levels of depression, anxiety and stress over the week preceding their survey, and another 18 to 22% had moderate symptoms.

Newby says: "We wanted to provide a snapshot of the mental health of the general community during the COVID-19 outbreak and look into the impact of the enforcement of social distancing laws, in Australia."

HEALTH bulletin



Breastfeeding is safe after anaesthesia

New guidelines published by the Association of Anaesthetists in the journal *Anaesthesia* say that breastfeeding is safe after the mother has had anaesthesia, as soon as she is alert and able to feed.

"The guidelines say there is no need to discard any breast milk due to fear of contamination, since evidence shows that anaesthetic and non-opioid painkiller drugs are transferred to breast milk in only very small amounts," explains Dr Mike Kinsella of the Association of Anaesthetists Safety Committee, based at St Michael's Hospital, Bristol, UK, and colleagues. "For almost all of these drugs, there is no evidence of effects on the breastfed infant."

However, they caution that drugs such as opioids and benzodiazepines should be used with caution, especially after multiple doses and in babies up to 6 weeks old. In this situation, the infant should be observed for signs of abnormal drowsiness and respiratory depression, especially if the woman is also showing signs of sedation.

They also add that codeine should not be used by breastfeeding women following concerns of excessive sedation in some infants, related to differences in metabolism.

Lifestyle during COVID-19: The 'new normal'

PROF DR MANZOOR HUSSAIN

Since there no specific cure or vaccine for COVID-19 is available yet, we could prevent the spread of this deadly pandemic by changing our lifestyles and following some etiquettes.

Some specific rules suggested by the World Health Organisation (WHO) needs to be followed. For example, washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, using a mask while outdoors, maintaining social distancing, staying indoors and avoiding public gatherings. We also need to be accustomed to a few more social etiquettes like giving up shaking hands, hugging and greeting by kissing someone's cheeks.

Lockdowns alone may not be the only way to prevent COVID-19. Rather, avoiding public gathering and quarantine of the elderly and vulnerable is the best way to reduce the mortality rate by the disease. Simultaneously, efforts should be made to formulate effective strategies for the already existing service facilities to improve the necessary health service delivery for the treatment of the sick population. It is imperative to have proper planning and implementation of the existing healthcare system.

Diagnosis should be confirmed through definitive examination and triage needs to be done for COVID-19, suspected and non COVID-19 cases based on clinical criteria. Properly diagnosed and identified cases need to be

hospitalised or isolated as needed. Everyone else who has come in contact with them must be traced and needs to be quarantined and monitored separately.

The most important thing is to emphasise on the need to use masks in public and use them properly. We must motivate the public to do so, i.e. to eliminate the habit of wearing the mask over or below the head/around the neck and hanging around the ear on one side. Always make sure that the mask is well fitted covering the nose and chin. Hands must be sanitised or washed before touching the face, eyes or nose. There should be strict protocols and implementation of health hygiene etiquettes in all public transportation, bazaars and shopping centres.

We should try to increase immunity naturally by having adequate sleep, as sleeping and

the immune system are closely linked. The antioxidants found in vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds help reduce inflammation by fighting compounds called free radicals. Healthy fats found in olive oil, freshwater fish and seafood can reduce inflammation and increase immunity. It is also important to drink plenty of fluids to keep yourself well hydrated. Exercising regularly can keep you fit and help to reduce your stress.

Until the vaccine for COVID-19 is available, we have to get used to the 'new normal' lifestyle to cope with our lives. There is no alternative to abiding etiquette and proper hygiene practice. Gradually we will have to learn to adapt to the pandemic and other mutant viruses that may emerge in future.

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40% dementia cases could be prevented or delayed!

Modifying 12 risk factors over the lifecourse could delay or prevent 40% of dementia cases, according to an update to The Lancet Commission on dementia prevention, intervention, and care, which was presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC 2020).

Led by 28 world-leading dementia experts, the report builds on the 9 risk factors identified in the 2017 Lancet Commission, and provides an up-to-date analysis of the best evidence on the prevention of dementia.

Worldwide around 50 million people live with dementia, and this number is projected to increase to 152 million by 2050, rising particularly in low-income and middle-income countries (LMIC) where around two-thirds of people with dementia live.

To address dementia risk, the authors call for 9 ambitious recommendations to be undertaken by policymakers and by individuals:

- Aim to maintain systolic blood pressure of 130 mm Hg or less in midlife from around age 40 years.
- Encourage use of hearing aids for hearing loss and reduce hearing loss by protecting ears from high noise levels.
- Reduce exposure to air pollution and second-hand tobacco smoke.
- Prevent head injury (particularly by targeting high risk occupations and transport)
- Prevent alcohol misuse and limit drinking to less than 21 units per week.
- Stop smoking uptake and support individuals to stop smoking (which the authors stress is beneficial at any age).
- Provide all children with primary and secondary education.
- Lead an active life into mid, and possibly later life.
- Reduce obesity and diabetes.

These actions are especially important in LMICs where dementia rates are rising more rapidly than in high-income countries.

f b /StarHealthBD



Rumors and Misconceptions Unveiled

Can COVID – 19 be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates?

- The COVID- 19 virus can be transmitted in any climate, including areas with hot and humid weather.

The best and most effective way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by maintaining physical distance of at least 1 metre from others and frequently cleaning your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or washing them with soap and water.

By doing this you eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth and nose.

Can cold weather kill the new corona virus?

- There is no reason to believe that cold weather can kill the new corona virus or other diseases.

The normal human body temperature remains around 36.5 to 37 °C, regardless of the external temperature or weather.

Public awareness by:



In a search of Excellence

A woman mountaineer's dream shattered by reckless wheels

Separate cycle lanes are urgent

We are heartbroken at the death of a promising young woman, a mountaineer who was training to fulfil her dream of conquering the Everest. It was a horrific hit-and-run incident that happened on Friday while she was cycling on Lake Road, next to Chandrima Udyan. It is heartbreaking because in a patriarchal society where women with minimal ambition are pitted against all kinds of odds, Reshma Nahar Ratna pursued athletic endeavours with such determination. A schoolteacher by profession, her passion was to climb mountains and she had taken a basic mountaineering course from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering in India's Uttarakhand. She scaled the Keokradong peak in Bandarban and the highest mountain in the Stok Range of the Himalayas in the Ladakh region of north India last year. She loved singing, running and cycling. We have lost an inspiring young woman whose contributions to our country have been cut short by a meaningless act of recklessness.

For that is exactly what it was—a complete disregard for human life that has also taken thousands of lives before Reshma. At least 168 people were killed and 283 injured in 149 road crashes across the country during the Eid-ul-Fitr festival and amid the shutdown, according to Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity. Despite the passionate student movement for road safety in 2018, despite the unbelievable number of valuable lives we have lost, despite all the promises made by the transport authorities to reduce the number of road crashes, lives are being lost or maimed relentlessly every day. Even the lighter traffic during the pandemic could not save Reshma who was cycling along a road that is a favourite of many fellow-cyclists.

Although over the years there has been a significant revival of cyclists on the roads, the risks they take continue to be very high as there are no separate cycle lanes like in other countries. As we have seen the world over, cycling is considered the most environment-friendly, efficient mode of transport, especially for cities with heavy traffic, as well as an excellent form of exercise.

Reshma's untimely death has highlighted the need for separate bicycle lanes. The Dhaka North City Corporation's Mayor Atiqul Islam has given the nod for such lanes as proposed by a group of organisations and platforms that want to promote cycling and keep cyclists safe. We hope it will be approved and implemented on an urgent basis and cover the main roads of the city. Although it is a start, just having separate lanes will not keep cyclists safe. Reckless driving and utter disregard for road rules have to stop. The Road Safety Act must be enforced. Reckless drivers and transport owners who employ them or unleash unfit vehicles on the road have to be held accountable and punished accordingly. This can be possible only if there is political will to do what is right. In the case of Reshma's death, we expect the law enforcers to identify the minibus and its driver through proper investigation. Those responsible must be meted out appropriate punishment for this crime.

Saving lives through blood donation during the pandemic

Digital platforms led by young people show the way

It is encouraging to learn that volunteers of social media-based blood donation groups have continued their humanitarian work during this pandemic, risking coronavirus infection. Roktodoran Opekkhay Bangladesh and Amra Roktosandhani are two such Facebook groups that along with many other digital platforms have been carrying on their lifesaving activities maintaining health guidelines. Although at the beginning of the pandemic, donors were facing difficulties in donating blood due to a lack of transportation and restrictions on movement, the situation is getting normal now. The blood donors think that there is nothing to be afraid of if proper distance and hygiene are maintained while donating blood. These platforms also suggest donors maintain personal safety through hygiene practices and avoiding unnecessary contact with anyone—the persons accompanying the donors or the patients' family members.

Milon Hossain, a 30-year-old motor mechanic from Pabna, is one of the volunteers of Roktodoran Opekkhay Bangladesh, who recently drove 35 kilometres from his village to the Pabna Sadar Hospital to donate blood to an ailing woman. Asif Ahmed is another courageous volunteer who has been managing blood donors for the group since 2017. Although Asif was discouraged from donating blood because of his physical disability of congenital hand deformity and weakness in both legs, this 20-year-old young man has proved that disability is not an inability to donate blood and has donated blood three times so far. Sajal Ahmed from another Facebook group, Amra Roktosandhani, despite his family's objection, has also donated blood to save the life of a woman whose baby died inside her womb during the pandemic.

Although many organisations have been working in the field of voluntary blood donation across the country for decades, these digital platforms have made it easier for the patients and their relatives to manage donors in recent times. The number of such groups has also increased over the years, as many young people willing to serve patients have created or joined these groups. The massive campaigns have also brought about a positive attitude towards blood donation, increasing the number of voluntary donors.

We hope these groups will get all the support they need in carrying out their activities and also hope that many amongst us will be encouraged to donate blood for critically ill patients in these trying times when people in general are still afraid of donating blood.

TRIMITA CHAKMA and PALLAB CHAKMA

As we witnessed the global crisis of the coronavirus pandemic hit Bangladesh at the end of March 2020, we became anxious about the impact it would have on the indigenous peoples of the country, who were already struggling with longstanding issues related to their socioeconomic, political and cultural rights.

There are over 50 indigenous communities living in Bangladesh, primarily spread in the delta region of the country or "the plains", as well as in the south-eastern part of the country known as Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). These diverse communities have their distinct languages, cultures and heritage and only constitute approximately 1-2 percent of the total population of the country. As minorities, the indigenous peoples have long been cut off from the benefits of mainstream socio-economic development measures. A recent study by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies and ILO revealed that several socioeconomic indicators such as health, education, household-level income, food consumption, participation and women's empowerment remain below the national average for indigenous peoples.

For instance, the poverty rate among indigenous peoples is much higher than the national average of 20.5 percent. The poverty rate among the indigenous peoples in the plains is nearly 80 percent whereas, in the CHT, it is around 65 percent. The indigenous population of the country has been living in a state of perpetual marginalisation and poverty due to various factors. Their lives and livelihoods have become highly vulnerable due to the increasing dispossession of land and resources caused by conflict, land grabbing, climate change and various development interventions, as well as the prevailing systemic discrimination.

Soon after the government declared a country-wide shutdown to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the immediate socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic hit the indigenous communities the hardest. According to a recent study we conducted on the impact of the pandemic on indigenous communities, thousands of ready-made garment workers and beauty parlour workers have lost their jobs, agricultural production has been hampered, small enterprises are struggling to survive, regular health services and education facilities have been disrupted, violation of indigenous

peoples' human rights has been on the rise and, most alarmingly, indigenous communities are faced with a severe food insecurity. For example, the Hajong families in Durgapur, Netrokona reported having to cut down on the number of meals eaten per day to only one. Many indigenous migrant workers who have returned home are now staying at their village without any income and are in desperate need of employment opportunities for their survival.

What is noteworthy is that the

However, most indigenous communities involved in our study have reported that they received little or no support from these programmes.

The government's initiative of remote learning through digital education (i.e. classes broadcasted through Sangsad TV and YouTube) remains inaccessible to hundreds of thousands of marginalised indigenous students due to the existing "digital divide". On top of the existing challenges to accessing education such as language barrier, indigenous children

As we celebrate this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples with the theme "COVID-19 and indigenous peoples' resilience", we observe with indignation that the indigenous peoples of the country continue to be disproportionately impacted by the crisis. While the indigenous communities have been demonstrating incredible resilience at the face of historical injustices and marginalisation, let us not forget that the responsibility for protecting them still



Most indigenous communities involved in a study by Kapaeeng Foundation have reported that they received little or no support from the Covid-19 assistance programmes of the government.

STAR FILE PHOTO

communities seem to be more anxious about the impact of the shutdown rather than the spread of the virus. As one of the respondents, Kalu Ram Rishi, a 42-year-old Mushor labourer from Parbatipur, Dinajpur said, "The indigenous Mushor community is more afraid of starvation during the lockdown period than being affected by the virus."

The government has taken several policy measures in response to the Covid-19 crisis, including social safety net and other support programmes for the low-income and marginalised groups.

both in the hills and plains lack adequate IT equipment, internet connection, and sometimes even electricity.

The International Monetary Fund has projected that Bangladesh's economic growth, which has been steady at 7 percent a year on average over the past decade, is likely to drop to 2 percent in 2020. As an unofficial lockdown continues with no timeline in sight, indigenous peoples who are already facing multiple difficulties engendered by the Covid-19 crisis are now confronted with even graver challenges in the days to come.

lies with the state.

Therefore, it is crucial for the government of Bangladesh to explicitly address the needs and priorities of the indigenous peoples not only in terms of short-term responses to the pandemic, but also in terms of the prevailing systemic and structural socio-political, economic and cultural barriers that continue to marginalise them.

Trimita Chakma is an independent feminist researcher and activist, and a member of Kapaeeng Foundation. Pallab Chakma is the Executive Director of Kapaeeng Foundation.

Two brick-laying ceremonies for Ram: Which one was kosher?

SAEED NAQVI

It reflects on the civilisational power of Lord Rama in this ancient land that Independent India's five prime ministers involved themselves in the affairs of his birthplace at Ayodhya: Nehru, Rajiv Gandhi, P.V. Narasimha Rao, Narendra Modi and, tangentially, V.P. Singh in between.

India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, learned his early lessons about the limits to his power when the Rama idols "mysteriously" appeared on the night of December 22, 1949 at the spot where the Lord was supposed to have been born and UP Chief Minister Govind Ballabh Pant refused to have the idols removed, despite Nehru's insistence. Secularism was a fine concept but not at the cost of Hindu faith. In the different approaches to Ayodhya are embedded serious divergences within the Congress on the centrality of Hinduism in national life. Not only was Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya president of the Congress for a record four terms, but he was also a founder of the Hindu Mahasabha. One may quibble over proportions, but there is Hindu Mahasabha in the Congress DNA just as there is the RSS in the BJP.

Nehru was a proud "Pandit" but there was a clear mismatch between his elitist tolerance of Hinduism and the all-pervasive Hindu faith in the make-up of most of his colleagues. It turns out, in retrospect, that Nehru's secularism was a huge gamble. It would be thrilling if the secular experiment succeeded to a point where my brother Shanney could revisit relatives in Karachi and regale friends in JNU with the observation which became a classic in the 70s: "Nice place", he said returning from Pakistan, "but too full of Muslims." Today, this gregarious raconteur finds himself fixed in the pitying gaze of relatives from across the border. I called him in Lucknow on August 5, the day of the Shilanyas ("foundation stone laying"). He didn't say much. It is instructive that the top-down secularism of Nehru and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk of Turkey faced eclipse within weeks of each other.

In his very first speech in parliament

in May 2014, Prime Minister Modi had lamented 1,200 years of foreign subjugation. But after the Shilanyas at Ram's birthplace in Ayodhya, he was specific about the timeline of the Ayodhya struggle, that it had taken 500 years since Babar's arrival to liberate the hallowed birthplace. There will of course be arguments galore: has the choreography at Modi's Shilanyas brought down the curtain on the old consensus on the Idea of India? Is that what an emotionally pent-up nation's

Srivastava, a more harassed officer I shall never see. Since I was seated next to him, I could virtually peep into the pit where the brick was to be laid, under instructions from Rajiv Gandhi, his cousin Arun Nehru, and UP Chief Minister Narayan Dutt Tewari. It was an underhand, duplicitous operation, totally violative of the Allahabad High Court order that prohibited any construction on "disputed" land. In a show of force, Ashok Singhal of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), the



File photo of an armed police officer standing guard on the bank of Sarayu River ahead of the foundation-laying ceremony for a Hindu temple on "disputed land" in Ayodhya, India, on August 4, 2020.

PHOTO: REUTERS/PAWAN KUMAR

cathartic "victory over Babar" entails? Was it that... a victory?

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra must be commended for having "openly" endorsed the beginning of a Ram temple, but in doing so she may have slighted her father's memory. Rajiv Gandhi may not have been present at Ram's birthplace for the first brick-laying ceremony on November 9, 1989, but a foundation stone was laid at the behest of Rajiv Gandhi's government under official supervision of the District Magistrate of Faizabad, Ram Sharan

Hindu body leading the agitation for a temple, threatened "rivers of blood": he would lay the foundation stone on exactly the spot which the temple plan dictated, namely the "disputed" land. Clandestinely, the VHP was allowed to have its say. But Srivastava was to put out a press note that the brick was laid a 100 feet away from the disputed site.

Rajiv Gandhi was fighting for his life against his once-favoured Finance Minister V.P. Singh's rebellion, in the 1989 general elections. He struck a desperate deal with the VHP. The VHP

was to press the BJP to pull back its horses in a seat at Faizabad and three in Kerala. The VHP will claim that it had done the Shilanyas where it wanted in the first place. This double-cross, too, was part of the secret deal. Despite all these machinations, Rajiv lost the general elections.

In his memoirs *The Turbulent Years*, Pranab Mukherjee has confirmed a gem of a story. A week before the Shilanyas, Rajiv Gandhi, escorted by Home Minister Buta Singh, visited godman Devraha Baba who had a delightful way of blessing his devotees. He dangled his legs from a thatched roof and thumped on the heads of those he chose to bless—in this case, the renaissance Prime Minister of India, eager to know if he should allow the Shilanyas. The Baba, networked in the interstellar spaces, transmitted his message: "Bachcha, ho jane do" (child, let it happen).

The soft saffron that Rajiv adopted by way of electoral tactics came to him from two sources: Indira Gandhi donned this shade during the 1982 Jammu election, this being her gut response to the Khalistan movement. Two years later, the unprecedented majority with which Rajiv Gandhi came to power, after Indira Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984, was not attributed to a sympathy wave but a massive Hindu consolidation against "minority" communalism.

This conventional wisdom among Congress senior leaders caused him to open the temple locks in May 1986. Since then, the Congress has been wasting away, wearing soft saffron, selling its family heirlooms, even as the BJP acquires a shade of saffron as hard as it was on show at the Shilanyas in Ayodhya.

Since it is accepted by everybody—except perhaps Randeep Surjewala—that the Congress is now beyond redemption, the best that the Gandhi siblings can do is to recover as a priceless memento that brick which was laid in their father's name in Ayodhya to start a temple for Lord Rama.

Saeed Naqvi is a senior Indian journalist, television commentator and interviewer.

Three challenges to the 2020 US election



ALI RIAZ

BLACK, WHITE AND GREY

ALTHOUGH the US presidential election is less than 90 days away, it is—unlike any other election year before—not at the centre of public discourse or media coverage. Summer used to be the time of party conventions and nominations; campaigns used to kick off, with much fanfare, and media pundits used to slice and dice polling data and make predictions. But not this year.

Surging deaths from Covid-19 and grim milestones being reached every day have created an unprecedented situation in the US. President Trump is still in denial about the scope of the pandemic. His description of the staggering death toll, more than a thousand a day, as “it is what it is” was another testimony of his lack of empathy. The US economy is in the doldrums. At least 30 million are jobless and layoffs are continuing. During the March-June quarter, the US economy contracted by 32.9 percent—the biggest drop in the gross domestic product since the government began tracking such data in 1947, according to the media. Both public health concerns and economic hardship are overwhelming.

While uncertainty about life and livelihood is ubiquitous, what is certain is that the election will be held on November 3, 2020. In the wake of his falling approval rating and dwindling support compared to the Democratic Party’s presumptive nominee Joe Biden, President Trump tacitly proposed to delay the election. But neither does the US constitution allow such a delay, nor does history suggest any precedents. Thus, his idea was pushed back. Vociferous opposition came from Democrats and constitutional experts, and some Republican lawmakers joined them too. These developments notwithstanding, the 2020 election faces three major challenges.

The first challenge for the candidates is to campaign and reach out to the voters.

In 2016, around 138 million, roughly 58.1 percent of eligible voters, cast their ballots. The number of voters has grown in the past four years and this year the turnout is expected to be higher. Large conventions—a cornerstone of the electoral campaigns—are already scrapped. These conventions provided wall-to-wall coverage in all mainstream media for at least four days to each party and showcased their positions and debates. But now leaders of both parties are scrambling to find ways to have some sort of events to formally anoint their candidates. Large public gatherings maintaining social distance are now in the realm of impossibility, although this is something President Trump relishes.

Two reasons preclude such events: health risks for the participants and the risk of a poor showing. The rally organised by the Trump campaign on June 20 at Tulsa, Oklahoma was poorly attended, even though the campaign had trumpeted that hundreds of thousands would flock to the venue. Besides, the death of Herman Cain from Covid-19, a one-time Republican presidential candidate who attended the rally, has made everyone wary. Bus trips, a familiar feature of US elections, will be somewhat irrelevant this time around. Door to door campaigns may be conducted, but only to deliver printed materials. In previous elections, robust “knock-on-the-door” operations not only allowed campaign workers to reach the voters, but also were an indication of how a candidate may fare on election day. The scale will be limited this year.

These make the campaigns extremely dependent on reaching voters via media—mainstream and social. Electronic media, particularly television, has always played a key role in the US presidential campaigns. Since 2008, social media has gained salience. It was a key to the victory of Barack Obama. But the 2016 election revealed the darker side of social media. The machination of Cambridge Analytica in 2016, the spread of fake news by dubious sources often connected to foreign governments, and the ongoing Russian intervention threat have all made the situation difficult. Differentiating



File photo of a voter placing their ballot in a curbside ballot drop box to help prevent the spread of Covid-19 during the Maryland US presidential primary election, as other voters stand in a long line waiting to cast their votes, on June 2, 2020. PHOTO: REUTERS/JIM BOURG

legitimate messages from fake news will not only be a task of the voters but also of the campaigns themselves. Evidently, these developments will make campaigning more like an “information war” than an election campaign. Campaign expenditures will increase, consequently the war chests of candidates may become a serious determinant to the success.

The second challenge is to make people vote. Considering the health risks associated with in-person voting, there is a growing demand for expanding the options for voting by mail. There are two ways of mail-in voting: universal mail-in voting, where all voters can vote by mail, and absentee balloting, where the voters can ask for a ballot via mail. Five states—Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington and Utah—have had the universal mail-in balloting system for a long time, while three states—California, Nebraska

and North Dakota—allow individual counties to conduct their elections by mail. Another 30 states as well as Washington D.C. allow voters to take advantage of absentee ballot without any excuse. Democrats are pushing the demand that all states adopt universal mail-in voting. Trump has already begun a concerted campaign to undermine the process making false allegations that mail-in voting is unsafe and plagued by fraud. There is no evidence to support Trump’s claim, as studies have shown that it does not benefit one party. Trump himself has voted via mail at least in three elections, including this year’s primary election. About 16 members of his family, campaign team, and top officials in his administration have voted by mail in recent years.

The mail-in ballot issue has brought the US Postal Service into the centre of the debate. President Trump has recently appointed a

Republican fundraiser as the postmaster general. Louis DeJoy has made several changes, including getting rid of overtime for hundreds of thousands of employees and requiring mail that arrives late to be delivered the next day. These are being considered as a way of the Trump administration to slow down mail delivery and influence the result. The Republican Party’s opposition to universal mail-in voting is nothing but a political ploy and part of longstanding efforts of voter suppression. While the party supports mail-in voting in Florida and Texas, states with Republican governors, it has challenged a similar decision by Nevada in the court. However, there are some concerns whether states are ready to handle a large number of mail-in votes. In 2016, nearly one-quarter of votes were cast by mail.

The third challenge is whether the results of the election will be delayed, and the integrity of the election will be questioned. Except for a tightly contested election, the result of the election, particularly the Presidential one, is known by the early morning of Wednesday. However, if there are a large number of mail-in votes, it may not be “election night” but “election week”. The slow process of counting might add to uncertainty, unless there is a clear winner. If Trump does not lose decisively, it is likely that he will challenge the result in the court and hope for a rerun of the 2000 election. One may recall how on December 12, 2000—after a month-long legal battle following that election—the Supreme Court, in a 5-4 vote, ruled in favour of Republican candidate George W. Bush.

As the election day approaches, more problems and questions regarding the electoral process and counting will appear. However, these three challenges will remain at the front and centre until a clear winner emerges. This is a grim reminder that we are living in a different time, an era of Covid-19 which not only influences life and livelihood but political processes too.

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Why the world needs a second Marshall Plan



ABDULLAH SHIBLI

AN OPEN DIALOGUE

“LITTLE international aid is flowing to poorer regions to fight the epidemic.” That was the headline in a major news item circulating in early March, before the spread of Covid-19 was declared to be a “pandemic” and the virus had started its devastating journey out of Wuhan and flattened the economic and geo-economic landscape, upending global commerce. It has been five months since then and, unfortunately, we have been getting the same dire assessment and pleas for assistance all around the world.

After World War II, the US launched an aid programme to help European countries recover from the ravages of the great war. The programme, known as the Marshall Plan, named after the US Secretary of State who played an important role in creating and marketing this plan, was instrumental in pushing the war-devastated countries like Germany, Britain, and France get back on their feet and helped accelerate post-war economic recovery. Today, as we try to undo the economic mayhem created by Covid-19, the international community must see the necessity of a concerted and coordinated effort to launch a second Marshall Plan to hoist up the hard-hit countries, and also to intelligently finance the new economy that will take shape in the post-pandemic era.

Economist Robert Shiller, a Nobel laureate, fears that the economic effects of the pandemic may take a long time to heal. Boston Consulting Group estimates the virus could obliterate as much as USD 16 trillion from global wealth this year, a 7 percent contraction, and stymie growth for five years going forward. By contrast, the 2008 financial crisis erased USD 10 trillion. Global debt, including borrowing by households, governments, and companies, has jumped to more than three times the size of the global economy, the highest ratio on record, according to

the Institute of International Finance. Mark Lowcock, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, warned, “Covid-19 has now affected every country and almost every person on the planet.”

The question is, who will fund this new Post-Pandemic Plan (PPP)? The key contributors will have to be the US and the OECD countries, plus international organisations such as the World Bank, IMF, and ADB. Other sources could be SDG

announced initiative of EU leaders to assist their own member-states. The plan, announced on July 21, combines the multiannual financial framework (MFF) and an extraordinary recovery effort, Next Generation EU (NGEU), into a 1.824 trillion euro financial package for 2021-2027 to help the EU to rebuild after the Covid-19 pandemic, and to support investment in the green and digital transitions.

Unfortunately, some of the rich countries are dragging their feet when it comes to

World Food Program, sent out a strong message sounding the alarm by highlighting the possibility of 265 million people being vulnerable to a famine by the end of 2020. The UN appeals to wealthy nations for funding all the time, he said, but the pandemic is “a one-time phenomenon, a catastrophe we’re hitting,” so it’s not unreasonable to ask the wealthiest people and companies to give. He added: “I don’t mean just a few million. I’m talking about hundreds of millions of dollars, billions.”

The proposed PPP will offer loans and grants to countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America who have suffered a major downturn in their economy (i.e., 5 percent decline in GDP in the April-June 2020 quarter)—with no strings attached.

The “no strings attached” clause is important to remove any notion that only the market economies or US-allied nations will be the beneficiaries of the PPP. The United Nations or a newly created agency can be entrusted with managing this fund, which is initially proposed to be USD 100 billion—a mere .1 percent of the USD 8 trillion stimulus package rolled out by the world’s 20 richest countries to buttress their own economies.

Various ideas have already been floated to that end: a) enlist the legislators in the USA, the UK, and the EU to participate; b) promote equitable and sustainable economic growth; and c) strengthen the healthcare sectors to prevent future pandemics. It has been suggested that the WHO must be restructured to prevent recurrence of mishaps of the past, and countries must be transparent, communicate outbreaks of communicable diseases, and alert WHO, CDC, and regional health bodies with the utmost urgency.

There are several other precedents besides the Marshall Plan to guide this new global initiative. After WWII, the Soviet Union developed its own economic plan, known as the Molotov Plan, for the Eastern European countries that were liberated by the Red Army. In addition to the Marshall Plan, the USA also provided assistance to Japan during the occupation period and, between 1946 and 1952, the magnitude of the transfer was roughly USD 15.2 billion (in 2005 dollars),

of which 77 percent was grants and the remaining 23 percent was loans.

Last month, more than two dozen international aid agencies have told the US government that they are “increasingly alarmed” that “little to no US humanitarian assistance has reached those on the front lines”. Failure to help will result in delays in economic recovery and even potentially trigger a resurgence of the virus.

Tedros Adhanom, the WHO chief, said that more funds will be necessary in the coming months to meet the global demand for personal protective equipment, medical oxygen in hospital care, and other essential supplies. He also said that less than two-thirds of health facilities globally have hand hygiene stations, while three billion people lack soap and water at home. “If we are to stop Covid-19 or any other source of infection, and keep health workers safe, we must dramatically increase investments in soap, access to water, and alcohol-based hand rubs,” he said. “The most devastating and destabilising effects” of the novel coronavirus pandemic “will be felt in the world’s poorest countries.”

Countries such as Bangladesh that are providing shelter to refugees have repeatedly pointed out that the Rohingya camps have minimal access to personal hygiene amenities, safe drinking water, sanitation, soap, sanitisers or preventive hygiene and protective measures. Unfortunately, millions elsewhere in some countries still do not have access to clean water and sanitation facilities.

What could Bangladesh do to bolster its claim to the resources destined for vulnerable countries? All the ministries, in coordination with the PM’s Coronavirus Task Force, and in partnership with the private sector, might want to do the following: 1) track the funding available for developing countries and go for it; 2) seek foreign direct investment (FDI) aggressively; and 3) train and assist the business community to reach out to international businesses and to get ready for the next business boom.

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PHOTO: AFP

assistance, Global Environmental Fund, and the Gulf states. The UN has already issued an urgent solicitation to governments, companies, and the super-rich to contribute to a USD 6.7 billion fund for immediate humanitarian assistance. However, this amount is just a fraction of the hundreds of billions of USD that will be needed to fund the PPP.

The model for PPP could be the recently

stepping up to the plate and are hesitating to even come forward in response to the UN’s earlier call, in March, for the measly USD 2 billion included in the initial appeal. Only half of this money was raised, mainly from contributions by Great Britain, Germany, and the European Commission. Persian Gulf countries, Japan, and Canada are still but minor contributors to this fund.

David Beasley, executive director of the

QUOTABLE Quote

THOMAS MANN (1875-1955)
German author.

All interest in disease and death is only another expression of interest in life.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	30 Set afire	9 Flight makeup
1 Scheme	32 Jackson 5 hit	11 Chisholm Trail end
5 Puts on ice	33 Clumsy one	17 Movie set worker
10 Ancient Greek colony	34 Position	20 Sword part
12 Let on	35 Placates	21 Argo skipper
13 Scale	37 Head out	23 Blackjack’s cousins
14 Note from the boss	39 Places for pads	25 Illinois city
15 Kipling book	40 Less loony	26 Atom centers
16 Mamie’s mate	41 Virtuous one	27 Demi Moore movie
18 Gloss target	42 Try out	28 Kitchen fixtures
19 Horse house	DOWN	29 Bulletin board items
21 “West Side Story” gang	1 Chooses	31 Reviewer Roger
22 Night prowlers	2 Nabokov novel	33 Aide: Abbr.
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YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

C	U	B	A	N		B	A	W	L	S			
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BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

Bangabandhu's

FROM PAGE 12

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad today calls upon Pakistan to shun the path of hatred and conspiracy, release all the Bangalees stranded in Pakistan and refrain from obstructing the course of justice so that a new page could be turned in Bangladesh-Pakistan relations on the basis of equality and national integrity.

HEAVY CROP DAMAGE FEARED Standing crops, paddy and jute, on a vast tract of land of Pabna and Jamalpur have been damaged heavily by flood. Meanwhile floodwater is receding in Sirajganj. The erosion, however, continued on slowly. Five lives have so far been claimed by flood in Rangpur.

SOURCES: August 10, 1972 issues of *Bangladesh Observer*, *Dainik Bangla* and *Dainik Ittefaq*.

Bodies

FROM PAGE 12

and a bag with papers from the spot. Masud and Mamun were returning to their workplaces by a motorcycle after the Eid holidays.

Contacted, Shahinul Islam Fakir, additional superintendent of Tangail police, said reason behind the deaths could be confirmed after receiving autopsy reports.

Music director

FROM PAGE 12

were music directors and composers in the 1960s.

Born on December 24 in 1952, Alauddin won the Bangladesh National Film Award five times as the best music director.

He directed music for more than 300 films.

Death toll

FROM PAGE 12

tested for Covid-19, Gopalakrishnan said, adding that autopsies of the dead would also be carried out according to the Covid-19 protocol.

Some 149 patients remain in hospital after some were discharged yesterday, Gopalakrishnan said.

Authorities have also asked local people who rushed out to help the passengers trapped in the plane to go into quarantine.

The Boeing-737 plane skidded off the table-top runway of Calicut, crashing nose-first into the ground. Such runways are located at an altitude and have steep drops at one or both ends.

In 2010, another Air India Express flight from Dubai overshoot the table-top runway at Mangalore, a city in the south, and slid down a hill, killing 158 people.

Deaths more

FROM PAGE 12

Rajshahi and Khulna.

At the daily briefing, additional director general (administration) of DGHS Dr Nasima Sultana said of the 32 that died yesterday, 16 were from Dhaka and the rest were from other divisions.

A total of 11,737 samples were tested in 84 labs across the country in the last 24 hours.

At least 2,611 tested positive, which means one out five tests were positive.

So far, 2,55,113 people tested positive since the detection of the first case in the country on March 8.

The death rate, compared to the total number of cases, stands at 1.32 percent.

The total infection rate is 20.42 percent, according to the DGHS.

Meanwhile, 1,020 Covid-19 patients have recovered in the last 24 hours.

The total number of recoveries stands at 1,46,604 and the recovery rate is at 57.47 percent.

Meanwhile, 865 people were put under isolation, the DGHS official added during the briefing.

Among the deceased, 25 were male and seven were female while one was between 21-30 years old, four within 41-50, 12 were between 51-60 years old, 10 between 61-70, four were within 71-80 and one was between 81-90 years old.

Dr Nasima urged people to test if they detect symptoms. "If you have a fever and cold, please don't ignore and go for testing," she said.

Covid deaths

FROM PAGE 12

and extending supplemental unemployment benefits if the White House could not reach a deal on a relief package with top Democrats in Congress.

Trump, speaking at a news conference at his golf property in Bedminster, New Jersey, made the vow after negotiations between the two sides broke down on Friday.

Covid-19 infections are rising in 20 US states, according to a Reuters analysis, as the center of the outbreak shifts from sunbelt states such as California, Florida and Texas to the Midwest.

City officials in Anchorage, Alaska, on Friday won a court ruling in favour of a ban on indoor restaurant dining after suing an eatery that defied an emergency order prohibiting the practice.

Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker partially rolled back plans to reopen the state's economy, reducing the maximum number allowed at outdoor gatherings from 100 to 50.



People hold crosses as a tribute to Covid-19 victims and as a protest against the way Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro is handling the pandemic, in front of the World War II Brazilian Veterans monument in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Two witnesses 'forced' to sign on blank papers

FROM PAGE 1

charge of the investigation and did not receive the case documents yet.

Former army major Sinha, 36, had been making travel documentaries for a YouTube channel called "Just Go" with the three university students.

On July 31, he was returning to Cox's Bazar from Teknaf after shooting with Sifat.

His car was stopped at Shaplapur on Marine Drive road.

Police claimed that they tried to search the vehicle and Sinha aimed his pistol at them, which prompted them to shoot in self-defence.

They also claimed that they seized drugs from the vehicle.

Later, police conducted a drive in Nilima resort and arrested Shipra and Rifat.

Police later released Rifat under Guardian's custody. **THEY HIRED RESORT FOR TWO MONTHS** According to Nilima resort officials, Sinha and the three students rented the D-1 cottage on July 6 for two months, with a monthly rent for Tk 70 thousand. Sinha had already paid the rent in two phases to the resort authority, said caretaker Lokman.

Lokman said that Sinha was a very gentle and kind-hearted man. "He would always talk to us with a smile on his face and invite us whenever they would cook good food or bring fruits."

TWO ACCUSED MISSING On August 5, Sinha's sister Sharmen

Superintendent of Police ABM Masud Hossain on his cell phone around 9:33pm on the day of incident and informed that Inspector Liaquat Ali signalled a car but it did not stopped and then he ordered Liaquat to shoot, and he shot.

He is now going there, said Pradeep. After listening, SP Masud asked Pradeep to go as well.

Moments later, Inspector Liaquat called SP Masud again around 9:34pm and said that a man wearing an army uniform was trying to "get away after identifying himself as a major".

As the person pointed a gun at him, he shot.

SP Masud said, "The person first shot and missed. Then you shot him."

Asked about status of Sifat and Shipra, he said that a lawyer was already appointed to deal their case. "Rab will interrogate them for the sake of investigation."

FOUR INTERROGATED AT JAIL GATE Zamilul Hoque, senior assistant superintendent of Rab-15 -- also the investigating officer of the Sinha murder case, interrogated four police members -- Constables Safanur Karim, Kamal Hossain and Mohammad Abdullah and Assistant SI Liton Miah at the jail gate yesterday.

Mohammad Mokammel Hoque, jailer of Cox's Bazar district jail, said the IO interrogated four policemen at 2:00pm yesterday and would further interrogate the arrestees today.

Shahria Ferdush filed a case against nine policemen. Seven of them have already surrendered and are now in jail.

Lt Col Ashique Billah, legal and media wing director of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), yesterday said that the seven arrestees were placed on a seven day remand after Rab's appointed investigating officer appealed in the court.

"We would take the accused in our custody tomorrow [today] and we would interrogate the suspended policemen in phases. We are working in line with court directives for the complete interrogation of the seven accused within ten working days from the date of the given order."

"Although the plaintiff mentioned nine policemen names, in primary investigation we did not find the presence of the two other policemen in Baharchhara investigation centre. Still, we are verifying their roles and checking further," he said.

About interrogating the Cox's Bazar police super, he said that they have made note of the telephonic conversation that surfaced in different media. "Rab is now analysing the conversation and, if necessary, the investigation officer would take further legal action in this regard," he said, adding, "We want to ensure a fair investigation and the punishment of those responsible."

According to media reports, OC Pradeep Kumar Das called

Submerged roads keep people marooned

FROM PAGE 12

damage caused to the road. In Kurigram and Lalmonirhat, 25km unpaved road, 9km paved road, a 4km flood control dyke and 44 bridges/culverts under the LGED, Roads and Highway Department (RHD) and Water Development Board (WDB) have been damaged by floodwater.

"The dyke was the only way to connect our village with other villages. As it has collapsed, we have no alternative ways to leave our village, except boats," said Meher Ali, 58, a farmer in flood-hit Sardob village of Kurigram Sadar.

Villagers now have to spend Tk 10 for each trip in boat to cross the water, which is an additional burden on them, he said.

"Around half a kilometre of a road was damaged by water from the Teesta river, and now the road is under water," said Idris Ali, 58,

a farmer from Burihat village in Lalmonirhat's Rajarhat upazila.

In Nilphamari, flood has badly affected communication as 20 bridges and culverts and 40km of road have been damaged.

"We have completed a rough assessment according to which the damage to roads, bridges and culverts stands around Tk 20 crore," said Saiful Islam senior assistant engineer of LGED at the district office.

Badiuzzaman Proddhan, chairman of Khokshabari union parishad in Sadar upazila, said, "A 15km road connecting tourist spot Nil Sagor with Bottoli Haat lies damaged for more than a month, causing communication disruption to 10 thousand people."

"The 150-metre-long Beltoli Bridge connecting Kishoreganj upazila of Nilphamari with Taraganj of Rangpur district has also been

damaged at both ends, snapping communication," lamented Fazal Kadir, a school teacher in Kishoreganj upazila.

In Sirajganj, residents of Shuvogacha village in Kazipur upazila were dealing with a lot of trouble to reach the upazila headquarters as most of the earthen roads in the village have been damaged.

Around 53km of roads in the district have gone under floodwater. But how much of the roads have been damaged would be known after the water recedes, said Abdur Rahim, district relief and rehabilitation department.

The overall flood situation the district was improving slowly and the water level of the Jamuna came under the danger mark. But many people were still left marooned.

[Our correspondents in Sylhet, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Pabna contributed to the report.]

Examples worth following

FROM PAGE 1

Flora Bably Talang, general secretary of Kubraj, an inter-punji development organisation, said there is a population of around 40,000 who mostly live in hilly punjis in Sylhet division.

"We suffer badly at times due to the poor condition of hilly roads and no electricity facilities. There are so many remote punjis where there are no modern facilities."

"But," he added, "we are following strict health rules during this pandemic for our own safety."

On Thursday, this correspondent was able to secure a visit to three punjis, with special permission and under special arrangement. The nearest of the villages is around 50km from Moulvibazar town.

In the first punji, this correspondent was able to enter through the only open gate and was sprayed down by guards on duty before being allowed in.

Needless to say, he had to keep wearing gloves and a mask all the time and did not enter any house.

"After meeting with all residents, we have been maintaining a complete lockdown with no exceptions," said Welcome Lymba, a resident of Jaflong punji in Gowainghat upazila of Sylhet.

This includes a ban on tourists, who sometimes stray from the popular hill station in Jaflong into the punjis.

Dipu Rema, a resident of Dhanchhara punji in Sreemangal upazila of Moulvibazar, said they met everyone in the village on implementing the lockdown, so that no one is given any special concessions.

"If Covid-19 is able to enter our area, everyone will be severely affected."

Monika Khonglah, myntri (head) of Megatila punji in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar, said even sacks of rice and pulses bought from outside are sprayed and kept in a hut adjacent to the punji gate for a week, as a precaution against the virus.

Father Joseph Gomes OMI, central

committee member of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, and his team are also working in the punjis to spread awareness, under the leadership of Bishop Bejoy N D'Cruze, head of the Sylhet Diocese.

"We are running from one punji to another -- advising everyone to wear masks, maintain social distancing, and adhere to hygiene rules," said Father Joseph.

He said they themselves maintain strict hygiene and use protective gears during the campaigns.

Another precaution has been stopping gathering for public worship in the punjis during the last few months, he added.

ATM Farhad Chowdhury, UNO of Kulaura upazila in Moulvibazar, said the punji residents have been extremely sincere about the Covid-19 issue.

"Their strict rules make us proud. We are also helping them carry out various activities to increase social awareness, including making it compulsory to wear a mask."

China Airlines

FROM PAGE 12

"Maybe it's because we have been bored for too long," Cheng said to AFP.

Later in the day, the excitable gaggle of kids took to the skies in their new uniforms for a two hour flight over the island and the soaring mountain range that runs down its spine.

The flights are part of an innovative attempt by airlines to scramble up some extra cash at a time when their business has all but dried up.

Like most airlines around the world, both China Airlines and its main competitor Eva Air have had to mothball a huge chunk of their fleet as international travel evaporates during the pandemic.

The two also have a limited domestic business to fall back on.

Yesterday, an Eva A330 from Taoyuan International Airport flew over Taiwan's northeast cape, circled Japan's Ryukyu Islands before returning home via the picturesque and rural southeast coast. The total flight time was two hours and 45 minutes.

An economy seat is selling for around NT\$5,288 (US\$180) while business class costs NT\$6,288.

The China Airlines flight lasts around two hours and will also fly into Japanese airspace before turning around to the eastern coast of Taiwan.

Further flights are planned in the coming weeks and both Eva and China Airlines say they have quickly sold out.

Local enthusiasm for the trips has been helped by the knowledge that there is currently little chance of catching the coronavirus on a Taiwanese flight.

Tragic day

FROM PAGE 12

of vehicles and pedestrians all within a distance of half a kilometre in Chuadanga Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

The accident occurred at Sojrojanj Bazar around 6:30am.

Locals protested the accident blocking Chuadanga-Jhenidah highway, halting transport movement.

A night coach of Royal Express, headed towards Chuadanga from Chattogram, first hit a battery-run three-wheeler, killing three of its eight passengers, said Officer-in-Charge of Chuadanga Sadar Police Station Abu Zihad Md Fakhru.

It also rammed into a number of local three-wheelers, motorcycles and pedestrians, leaving three more dead, said the OC.

The deceased are Sohag Ali, 25, Sharifuddin, 30, Raju Ahmed, 45, Kalu, 40, Milon Hossain, 40, and Sree Shashthi Halder, 42.

The injured were admitted at Chuadanga Sadar Hospital, said Abdus Salam, deputy assistant director of Chuadanga Fire Station.

Kanak Kumar Kanti, additional superintendent of Chuadanga police, told our correspondent that police could not arrest the driver and helper as they went into hiding after leaving the vehicle at the local bus depot.

In Saoghat area on Golakandail-Araihazar road in Ruppaganj upazila of Narayanganj, two persons were killed and two others were injured when a CNG-run auto-rickshaw collided with a truck yesterday morning.

The deceased were identified as Nasir Madbar, 26, son of Salim Madbar of Charsidhil village in Shariatpur and Wajib Mia, 14, son of Saeed Mia of Panchgaon Charpara area in Arihazar Upazila, said, Parimal Sutradhar, sub-inspector of Ruppaganj Police station.

The police official said auto-rickshaw driver Nasir Madbar was heading towards Araihazar with three passengers. When his vehicle reached Saoghat area, it collided with a sand truck coming from the opposite direction.

Driver Nasir Madbar and passenger Wajib died on the spot.

At the same time, two passengers Nur Nabi, 26, and Nasir Uddin, 28, of Araihazar area were seriously injured. They were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Two bodies were recovered and sent to Narayanganj General Hospital morgue for autopsy. The sand truck was seized but its driver and helper escaped. Preparations are underway to file a case in this incident.

In Singair upazila of Manikganj, two people were killed in a head-on collision between a Laguna and a motorcycle in Basta area of Hemayetpur-Singair-Manikganj regional highway on Friday night.

The deceased were identified as motorcyclist-Ashraf Khan, 55, of Airmara village in Manikganj Sadar upazila and Laguna passenger-Abdullah, 8, son of Abdul Jalil of Bartala village under Sreepur upazila of Magura district.

Singair police said Ashraf Khan's motorcycle collided with a Hemayetpur-bound Laguna at Basta Bus stand area of the Hemayetpur-Singair-Manikganj regional highway at around 8:00pm on Friday. The Laguna and the motorcycle were submerged in the water.

Abdullah, an 8-year-old passenger from Laguna, drowned in water. Abdullah was found dead two hours later at 10:30pm by firefighters.

On the other hand, Ashraf Khan was rescued in a critical condition and taken to Savar Enam Medical College Hospital where the doctor declared him dead.



'EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE NEW'

Bangladesh Test skipper Mominul Haque returned to practice yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur after a long break due to the coronavirus enforced break. After the successful completion of the first phase of individual practice sessions last month, the second phase began yesterday with an increased number of cricketers across different BCB-run facilities in the country. "Everything seems to be new after such a long time. I think it will take some time to adjust. Maybe it will take 2-3 or 4-5 days to adjust. Hope to adjust with everything soon.

I have been away from cricket for 4-5 months and I missed the game a lot during this time. Teams like England, West Indies and others are returning to cricket and I miss this game more seeing them play. But we too are trying to get back to cricket. There is a possible Test series ahead of us and I hope that we can prepare well for that," said Mominul after yesterday's practice session.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Booters to be tested again

SPORTS REPORTER

BFF officials informed that all 36 persons -- 30 players and six officials -- will be retested for Covid-19 on Monday in two different facilities of Dhaka.

The decision comes after a total of 18 players and an official among 29 tested over the previous few days were found to be positive even though most of them had submitted negative reports prior to being tested at the BSMU under BFF's supervision.

Officials also claimed that the confusion regarding the test results -- seven players and an official were eventually found Covid-19 positive on Friday after the federation had announced them negative on Wednesday -- happened due to 'an error in communication stemming from a server related issue'.



England made quick work of Pakistan on the fourth day of the first Test at Old Trafford in Manchester yesterday, sending the visitors packing for 169. Set a target of 277, the hosts then fell into disarray and were reduced to 107 for four, with both Ben Stokes (7) and Joe Root (42) gone as the game's fate hung in the balance.

PHOTO: REUTERS

A pipeline at risk of being clogged

ZAHANGIR SHAH from Manikganj

In October 2019, Bangladesh cricket was shaken to its core after national cricketers called for a strike and placed an 11-point demand -- which was later extended to 13 points. One of those demands stated the necessity to improve gyms, indoor facilities and ground facilities across the country.

More than nine months since the incident, how much has changed in this regard? Looking at the state of Manikganj district, a place about an hour-and-a-half drive away from Dhaka, it seems as if the players' demands fell on deaf ears.

Manikganj is known for producing many prominent athletes like former cricketer Naimur Rahman, former national footballer Shafiqul Arefin Tutul, national team goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana, former national hockey player Jahid Hossain Raju and many others, but is now home to a very poor sporting facility. The only stadium in the district, built in 1963 on 3.98 acres of land and named Shaheed Miraj-Topon Stadium in remembrance of two heroic

to build a proper athlete-like physique. And to facilitate that a gymnasium needs to be built," said Khokon.

Meanwhile, former national hockey player turned current head coach of the BKSP hockey team, Jahid Hossain Raju, mentioned how a lack of facilities is hindering the growth of many prospects.

"Several players from Manikganj are currently playing in the [hockey] national team. There are a lot of prospects here. But their growth is hindered severely as we still don't have a gymnasium and other training facilities," said Jahid.

However, despite lacking basic training facilities, players from Manikganj are still shining at different levels and competitions. The under-17 boys from Manikganj emerged as champions in the Dhaka division in the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Gold Cup last year, the under-14 football team of Manikganj also became zonal champions in the JFA Cup while athletes from Manikganj won a total of seven gold medals at the National Youth Games.



freedom fighters -- AKM Miraj Uddin and Topon Chowdhury -- has not seen any infrastructural development for a long time.

Although there is a two-storey building with 10 rooms and a gallery for 5000 fans, the dilapidated stadium does not even have basic facilities such as a gymnasium, swimming pool or indoor stadium.

"Manikganj is a fertile land for producing talented athletes. Players from this district have always played valuable roles at the national level. But even after being a district so close to Dhaka, mentionable and proper sporting infrastructure has not yet been built," said former national hockey team skipper Moshir Rahman Biplob.

Sheikh Russell goalkeeper and former national team skipper Ashraful Islam Rana moaned about the reluctance of those concerned in building proper training facilities in his hometown.

"It is disappointing to see that we still do not have an indoor stadium, gymnasium or swimming pool. All these should have been built long ago," sighed the 32-year-old.

Although Manikganj was capable of producing many sporting gems over the years without proper facilities, the district's football coach Shahidul Haque Khokon sought at least a gymnasium to gift the country with more promising players.

"A player needs to do physical activities

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"A player needs to do physical activities

Zidane's first loss coincides with Sarri's last

AGENCIES

Manchester City marched into the Champions League quarterfinals by beating visitors Real Madrid 2-1 for a 4-2 aggregate triumph on Friday, with Raheem Sterling and Gabriel Jesus taking advantage of two dreadful errors by Raphael Varane.

Having beaten the 13-times champions home and away, City will now head to Lisbon for the 'final eight' where they will face Olympique Lyonnais, who progressed on away goals

against Juventus in Friday's other game despite a 2-1 loss on the night.

On Saturday, Juventus announced that Sarri had been sacked. Sarri was hired to give Juventus a more flamboyant edge but struggled to impose his so-called "Sarri-ball" high-tempo passing game on the Turin side.

He had been under pressure since his side lost to Napoli on penalties in the final of the Coppa Italia in June.

Real, trailing 2-1 from the first-leg, were without suspended skipper Sergio Ramos at The Etihad and it showed.

French international Varane, having

If I wasn't devastated by not qualifying, I'd be happy with the performance. I actually expected less from us, I think we played a great game. We fell behind to a penalty kick that could have made us lose our heads and we had three chances when we were 2-1 ahead.

MAURIZIO SARRI
JUVENTUS COACH

received a pass inside his own area from goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois in the ninth minute, was robbed by Jesus and the striker slipped the ball to Sterling who slotted home his 100th goal for the club.

Karim Benzema equalised from a header after some brilliant work down the flank by Rodrygo and it took another piece of calamitous defending by Varane to decide the tie in the 68th minute, when his backpass to Courtois was lobbed home by Jesus.

Zinedine Zidane had never lost a knockout tie in the Champions League as Real manager, having won his

previous 12 encounters while winning the trophy three times. "It is important. We beat them twice. Zinedine Zidane never lost a knockout game. The calm and personality they play with, they are good," he said.

Zidane said his side's loss had to be put in the context of their domestic title-winning campaign. "We are proud of what we achieved this season, this is football. We lost to a good team and have to accept it," said the Frenchman. "95% of what we have done this season has been excellent. Today we played a good team and we have to accept it."

"I wanted to show my face because this defeat is mine. I have to take all the responsibility for this match. We played well in the game, we'd prepared well for it, but at this level if you make mistakes you end up paying a lot for them. I can't explain the errors but I have to accept them. This is a complicated moment for me. This hasn't happened to me many times in my career but something like this can always happen, errors are made all over the pitch but in my position they have a higher price. My team mates know I'm sad but I have to show character and get over this quickly. It'll be a sad night for me. I'm a competitor and today I messed up. I'm not happy but I have to accept it."

RAPHAEL VARANE
REAL MADRID DEFENDER



Cristiano Ronaldo (L) fell to his knees and looked up at the heavens after Juventus were eliminated from the Champions League by Lyon (C) on away goals on Friday night. The Portuguese has scored all seven Juventus goals in the Champions League knockouts over the past two seasons. Meanwhile Real Madrid defender Raphael Varane gifted Manchester City two goals to end Zinedine Zidane's stranglehold on the Champions League.

PHOTO: TWITTER/REUTERS

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

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT BSRM

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES

RECORD HOLDER

World's Largest VRM

SHAH CEMENT

Tragic day on roads

17 killed; head-on collision leaves 7 dead in Mymensingh

STAR REPORT

At least 17 people were killed in four separate road accidents in Mymensingh, Chuadanga, Narayanganj and Manikganj between Friday night and yesterday afternoon.

In Muktagacha upazila of Mymensingh, seven people including six passengers and the driver of a CNG-run auto-rickshaw were killed in a road accident in Mankon area on Mymensingh-Jamalpur road yesterday afternoon.

Among them, five could be identified. They are Nurul Islam, his wife Taslima Akter and their daughter Liza Akter, of Madhupur in Tangail; and CNG-driver Ebadul Haque, and Nazrul Islam, of Muktagacha, said police.

Quoting locals, Md Jahangir Alam, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Muktagacha Police Station, said the accident took place when a Jamalpur bound bus from Mymensingh collided head on with the CNG coming from opposite direction, killing four on the spot and injuring three others critically around 4.00pm.

The injured persons were taken to Muktagacha Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared them dead, said the OC.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies.

Police also seized the bus and detained its driver with the help of the local people. The driver was taken to the police station and was being interrogated as of filing this report, informed the OC.

In another development, six people were killed and nine others injured as a night coach rammmed a number

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



A wall on Malibagh College Road is covered with mostly to-let notices of different colours to attract the attention of potential tenants. Many people have left the capital following the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent loss in earnings. Landlords are finding it difficult to get tenants in many neighbourhoods, including this one.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

INDIAN PLANE CRASH Death toll rises to 18

Inclement weather blamed; black boxes recovered

REUTERS, Kozhikode

The death toll from an Indian passenger aircraft accident has risen to 18, while 16 people have been seriously injured, a senior government official said yesterday.

The Air India Express plane, which was repatriating Indians stranded in Dubai due to the coronavirus pandemic, overshot the runway of the Calicut International Airport in heavy rain near the southern city of Kozhikode on Friday. It was India's worst passenger aircraft accident since 2010.

The flight was carrying 190 passengers and crew.

The plane's pilot and the co-pilot were killed in the accident, K Gopalakrishnan, chief of the Malappuram district in the southern state of Kerala, told Reuters.

All survivors were admitted to various hospitals and were also

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Submerged roads keep people marooned

STAR REPORT

Road communication in some districts has taken a hit as prolonged flooding has damaged a large portion of roads and bridges there.

For many flood-affected people, who are facing immense sufferings in those districts, boat is now the only mode of transport.

Meanwhile, a Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) report yesterday said although water of major rivers, including the Padma, the Jamuna, and the Brahmaputra, would continue to recede, 12 rivers were still flowing above the danger level.

Some 54.60 lakh people of 10.18 lakh families have been affected by flood in 163 upazilas of 33 districts since June last week, according to a recent report of the Department of Disaster Management.

In Sunamganj, an estimated 900km of road in all 11 upazilas have been damaged, as per the primary estimation of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

Among them, 24 roads have become impassable while at least 40 approach roads to bridges and culverts have been damaged by floodwater, said Mahbub Alam, executive engineer of LGED in the district.

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Bangabandhu's meeting with British Foreign Secretary

August 9, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

HOME CALLS ON MUJIB

British Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas Home visits Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at London Clinic today and stays with him for nearly 30 minutes. Sir Alec tells reporters that he is happy to see Bangladesh prime minister recovering steadily. British Foreign Office describes the visit as a 'courtesy call' while Bangladesh High Commission in London says that Bangabandhu and the British foreign secretary have a general discussion of recent events in Bangladesh.

It is reported that Bangabandhu would decide within two days the date of his departure for convalescence in Switzerland in response to an invitation by the Swiss government. According to a health bulletin issued by Bangabandhu's personal physician Dr Nurul Islam, Sir Edward Muir removes stitches this morning. Other condition of the Bangladesh prime minister continues to be satisfactory.

OSMANY'S CALL TO CHINA

General MAG Osmany, minister for shipping, airways and inland water transport, today appeals to China to recognise the reality of Bangladesh. He says, "We had also supported China during her struggle and now it is her duty to recognise Bangladesh."

RELEASE STRANDED BANGALEES

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Deaths more in densely populated divisions

32 more reported dead, 2,611 infected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Divisions with higher populations are witnessing higher numbers of Covid-19 deaths.

At least 3,365 people, including 32 from yesterday, have so far died from coronavirus infection in the country.

Of them 1,613 were from Dhaka, 798 from Chattogram, 209 from Rajshahi and 252 from Khulna, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Till yesterday, the death toll stood at 132 in Barishal, 158 in Rangpur, 132 in Sylhet and 71 in Mymensingh.

According to the Population and Housing Census 2011, Dhaka has the highest population followed by Chattogram,

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China Airlines offer sight-seeing flights



AFP, Taoyuan

Faced with the coronavirus collapse in travellers, Taiwanese airlines have begun offering sight-seeing "flights to nowhere" on their passenger jets -- including flight attendant lessons for children.

At the headquarters of Taiwan's China Airlines in Taoyuan yesterday, 50 children took a morning course on how to serve passengers aboard a mock cabin.

Cheng Yu-wei, who works in the fashion apparel business and enjoys travelling abroad, came with his wife and six-year old daughter to "revive that old feeling of travelling".

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Bodies of 2 bikers found near highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police recovered two throat-slit bodies from a waterbody near Dhaka-Tangail Highway in Mirzapur upazila of Tangail yesterday morning.

The dead are Masud Rana, 30, of Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, and Mamun Miah, 32, of Rangpur town.

Masud was a garment factory worker in Gazipur and Mamun was a bKash agent in Chakraborty area of the same district, said police.

The locals saw their bodies floating in the floodwater along the highway at 7:00am and informed police.

Later, police and fire service members recovered the bodies at 9:00am and brought them to the police station.

Police also recovered a Yamaha motorcycle, clothes and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Music director Alauddin Ali put on life support

UNB, Dhaka

National award-winning music director and composer Alauddin Ali has been put on life support at a city hospital.

His daughter Alif Alauddin, a singer and anchor, shared the information in a Facebook post yesterday.

He was admitted to the hospital as his condition deteriorated.

Alauddin's father, Jadob Ali, was a staff artist of Bangladesh Betar. His uncle, Sadek Ali, and cousins Dhir Ali Miah, Mansur Ali, Yunus Ali and Momotaz Uddin,

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Growers bring in guavas in boatloads on Bhimruli canal in Jhalakathi yesterday. The canal serves as one of the largest markets for wholesale guavas in the country. Some say the trade in the monsoon fruit has been going on at the floating market for around 200 years. These days the market attracts tourists too.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Covid deaths in LatAm top Europe

Schools reopen in virus hotspots in US; Fauci warns vaccine may be partially effective

AGENCIES

Latin America and the Caribbean surpassed Europe on Friday to become the region with the most Covid-19 deaths.

The world's worst-hit region has recorded 213,120 fatal cases, 460 more than Europe. Over the last week, 44 percent of global deaths from Covid-19 -- 18,300 out of 41,500 -- happened in the region.

Latin America is also the region with the largest number of infections in the world with 5.3 million. More than half, some 2.9 million, are in Brazil, which has also recorded 98,500 deaths among its 212 million people.

Only the United States has been worse hit. More than 160,000 people have died from virus in the US as President Donald Trump said he would unilaterally grant financial relief to Americans after talks with congressional Democrats stalled.

The grim milestone, which includes 10,000 deaths nationwide in the past nine days, comes as Americans and their political leaders remain divided over such issues as reopening schools, testing, business closures and mask orders.

Trump said he would issue an executive order suspending payroll taxes for all Americans through the end of this year

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PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 9

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4:20 12:45 5:00 6:47 8:15

JAMAAT 4:55 1:15 5:15 6:50 8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION