

NAVALNY POISONED
Germany says the Putin critic was poisoned with Novichok chemical nerve agent, demands answers from Moscow
SEE PAGE 6

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Your Right to Know

MUHARRAM 14, 1442 HJRI

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**BANGLADESH
UPDATE**



2,582
New cases in 24hrs



3,17,528
Total cases



4,351
Deaths



2,11,016
Recoveries

**GLOBAL
UPDATE**



863,136
Deaths



26,008,509
Total cases

LIFTING OF RESTRICTIONS

Untimely, risky

Govt statistics show number of hospitalised, critical patients on rise; experts say social distancing not possible in public transports

**COVID-19: NOW
AND A MONTH AGO**



| PATIENTS | 2-AUGUST | 1-SEPTEMBER |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------------|
| Hospitalised (general beds) | 3,739 | 3,749 |
| At ICUs | 283 | 300 |
| Positivity rate | 24.05% | 15.97% |

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The numbers of Covid-19 patients at the hospitals and those needing treatment at Intensive Care Units have increased over the last one month, suggesting that there is still a long way to go to bring the pandemic under control.

At least 4,022 Covid-19 patients were admitted at hospitals on August 2. Of them, some 283 in critical conditions were being treated at the Intensive Care Units (ICU).

One month down the line, when things appear to be returning to normalcy, the number of hospitalised patients was 4,049; and 300 of them were in ICUs on Tuesday.

Although there is no sign of the pandemic abating anytime soon, the government has lifted all restrictions on public movement and activities which were imposed to

contain the spread of coronavirus.

The much-talked-about implementation of the containment efforts -- marking hotspots as red zones, imposing lockdown and maintaining social distancing -- have already fizzled out even before the government officially lifted the restrictions on Tuesday.

Health experts maintain that it cannot be said that the outbreak has come under control until the positivity rate falls below 5 percent, and a temporary trend of decline in the positivity rate might stumble through the lifting of restrictions.

"I don't understand why the government took the decision. Why should let people know the logic behind such a move," noted virologist Prof Nazrul Islam told The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Halting traffic, motorcyclists go across the capital's busy Airport road just so they don't have to take the designated U-turn nearby. Such reckless and selfish acts often cause accidents claiming lives. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO:
PRABIR DAS

Covid tests go up, so do cases

35 die, 2,582 test positive in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the number of Covid-19 tests increased in 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday compared to the previous 24-hour period, the number of coronavirus cases also went up in the country.

During the 24-hour period till 8:30am yesterday, a total of 2,582 new novel coronavirus cases were reported after testing 15,204 samples. The infection rate was 16.98 percent, according to a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Another 35 people died from Covid-19 across the country during the same period. With them, the total number of deaths from the virus rose to 4,351 with a death rate of 1.37 percent.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Health watchdog in deep slumber

No meeting in last 5 months!

RASHIDUL HASAN and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

As the country is confronted with an unprecedented health emergency caused by the pandemic and multiple scams hitting the sector, the parliamentary watchdog concerned seems to be in a deep slumber.

The parliamentary standing committee on the health ministry did not hold a single meeting in the last five months when the novel coronavirus gradually gained its footing in the country, leaving the public healthcare services overstretched.

More than 4,300 people have died and over three lakh got infected since the first Covid-19 cases were reported on March 8. The infection curve is getting higher every day with no sign of relief in sight.

In these trying times, the role of the Jatiya Sangsad body, which has plenary powers to review works relating to the ministry, and inquire into any activity or irregularity, is all but depressing, say experts.

According to the rules of JS procedure, each standing committee shall meet at least once a month, but the committee in question did not hold any meeting since March 24.

In fact, the JS body met only six times in the last 19 months after it was constituted in January last year, its members told The Daily Star.

The case with the other 49 parliamentary standing committees of the current JS is similar.

No meeting of any of the committees took place in April and May; only one meeting was held in June and four in July, shows the parliament website.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

HIGH COURT RULING

Hindu widows to have right on husbands' land

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ruled that Hindu widows will have the rights to both agricultural and non-agricultural lands that belonged to their husbands.

They will also get the right to sell the lands for legal necessities during their lifetime, the HC observed.

Interpreting the Hindu Women's Right to Properties Act, a judgment of Indian Federal Court in 1941, and Adaption Law of 1972, the court said no separation has been made between the agricultural and non-agricultural lands in Bangladesh, and so Hindu widows have rights to the lands of their husbands.

The HC bench of Justice Md Miftah Uddin Choudhury came up with the verdict following a civil

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

AMAN FARMING

Recurring flood ruins a season

DAE now suggesting going for late variety, winter crop

PINAKI ROY and MAHBUB KHAN

Prolonged and multiple monsoon floods have disrupted cultivation of Aman paddy, which provides around 36 percent of total rice production in the country.

This is the period when farmers remain busy taking care of their Aman paddy every year but they are mostly sitting idle this time as a vast area of agricultural land is still submerged.

Traditionally, August 15 is considered the deadline for planting Aman. But this year, cropland in many areas is still under water and farmers could not prepare their seedbeds. Floods destroyed seedbeds or submerged paddy fields where Aman saplings were planted.

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) is now suggesting farmers go for a late variety of Aman or cultivate winter crops after water recedes.

Delowar Jahan, a farmer of Ghior in Manikganj, said he prepared a seedbed but could not plant Aman as water inundated his field for the second time this year.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



AL decides to come out of Covid hiatus

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

After a lull of organisational activities for about five months amid the Covid-19 outbreak, the ruling Awami League has decided to revive the activities on a limited scale following health safety guidelines.

The decision came at a meeting of the party's secretary-level leaders yesterday at its headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital, with AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader in the chair. The party has already conveyed the decision to its grassroots.

Speaking at the meeting, Quader asked party leaders to submit by this month the draft lists of full-fledged committees of those units whose councils were held but the full committees were not named.

He also asked the secretary-level leaders to submit names of members for sub-committees by the middle of this month. There would be 35 members for each sub-committee, the AL leader informed the meeting.

Sources said during the discussion on the sub-committee, party joint general secretaries Mahbubul Alam Hanif and Bahauddin Nasim told the meeting that no

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Three workers killed in fuel tank explosion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three people were killed as an oil tanker exploded at the mechanical workshop of Incontrade Container Depot in Chattogram's Patenga area yesterday.

The dead are Muktar, 20, Newaz, 30, and Arman, 25, all employees of Incontrade Limited.

Besides, three more people -- Amir Hossain, 35, Jobayer Hossain, 30, and Rabiul, 38 -- sustained burn injuries.

They were admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

According to officials, the blast occurred around 11:30am when the workers were welding a diesel tanker.

Azizul Islam, assistant director at Chattogram Headquarter of Fire Service and Civil Defense, said the tanker went off as fuel was left inside it when the workers were welding.

On information, two units of firefighters rushed to the spot, doused the flare, and rescued the injured.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Police officers examine the charred remains of a semi-truck which caught on fire yesterday, killing three workers who were welding its fuel tank, at Incontrade Container Depot in Patenga area of Chattogram.

PHOTO:
RAJIB RAIHAN

BORDER FLARE-UP WITH CHINA

India secures its east after Ladakh clashes

Rajnath Singh leaves for Russia to attend key meet

AGENCIES

India has moved troops to its eastern stretch of border with China since clashes erupted between the nuclear-armed rivals on the western part of their border in the Himalayas in June, a government official said.

The June clash in the Ladakh region, in the western part of their border, was the worst violence between the Asian giants in decades and there has been little sign of a reduction in tension, with more military action in the past week.

The movement of troops to the eastern district of Anjaw, in Arunachal Pradesh state, which China also claims, raises the prospect of a wider face-off though both government and military officials in India ruled out any imminent confrontation.

"The military presence has surely increased, but as far as incursions are concerned, there are no verified reports as such," said Ayushi Sudan, Anjaw's chief civil servant, adding that several Indian army battalions were stationed there.

"There has been an increase in troop deployment since the Galwan incident, and even prior to that we'd started," she told Reuters by telephone, referring to the June clash in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed.

Arunachal Pradesh, which China calls South Tibet, was at the centre of a full-scale border war between India and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Macron backs Iraq ‘sovereignty’ on first Baghdad visit

AFP, Baghdad

French President Emmanuel Macron met his Iraqi counterpart yesterday on his first official visit to Baghdad, where he insisted the war-scarred country should reassert its “sovereignty” despite simmering US-Iran tensions.

Coming straight from a two-day trip to crisis-hit Lebanon, Macron is the most prominent world leader to visit Iraq since Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi came to power in May.

The trip aims to “launch an initiative alongside the United Nations to support a process of sovereignty,” Macron announced on his final night in Beirut.

In Baghdad, he voiced his support for his Iraqi counterpart Barham Saleh to help Iraq fight Islamic State group sleeper cells and resist foreign interference.

“Iraq has been going through a challenging time for several years, with war and terrorism,” Macron said.

“You have a transition to lead. France will be by your side so the international community can help,” he added.

But there were few details on the much-vaunted “sovereignty” initiative,

and Iraqi officials told AFP they were not expecting announcements of new financial or military aid.

Saleh thanked Macron for France’s support in the anti-IS fight and said he hoped Macron would pay a longer visit to Iraq in 2021.

After dictator Saddam Hussein was toppled by a 2003 US-led invasion -- in which France did not take part -- Iraq was ravaged by waves of sectarian conflict.

That culminated in IS capturing swathes of the country six years ago, before the jihadists were beaten back with international support including a US-led coalition that did include French forces.

Iraq has been caught for years between its two main allies Iran and the US, a balancing act that has become increasingly tortured since Washington’s withdrawal in 2018 from a multilateral nuclear deal with Tehran.

France, one of the key remaining backers of the 2015 agreement, called for de-escalation after a US strike on Baghdad in January killed top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and prompted Iran to launch missiles against US troops in Iraq.

Health watchdog

FROM PAGE 1

Sources said there was no effort in arranging any meeting or discussion online when virtual meetings have now become a norm amid the pandemic.

The number of the meeting slightly increased only last month when life in the capital and other major cities started to return to normalcy. As many as 11 meetings took place in August.

Announcements on holding at least eight meetings in September was available on the website on Tuesday, but members of the standing committee on health could not say when they would meet again.

Speaking about the matter, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said, “In Bangladesh, it is regrettably no news any more that standing committees are in general inactive and ineffective.

“But that the committee on the health ministry can be so indifferent at a time of a national crisis centring the health sector and when allegations of corruption have been galloping by leaps and bounds is truly and exceptionally embarrassing.”

“This shows that they are least bothered about accountability of those involved in abuses and irregularities. But more so, it begs the question whether the lack of any initiatives is due to their conflict of interest, and indeed if they have vested interests in facilitating protection of the corrupt and prevalence of impunity,” he told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

Right from the beginning, the government’s response to the coronavirus outbreak has been plagued by inappropriate decisions, delayed actions and muddled thinking.

In the first phase, it was very difficult for Covid-19 patients to get beds, especially at ICUs, in hospitals, as a handful of those provide treatment to such patients.

Many with Covid-19 symptoms died without treatment.

More and more frontline healthcare workers got infected with Covid-19 due to a lack of proper safety gear, making the battle against the viral disease more difficult. Reports of misappropriation of money in the

name of procuring medical equipment were also rampant.

Fraudulent activities by Regent Hospital and JKG Health Care over Covid-19 testing coupled with reports of irregularities and mishandling of the pandemic by the Directorate General of Health Services added fuel to the fire.

This was followed by the resignation of embattled director general of DGHS, Prof Abul Kalam Azad, with the government making some changes in the top tier of the directorate and even at the health ministry.

But all these incidents apparently could not draw the attention of the health watchdog.

Contacted, former health minister AFM Ruhul Haque, also a member of the standing committee, said it would have been better had a meeting of the JS body taken place as it could monitor the ministry’s activities and play its watchdog role.

Wishing anonymity, another member of the committee said he personally requested Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, chief of the JS body, to call a meeting. “But he didn’t show any interest in doing so,” he said.

“I told him [the chief] that as members of a watchdog it is our responsibility towards the nation to hold discussions on various irregularities and corruption taking place during Covid-19 period and give directives to the relevant ministry to take measures to stop those,” the ruling Awami League MP said.

The Daily Star could not reach Fazlul Karim Selim for comments despite repeated attempts.

According to the rules of procedure of parliament, the functions of a committee shall be to examine any bill or other matter referred to it by parliament, to review the works relating to a ministry which falls within its jurisdiction, to inquire into any activity or irregularity and serious complaint in respect of the ministry and to examine, if it deems fit, any such other matter as may fall within its jurisdiction and to make recommendations.

One of these correspondents called Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury over the phone for her comments, but she did not pick up the call.

India secures its east

FROM PAGE 1

China in 1962, and security analysts have warned that it could become a flash-point again.

But an Indian military spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Harsh Wardhan Pande, said there was no cause for concern and the troops arriving in the area were part of regular rotation.

“Basically, it’s units changing. That’s happening as it happens every time, nothing much,” Pande told Reuters from near Guwahati, the largest city in northeastern India.

“As of now, there’s nothing to worry about on that front.”

But Tapir Gao, a member of parliament from Arunachal, told Reuters that Chinese troops had been regularly crossing into Indian territory.

“It’s a regular phenomenon, it’s nothing new,” he said, identifying the Walong and Chaglagam areas in Anjaw as the most vulnerable.

In the 1962 war, India says its outnumbered forces “blocked the thrust of the invading Chinese” in Walong, and the area of mountains, meadows and fast-flowing rivers is now a government focus for settlement and road-building.

“What we’re trying to do is create more possibilities and opportunities for villagers,” said Sudan, referring to plans for clusters of villages in the disputed area.

“It’s a push to resettle people.”

RAJNATH LEAVES FOR RUSSIA

Amidst escalation of the fresh round of border faceoff with China, Indian

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh yesterday left for Moscow on a three-day visit during which he is expected to discuss expediting Russia’s supply of several defence hardware, including missile defence shield.

Singh is visiting Moscow primarily for attending a meeting of the Russia-China led security grouping Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) which is expected to deliberate on regional security scenario, the Indian Defence Ministry said.

Meanwhile, Namghyal Dolkar Lhagvari, a member of the Tibetan parliament in exile, told AFP that a Tibetan-origin soldier with India’s special forces was “martyred during the clash” on Saturday night.

However, China’s foreign ministry said yesterday no Indian troops had died along the countries’ shared border.

The two sides blamed each other for the latest incidents.

India’s defence ministry said Chinese troops “carried out provocative military movements to change the status quo” at the border on Saturday.

China’s People’s Liberation Army said that India was “seriously violating China’s territorial sovereignty” with its operation staged Monday and demanded that Indian troops withdraw.

India’s foreign ministry said Tuesday that China had caused the latest incident “even as ground commanders of the two sides were in discussions to de-escalate the situation.”



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina looks at dioramas of a 20-storey building for Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre in Savar and a complex for Mymensingh Divisional Headquarters. The photo was taken at the Gono Bhaban after the PM watched presentations on the plans for the projects yesterday.

PHOTO: PTID

AL decides to come out of Covid hiatus

FROM PAGE 1

person like Mohammad Shahed should be included in any committee.

Shahed, chairman of Regent Hospital, is claimed to be a member of the AL international affairs sub-committee. He is now behind bars on charges of issuing fake Covid-19 testing certificates and illegally collecting money from coronavirus patients.

The two leaders said the sub-committee chairman and member secretary would be held responsible if they included any such person in the committee, said meeting sources.

The meeting also decided that no meeting of any sub-committee would be held and none could claim himself to be a sub-committee member before the committee concerned got approval.

Bahauddin Nasim and AL International Affairs Secretary Shammi Ahmed at the meeting locked into an altercation over the inclusion of Shahed in the International Affairs Sub-committee. Shammi later shifted blame onto committee Chairman

Muhammad Zamir, a former ambassador, said meeting sources.

DMCH, TSC WILL BE REBUILT: PM Addressing the meeting, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government would rebuild Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Teacher-Student Centre of Dhaka University, Sufia Kamal National Public Library and the National Museum.

Hasina, also the AL president, joined the meeting from the Gono Bhaban through videoconferencing.

The PM gave some directives to her party colleagues about its organisational activities, said sources.

About TSC, she said she and her father had studied at Dhaka University and she has a feeling for it. She said she wants to see the TSC restructured and the worn down dormitories of the university repaired soon.

About the DMCH, Hasina said the hospital is the reminiscence of the Language Movement. She said her government would rebuild the hospital keeping its front intact and it would be a 5,000-bed hospital, said

meeting sources.

About the Public Library and the National Museum, the premier said the two institutions would be digitalised with modern technology for the young generation.

“The Public Library has become old enough and it should have a better shape,” Hasina was quoted by a party leader as saying.

The AL president also asked her party colleagues to get united and give their best to strengthen the party, to work to fulfill the pledges of her party manifesto and finalise its next course of action.

Recalling the memories of former Indian president Pranab Mukherjee, she said Bangladesh has lost a true friend.

Pranab, 84, breathed his last at a hospital in New Delhi on Monday.

At the beginning of the meeting yesterday, the AL general secretary expressed willingness to celebrate the party chief’s birthday on September 28 on a limited scale, but Hasina turned down the proposal saying there would be no celebration on that day.

Untimely, risky

FROM PAGE 1

In the first phase of Covid-19 transmission, the government implemented only a portion of its containment strategy as it experimented with marking and “locking down” zones in two areas in the capital and in several districts.

And the last visible step to contain the coronavirus was seen in July.

In the absence of any strict containment strategy, the country has been witnessing a high number of deaths since last month.

Twenty-two people died from the virus on August 2 and the number was 35 on Tuesday.

The overall positivity rate came down to 20.16 percent from 24.05 percent on August 2. But the rate was still much higher than the global average.

Despite the alarming numbers, the need for controlling the virus apparently became a secondary concern for the government as most of its activities revolved around reviving the battered economy.

HAS THE SITUATION IMPROVED?

According to a report the health ministry sent to the Prime Minister’s Office on Tuesday, a total of 43 Covid-19-dedicated hospitals had

14,847 general beds and 550 ICU ones.

A total of 3,749 Covid-19 patients were in general beds and 300 others in ICU ones on Tuesday, according to the report.

Of the patients at general beds, the highest, 2,306, are from Dhaka division, including 2,079 from Dhaka city alone. In Chattogram division, there were 637 hospitalised patients.

A total of 427 patients got admitted to the hospitals on Tuesday and 516 got released, according to the report.

Prof Nazrul Islam, also a member of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19, said the government did not take the committee’s suggestions into consideration before making decision to normalise public transport operations.

The government must have taken the decision to ease people’s woes, but the health safety guidelines were ignored.

“So, there is a likelihood for further transmission of the virus, because it is not possible to maintain physical distancing on public transport,” said the former vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

The government should have

taken steps while keeping in mind that people tend to violate health safety rules. “The government’s duty does not end with issuing guidelines. It has to monitor whether the guidelines are being followed.”

On the decline in positivity rate, he said, “We have to wait for some more days to know whether the positivity rate has declined actually or it is because of the low number of tests.”

The desired rate of under-5 percent is still a long way to go, he added.

Prof Muzaherul Huq, a former adviser of World Health Organization’s South East Asia region, said Bangladesh is still among the countries where the transmission rate is high.

“Lifting of restrictions from public transport was a risky move,” he told The Daily Star on Monday.

He said the positivity rate in Bangladesh is still above 20 percent.

“Therefore, the health safety guidelines, particularly the physical distancing, applied for public transport should not be relaxed right now,” he said, adding, “If the physical distancing is relaxed in public transport, transmission would definitely rise.”

Muezzin hacked to death by ‘two masked men’ in Meherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A muezzin was hacked to death in Gangni upazila of Meherpur yesterday.

The victim -- Sahir Uddin, 65, of the upazila’s Saheb nagar village -- was a caretaker for Saheb nagar Madrasa. He also worked as a muezzin at the mosque of the madrasa.

Locals said two masked men indiscriminately stabbed Sahir when he was working at the graveyard adjacent to the madrasa.

Obaidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Gangni Police Station, said the incident happened around 9:30am.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Meherpur General Hospital, he further said, adding the old man had wounds on various parts of his body including head, chest, back, arms, and legs.

The reason behind the murder could not be known immediately.

Hindu widows

FROM PAGE 1

revision petition filed by a Jyotindranath Mondal from Haliagram village in Khulna’s Batiaghata upazila challenging a lower court verdict.

On March 7, 2004, Khulna’s joint district judge delivered the judgement in a case filed by Jyotindranath Mondal and said that Gouri Dasi, widow of Jyotindranath’s elder brother Avimannu Mondal, will get right to the agricultural land of her late husband.

The land had been recorded in the name of Gouri after Avimannu died in 1996.

Jyotindranath had filed the case with the court of an assistant judge in Khulna challenging the record of the land in the name of Gouri Dasi in 1996.

After hearing the civil revision filed by Jyotindranath, the HC yesterday delivered the verdict.

Barrister Uzzal Bhowmick, an amicus curiae (friend of the court), told The Daily Star that yesterday’s HC verdict is an epoch-making judgement as it has removed the ambiguity of the laws regarding the rights of Hindu widows to their husbands’ lands.

Md Abdul Zabbar appeared for Jyotindranath while Nafail Islam argued for Gauri Dasi.

Three workers

FROM PAGE 1

Md Saiful Islam, manager of Incontrade Limited, told The Daily Star, “Those killed in the blast worked under the mechanical department of the depot.

“The oil tanker of a long vehicle went off at the mechanical workshop when they unlocked the tanker from the lorry and started welding.”

A three-member committee was formed to investigate the case, he added.

Police handed over the bodies after completing the legal procedure.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Hasan, maternal uncle of one of the dead Muktar, said his nephew was the only wage-earner in the family.

“How could we bear such an incurable loss?” he lamented.

Covid tests

FROM PAGE 1

Some 1,950 people had tested positive for the virus in 24 hours till 8:30am on Tuesday. With 12,209 samples tested, the infection rate was 15.97 percent.

Following the confirmation of the latest cases, the total number of novel coronavirus cases in the country rose to 317,528 yesterday.

This has put Bangladesh in the 14th position among the coronavirus-hit countries in the world in terms of total number of cases.

Of all confirmed Covid-19 patients in Bangladesh, more than 2.1 lakh have recovered till yesterday. The recovery rate is about 66 percent.

The rest of 106,512 patients are now undergoing treatment -- mostly at home. These are called active cases.

Of all active cases, only 3,845 were undergoing treatment in general beds of hospitals and 306 in intensive care units.

There are 14,474 general beds and 550 ICU beds in hospitals designated for Covid-19 patients across the country.

In the 24-hour till 8:30am yesterday, all the 35 people died in hospitals. Twelve of them were females and 23 males.

One of them was aged between 31 and 40, three were aged between 41 and 50, seven between 51 and 60, and the highest 24 were aged over 60, according to the DGHS press release.

In the same 24-hour period, 589 people were placed in institutional isolation. With them, the total number of people under institutional isolation now stands at 19,958.

Abul Mansur Ahmad's 122nd birth anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today marks the 122nd birth anniversary of renowned litterateur, journalist and politician Abul Mansur Ahmad. On this day in 1898, he was born in Dhanikhola village of Mymensingh.

One of the leading satirical writers of Bangla literature, he also had an illustrious career as a journalist and a politician.

In 1946, he was the founding editor of the daily Ittehad [in Kolkata]. He had earlier worked at daily newspapers Krishak and Navajug and many other periodicals.

An immensely successful politician, Ahmad was the provincial education minister of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haq's United Front government, and in 1957, served as the commerce and industries minister of the central government. His contribution to the development of East Bengal is undeniable.

Among his famous satirical novels, "Aina", "Asmani Parda", "Gulliverer Safarnama" and "Food Conference" are notable. Two of his autobiographies are

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



At Karwan Bazar, parking rules are so blatantly violated that a green coconut seller did not hesitate to set up his makeshift stall right behind a "No Parking" sign, as more vehicles can be seen parked behind him along a line. This photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Final nail in the coffin'

Speakers tell Shujan-organised discussion about EC move to revise RPO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has moved to kill itself through its latest initiative to revise the Representation of the People Order (RPO), 1972, said speakers including a former Appellate Division judge, eminent lawyer and civil society members, yesterday.

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), a civil society platform, organised the virtual discussion.

They said cutting off its own hands, legs and pulling out eyes is tantamount to suicide.

Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumder said through its move to revise the RPO, EC has hit the final nail in its coffin.

He said several important provisions that empower the EC to cancel the candidature of candidates and announce election schedule were absent in the proposed revised RPO.

"Through its move, the election commission has taken initiative to destroy the electoral system and to weaken the constitutional body," he added.

Former judge of the Appellate Division Justice MA Matin said it has to be ensured whether the EC has backtracked from its move to amend the RPO.

"We will have to remain vigilant in this regard," he said.

"They [EC] will not be able to do anything if the media remain alert," he further said.

Former Cabinet Secretary Ali Imam Majumder said it's very unfortunate that the EC itself wants to curtail its own power.

He said political parties failed to play its due role to force the EC to backtrack from its move.

Taking people with them, the former top bureaucrat said, political parties and civil society platforms will have to put pressure on EC so that it is bound to retract the move.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Unprotected on the frontline

Sanitation workers at health, economic risks amid pandemic, says WaterAid report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sanitation workers across different South Asian countries are working with little protective equipment and poor access to handwashing and cleaning facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a new report from WaterAid.

The report titled "Safety and wellbeing of sanitation workers during Covid-19 in South Asia", explored how the pandemic was impacting the lives and works of sanitation workers.

The research was carried out in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan over a period of approximately six weeks from the end of April until mid-June, where sanitation workers including sweepers and hospital cleaners were interviewed, according to press release received yesterday.

The report found that fear of infection and worrying for family members was a

common concern across all four of the study countries.

Eight in ten workers interviewed in Bangladesh thought their job would put them at high risk of infection.

The workers were aware about using personal protective equipment (PPE) but the supply of such equipment was inadequate.

While use of masks and gloves was relatively higher, supply and use of more specialised equipment such as aprons or goggles was much lower, even amongst high-risk groups such as hospital cleaners.

In Nepal, a third of workers had received no PPE from their employers at all. Workers across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh also complained of suffocation when using PPE in hot weather.

The Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated the considerable occupational and health hazards these workers usually face, leaving

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

65-DAY FISHING BAN

33pc fishers in two coastal upazilas had no income: MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly one-third people involved in fishing in two coastal upazilas had no income during the government-imposed 65-day ban on the activity between May 20 and July 23, said a report prepared by Manusher Jonno Foundation.

The rest saw their average monthly family income drop to Tk 3,208 during the ban from Tk 11,125, said the report.

MJF shared findings of the report "Situation of Artisanal Fisher Folk Community during Covid and 65-day Ban" during an online press conference yesterday.

The telephone survey was conducted under MJF's "Sustainable Ocean" project, supported by the Danish Institute for Human Rights in Patharghata and Cox's Bazar's Moheshkhali upazila.

A total of 1,018 respondents including 306 women participated in the survey. Of them, 519 were from Patharghata and 499 from Moheshkhali.

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh partnered with

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Animal rights activists and organisations yesterday demonstrated in front of Nagar Bhaban, protesting DSCC's decision to relocate stray dogs outside the capital.

'Relocating dogs illegal, shameful'

Animal rights groups protest DSCC move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A large group of animal lovers yesterday held a human chain in front of the Nagar Bhaban at Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), protesting authorities' decision to move stray dogs to the Matuail landfill.

After reports that DSCC relocated 15 dogs in the last week, six organisations -- Care for Paws, Obhoyaranno, Stella, PAW Foundation, We Are Nature, and Ekbelar Khabar Boba Pranider Jonno -- organised the rally in front of the DSCC headquarters. They demanded vaccination and sterilisation instead of relocating dogs.

Obhoyaranno founder Rubaiya Ahmad said, "DNCC [Dhaka North City Corporation] has more dogs than DSCC. But while DNCC opts to co-operate with us in vaccinating them, DSCC does not."

Terming DSCC's relocating dogs to Matuail shameful, she said, "If they moved the dogs, they should stop doing it, and opt for vaccination and sterilisation. We are asking DSCC to abide by the law."

PAW Foundation chairman Rakibul Haq Emil said, "The dogs were removed from their habitats to Matuail landfill. This is an act of forced migration. This goes against the existing Animal Welfare Act-2019, which prohibits killing stray dogs or removing them from their habitats."

"The government has vaccination programme for the dogs, and already 70

percent of the dogs in Dhaka have been vaccinated. So there is no need for culling or removal of the dogs," he reasoned.

People from different walks of life joined the protest, with placards saying: "Eliminate rabies not dogs", "Shame on DSCC" and "Dhaka dogs belong to Dhaka". Sayeda Gaffar, a retired professor of Dhaka University, said, "Killing dogs will not bring any solution; rather it will beget problems such as ecological imbalance."

DU student Fahmida Akhi said, "When there is option to vaccine and sterilise, killing or removing them is not pragmatic."

DSCC 'UNAWARE' OF LAW

Contacted, SM Shafiqul Islam, veterinary officer of DSCC, admitted that they had moved 15 dogs to the landfill. "Locals were telling the city corporation to relocate dogs. Therefore, we temporarily sent few dogs off to the Matuail landfill, but it didn't work. They all came back," he said.

"There has been no official decision to relocate dogs to Matuail permanently. It is just under discussion. We are not going to cull any dog," he added.

Asked about Animal Welfare Act that forbids dog culling and relocation, he said, "I'm only aware that dog culling is not allowed; we are not culling any dog."

Asked if they have any plans for stray dogs in future, he said, "Right now we

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

HC halts work of AL MP's economic zone near Turag

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed authorities to maintain status quo on works for constructing Arisha Economic Zone owned by ruling AL lawmaker (Dhaka-14) Aslamul Huq and on eviction of its structures near Turag River in Savar.

It also asked Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) to dispose of in 10 days the application submitted by Arisha Economic Zone for conducting a joint survey to determine whether the company has grabbed river land.

Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice AKM Zahirul Huq came up with the order following a petition filed by Aslamul Huq, managing director of the economic zone, challenging legality of a notice issued by the BIWTA asking the company to remove its structures from the land of the river.

Sagor Hossain Leon, a lawyer for the writ petitioner, told reporters that his client has invested Tk 1,500 crore for establishing Arisha Economic Zone on 51.81 acres of land at Syamla Mouja in Savar and has deposited US \$10,000 to the government for its final approval.

No place for illegal billboards in city

Says Atiqul as DNCC starts drive to pull those down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam yesterday said they will not allow any illegal billboard in DNCC areas and remove all of those gradually.

Addressing a drive against such billboards near the airport, the mayor said, "Many challenged that I'll not be able to remove illegal billboards and I have accepted their challenges. I'll see who comes forward to intercept our drives."

He said he wants to send a message that business of illegal billboards has to stop.

The billboards contain pictures of powerful people to show their political identities, which is not expected, the mayor said. They can campaign but not by destroying the beauty of the city, he added.

Yesterday, DNCC mobile court knocked and pulled down illegal structures and a giant billboard near the police box by airport crossing.

The drive was led by executive magistrate Motakabbir Ahmed that started at 11am and continued till 4pm.

Among others, ward-49 councillor Md Anisur Rahman Nayeem and councillor from reserved seat Zakia Sultana were present during the drive.

Dr Yunus appointed chancellor of Malaysian university

UNB, Dhaka

Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, also founder of Grameen Bank, has been appointed the inaugural chancellor of Albukhary International University (AIU) in Malaysia, reports the New Straits Times.



Yunus, also Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University, UK and the Chairman of Yunus Centre, was appointed based on his contributions, knowledge, expertise and experience in developing the world-recognised social business agenda.

"His appointment as Chancellor of AIU is in line with the Philosophy, Vision and Mission of the establishment of AIU to develop graduates or future leaders who are adaptable, balanced, well-rounded individuals, willing and able to serve humanity, acting as change agents in respective communities through Social Business agenda," the report quotes Vice Chancellor and President of AIU Prof Dr Abd Aziz Tajuddin as saying in a statement.

BOOKS ON BANGABANDHU

HC forms body to probe copyright infringement claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday formed a three-member committee headed by the secretary to Ministry of Primary and Mass Education to inquire into the allegation of attempting to misappropriate money by changing the copyright and intellectual property rights of two books published on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The other two members of the committee are Bangla Academy Director General Habibullah Sirajee and Liberation War Museum Trustee Mofidul Hoque.

In response to a writ petition, the HC also asked the committee to submit the probe report to it in a month.

Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice AKM Zahirul Huq delivered the order and rule.

Syed Sayedul Haque Suman submitted the writ petition on August 31, claiming Nazmul Hasan, owner of Journey Multi Media and Swadhika Publishers, reportedly tried to misappropriate money by changing copyrights and intellectual property rights of the two books.

The books published for the Bangabandhu Book Corners at all the primary schools across the country, according to the petition.



Scores of cars, trucks and rickshaws seized in road accidents are just haphazardly dumped near Ashulia Police Station, blocking the adjacent road. Since there is no designated spot to keep these vehicles, they remain there to rust away. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Sexual and reproductive health services need special attention: experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To ensure emergency reproductive healthcare and family planning services for women and adolescents, government and NGOs must work together, urged speakers at an online dialogue titled "Reproductive Health Services for Women and Adolescents in COVID-19: Perspective Bangladesh", organised by Marie Stopes Bangladesh and Team Associates on Tuesday night.

Mashrurul Islam, country director of Marie Stopes Bangladesh said, due to the global pandemic, child and maternal mortality rate in low and middle-income countries is expected to increase in the coming days since coverage and access to family planning services might have been reduced by around 10 percent. "The contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) has decreased already, and the number of unsafe abortions has also shot up. In addition to that, postpartum family planning services have also been disrupted greatly," he said at the programme.

Citing the news reports and surveys conducted by various organisations, Mashrurul also mentioned that the rate of child marriage and the incidents of violence against women have increased as well during the pandemic.

However, Member of Parliament Syeda Rubina Akhter highlighted the various steps taken by the governments to ensure women's reproductive health services. She said steps have been taken to ensure that not a single incident of abortion happens under risk. "Community clinics have been activated across the country and field workers have been making door to door visits to provide services. Besides, maternity allowance is also being provided," she added.

Member of Parliament Gloria Jharna Sarkar said along with taking all necessary steps to ensure reproductive health services, the government has taken steps to protect women's rights. "As a result of effective measures taken by the government, maternal mortality and infant mortality rates

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Abul Mansur

FROM PAGE 3

“Atma Katha” and “Amar Dekha Rajnitr Panchash Bachhar”, which while bringing out his own personal struggles, depict the historical and social challenges faced by the common people of that period.

He was one of the earliest proponents of Bangla being the national language of the country. He wrote extensively about the issues of national language since the beginning of the ‘40s and also contributed actively to the Language Movement as the editor of Ittehad. Abul Mansur Ahmad was the author of the famous 21-point manifesto for the United Front in the 1954 election, which saw the demise of Muslim League from power and from the politics of East Pakistan.

As a result of his political activities in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, Abul Mansur Ahmad was jailed several times by the military administration of Ayub Khan.

Bangla Academy has published three volumes of Abul Mansur Ahmad’s collected works. A collection of memorial books on the renowned personality was published by Prothoma. Star Books has also published “Abul Mansur Ahmader Shreshtho Golpo”.

In his honour, Abul Mansur Ahmad Smriti Parishad has launched an essay contest on three topics: Abul Mansur Ahmad’s thoughts on politics and nationalist perspective; anti-establishment ideas in Abul Mansur Ahmad’s short stories; and contribution and relevance of Abul Mansur Ahmad in societal change.

The contest received huge responses from all over the country. A total of nine contestants (three from each category) will be declared winners.

Unprotected

FROM PAGE 3

many of them to continue working with limited protection and almost no formal guidance or support structures.

A sanitation worker in Khulna said, “We are continuing our job under great risk only to give the public some level of comfort. But it is very unfortunate that people do not value our sacrifice.”

Practice of frequent handwashing also varied largely due to workers’ access to facilities with soap and water. In India, 40 percent workers reported lack of any handwashing station at work.

Many sanitation workers across the four countries are in fear of losing their livelihood while almost half of the respondents reported challenges in meeting their daily expenses.

Across the board, they had very limited access to social protection or safety nets, with only a small minority being covered by some sort of insurance, and many missing out on emergency support measures introduced during the pandemic.

Vanita Suneja, regional advocacy manager (South Asia), WaterAid, said, “South Asian governments must put in place a comprehensive safety net to protect these workers, including health insurance, guidelines and training. Only with proper job recognition and protections these essential workers will be able carry out some of their roles in our society safely.”

Sexual and

FROM PAGE 3

slowed down in the country. Special initiatives have also been taken to ensure maximum services to pregnant mothers and newborns from the beginning of this pandemic,” she said.

Manjun Nahar, focal person of Strengthening Family Planning Services through Advocacy initiative of Advance Family Planning (AFP) Media Advocacy; Jasmine Prema, chairperson of Samaj Kalyan Unnayan Shangstha (SKUS); SM Shaikat, executive director of SERAC-Bangladesh took part in the dialogue moderated by journalist Nikhil Bhadra.

Final nail

FROM PAGE 3

Eminent lawyer Shahdeen Malik said, in the last three years, EC has proved that they are totally inefficient to hold free and fair elections.

“They don’t have any idea how to hold such elections. They don’t even have the will to do so,” he said.

“Names of the present election commissioners and the chief election commissioner will be placed at the top of the list of those who caused the most damage to the country,” he also said.

Local government expert Prof Tofail Ahmed said the EC cannot take initiative to change its law.

“Curbing its own power through amending law is tantamount to suicide. Everyone knows that the present Election Commission is dysfunctional. Through its move to amend the law, the Election Commission will earn more hatred from people,” he said.

The retired professor of Chattogram University also said it is not a good sign for our democracy that everyone at this time is silent against the EC move.

Dhaka University Professor Asif Nazrul said, “It seems that Election Commission wants to get rid of its responsibilities and wants impunity.”

Noted environmental and rights activist Syeda Rizwana Hasan said as a civil society platform, they can express their no-confidence against the present EC through sending letters to the President or the committee, who had selected the present election commissioners.

Shujan President M Hafizuddin Khan presided over the meeting while former election commissioner Sakhawat Hussain, senior journalists – Abu Sayeed Khan and Sohrab Hossan, among others, spoke on the occasion.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

DRU, NSU hold webinar

CITY DESK

Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU), in collaboration with North South University (NSU), yesterday organised a virtual discussion on “The Reality and Challenges of Higher Education in Bangladesh” and an award ceremony for children of DRU members who passed PSC, JSC, and SSC examinations, said a press release.

Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni attended the programme as chief guest. Md Mahbub Hossain, Secretary of Secondary and Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education; MA Kashem, former president of FBCCI and chairperson, board of trustees, NSU; and Saiful Alam, president of Bangladesh National Press Club and Editor, The Daily Jugantor were present as special guests.

33pc fishers

FROM PAGE 3

MJE, while Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies and Coast Trust assisted in data collection.

Some 86 percent respondents received food (rice) and cash support as they had “fisher card”, it added. However, the survey found that about 87.4 percent respondents had to take out loans to meet their regular expenses.

Addressing the press conference, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said like in other parts of the globe, shutdown enforced to contain coronavirus disrupted the livelihood and income of many people in Bangladesh, especially those involved in informal sector. Its negative impact on the country’s fishing community could be assumed as well, she said.

Besides, the 65-day ban that is being imposed each year also impacted the fishing communities, she added.

On Covid-19, about 99 percent respondents reported they had been made aware from different sources including union parishad, media and neighbours.

The report recommended creating opportunities for diversified income generation among coastal fishing communities, and increasing food support as well as to introducing cash support for poor fishermen.

Relocating

FROM PAGE 3

are not sure what we are going to do with them. We need to work on it.”

LEGAL, SCIENTIFIC SIDES

Supreme Court lawyer Barrister Shihab Uddin Khan told The Daily Star, “The Animal Welfare Act prohibits anyone from killing or moving any stray animal from its habitat. If a government body does it, then any aggrieved organisation and person can avail their constitutional right to file a writ petition with the High Court.”

“If the city authorities want to take any such decision, I think they should sit with all stakeholders, and find a way that is acceptable to all and legally compliant to address the issue,” he suggested.

Dr Firoj Jaman, a professor of zoology at Dhaka University, suggested that any decision be made based on scientific evidence. Talking to The Daily Star, he said, “Street dogs are scavengers. They add benefits to the ecology, but they can also cause problems. If their population needs to be managed, I think it should be done based on surveys and scientific data.”

OC Pradeep sued

FROM PAGE 12

then sent to jail in a yaba case.

On March 5, her husband Musa Akbar held a press conference at Cox’s Bazar Press Club, demanding release of the arrestees.

On March 28, police picked up Musa and then demanded Tk 20 lakh from his family members to release him. The family members gave them Tk 3 lakh. But Musa was shot dead around 11:45pm that day, the complainant said.

The court asked the OC of Teknaf Police Station to submit the report of the incident within 10 working days.

The second complaint was filed by Hafez Ahmed, of Kanjarpara village in the same upazila, against 26 persons, including Pradeep. Of them, 25 are police personnel.

Judge Helal took the complaint into cognisance and asked the OC of Teknaf Police Station to submit the report of the incident in 15 working days.

In his complaint, Hafez said police picked up his younger brother Sahab Uddin on April 17. Later, police demanded Tk 5 lakh from them to free him. They gave police Tk 50,000. But Sahab Uddin was shot dead in the early hours of April 21 in a paddy field in Kanjarpara area.

With yesterday’s two complaints, seven complaints have so far been lodged against police personnel, including Pradeep, over killing people.

Meanwhile, three accused in Major (ret’d) Sinha Md Rashed Khan murder case gave their confessional statements before another Cox’s Bazar court yesterday.

They are: Nurul Amin, Nizam Uddin, and Ayas Uddin of Marishbania village.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police Khairul Islam, who works at Rab, also the investigation officer of the case, produced the three before the court around 10:00am.

Tamanna Farah, judge of Senior

Judicial Magistrate Court-4 in Cox’s Bazar, recorded their statements, said Khairul.

The trio were arrested by Rab on August 11. They gave their confessional statements while they were on a three-day remand in the third phase.

With them, eight of the 13 accused in the murder case, filed by the victim’s elder sister Sharmin Sharia Ferdous, have so far given their confessional statements.

Five others are: key accused suspended inspector Liakat Ali and suspended sub-inspector Nandadul Rakshit, and suspended APBN members Shajahan, Rajib and Mohammad Abdullah.

Another prime accused Pradeep was placed on 15 days’ remand in phases. But he is yet to give his confessional statement.

In another development, the probe committee members interrogated Pradeep in connection with the Major (ret’d) Sinha murder case.

The four-member committee, formed by the home ministry, reached Cox’s Bazar jail yesterday morning and started recording Pradeep’s statement around 11:00am, according to sources at the jail.

Meanwhile, Army Chief General Aziz Ahmed yesterday said like the people of the country, Bangladesh Army also wants exemplary punishment in the Major (ret’d) Sinha murder case.

The army chief made the statement in Chattogram, said an ISPR press release.

Court freezes

FROM PAGE 12

different police stations, while Masud was placed on a 28-day remand in different cases.

In August, the Special Tribunal-1 of Dhaka framed charges against Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed in an arms case.

Love for country

FROM PAGE 12

is creating such debate and with what motive,” said Dr Sil.

Dr Sil also said that he has the opportunity to work in Singapore and other countries; an opportunity that will remain open for him in the future.

The Daily Star also got in touch with Gonoshasthaya Kendra regarding Dr Sil’s current status and complications regarding the work permit.

Dr Sil had two years’ “employment visa” which expired in July. He applied for a visa and a one-year extension but did not get the work permit, said an official of the public university.

Gono University has already applied for his work permit and it is under process, said the official. Authorities have sought a few more papers which were also provided accordingly.

“We need Dr Sil. Bangladesh needs him. Students are reaping the benefits of having such an internationally acclaimed scientist. He does research work in our university. It’s a matter of huge pride for us,” Laila Parvin Banu, vice Chancellor of the university, told The Daily Star.

“We hope he will get the work permit soon,” she added.

“There is no question of relieving him. He is with Gono University.”

Gonoshasthaya Kendra’s founder Zafrullah Chowdhury said, “Some media outlets published reports that said Dr Bijon Kumar Sil was relieved from the university. It is a blatant lie. This information is not only misleading but disrespectful for him.”

Born and brought up in Banpara of Natore, Bijon Kumar Sil worked as a researcher at the BSMMU along with professor Dr Nazrul Islam on dengue in 2002. He then worked for a while at the institute of Livestock Research in Savar.

“I made some breakthroughs while working there. Usually the research examination was done on plastic but I did it on glass and successful. The benefit of my invention was that the glass can be reused,” Dr Sil said while reflecting on the early days of his scientific work.

An academic article on Bijon’s invention was published in a French journal after which the Singapore government proposed him to join its civil service.

“I decided to go to Singapore. I had to go through a procedure. I talked with some high-placed Singapore officials, of whom some had come from other countries. I joined the civil service after taking citizenship of Singapore,” Bijon said, adding that Singapore built up its human resources by bringing people from various countries.

According to Singaporean law, there is no scope of dual citizenship, that’s why Sil said he had to surrender his Bangladeshi citizenship.

He was assigned to do research on dengue. But when the Sars virus hit the world, he was assigned for research on the virus. In 2003, he invented the testing kit for Sars which earned him global fame.

Till 2006, he worked in Singapore civil service and then joined a California-based organisation and worked there till 2013.

During that time, he invented Multisure hepatitis-C rapid test kit. He then worked in India for a while and then returned to Singapore again. In the meantime, he got 14 patents under his name. Five of his kits are approved by the European Union.

In 2019, he came to Bangladesh following an invitation by BMRC. At the beginning of January this year, when the coronavirus hit China, he informed Zafrullah Chowdhury about the danger of Covid-19.

“I have known Zafrullah sir for a long time. I informed him about my research on Sars virus and testing kit. I told him that I want to do research on coronavirus at Gonoshasthaya Kendra and he agreed. I joined Gono University’s microbiology department as its chairman,” said Dr Sil.

He also led a four-member research team to develop antigen and antibody test kits for Covid-19.

Zafrullah said Singapore and China used Sil’s talent to successfully combat the Sars virus.

“He [Bijon] came voluntarily to Bangladesh and should we not use his talent? If he leaves, whose loss is it? It is our loss; it is the loss of Bangladesh.”

The Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder also asked, “Thousands of foreigners are working in Bangladesh. How many of them have work permits?”

“We are not saying that he should be allowed to work without a work permit. We have applied for it and will surely get it,” said Chowdhury.

Coordinator of the GR Covid-19 rapid dot blot project, Dr Muhibullah Khandaker said those who are trying to create controversy have no idea about Dr Sil’s credentials and his love for the country.

“As the issue of his work permit is pending, he is not taking his salary,” he added.

Australia falls into recession

FROM PAGE 12

announced a record contraction of seven percent despite authorities providing billions of dollars in support to struggling firms.

“Today’s national accounts confirm the devastating impact on the Australian economy from Covid-19,” said Treasurer Josh Frydenberg.

Bangabandhu asks

FROM PAGE 12

League. He said the proposed all-party government was necessary to prevent famine, safeguard the sovereignty of the country, restore law and order, check smuggling and root out corruption.

The Maulana also pleaded for an all-party committee under the leadership of Bangabandhu and Awami League for the prevention of famine.

BANGLADESH, IRAQ AMITY STRESSED

A Bangladesh-Iraq joint communique on the three-day visit of Iraq by Bangladesh

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad says that the disputes in the Indo-Pak-Bangladesh subcontinent could only be solved “by peaceful measures and mainly by bilateral discussions and negotiations on the basis of sovereignty, equality, national independence and mutual respect”.

Azad concluded his Iraq visit on August 30, 1972 but the joint communique is officially released in Baghdad today.

SOURCES: September 4, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Govt has no list

FROM PAGE 12

The judges said they would not hear the petition as the petitioner’s lawyers and deputy attorney general had a quarrel.

The HC bench said the petitioner would have the liberty to move the petition before any other bench. During the hearing, the bench on August 31 wanted to know how many Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 hospitals were there in the country.

It also asked the authorities concerned to inform the court yesterday about how many private hospitals have licence and how many do not have.

On July 26, Children’s Charity Bangladesh Foundation submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC, seeking necessary orders on the authorities to stop irregularities in some hospitals, including Regent Hospital.

It sought HC directives on the authorities concerned to refund the money

taken from patients who were cheated by Regent Hospital over Covid-19 testing and treatment.

The organisation requested the court to order the authorities to give Tk 25,000 as interim relief to each of the patients victimised by Regent Hospital.

In the petition, the rights body prayed to the HC to ask the health and home secretaries, DGHS director general and managing director of Regent Hospital to prepare a list of people who received fake reports from the hospital and to publish a list of the names of the hospitals and diagnostic centres that have legal licence to conduct Covid-19 tests.

The organisation also requested the court to direct the authorities to take necessary measures to monitor the activities of the hospitals and diagnostic centres at upazila level, regarding carrying out tests and treatment of patients.

Giant fossilised

FROM PAGE 12

At the time the tree probably sat at an altitude of 6,560 feet above sea level.

“This tree and the hundreds of fossil wood, leaf and pollen samples, reveal that when these plants were alive the ecosystem was more humid - even more humid than climate models of the past predicted,” said Camila Martinez, a fellow at STRI.

“There is probably no comparable modern ecosystem, because temperatures

were higher when these fossils were deposited 10 million years ago.”

Five million year-old fossils from the same sites confirmed that the Puna ecosystem that now dominates the Andes’ high mountain plateaus had been born: the younger pollen samples were mostly from grasses and herbs, rather than from trees.

Leaf material was from ferns, herbs and shrubs, indicating that the plateau had already risen to its current altitude.



World Health Organization
Bangladesh

VACANCY NOTICE

World Health Organization (WHO) invites applications from the interested and eligible candidates for the following positions under Special Service Agreement:

- National Consultant –Epidemiology
- National Consultant –Information Technology (IT)
- National Consultant –Statistics cum Data management

For further details on the terms of reference and deadline for applications, please visit our websites:

<https://www.who.int/bangladesh/about-us/employment>

*Qualified **female candidates** are highly encouraged to apply*



WHO has a smoke-free environment and does not recruit smokers or other tobacco users.

INVITATION FOR TENDER

Pubali Bank Limited, the largest online commercial Bank in Bangladesh is hereby inviting sealed Tenders from the eligible Tenderers, who can participate in any the following tenders, but in separate envelope as defined in the tender documents of the under mentioned works as per terms & conditions stated below:

1. **Civil, Electrical & Networking works** at proposed premises of our **Sarsina Branch, Pirojpur.**
2. **Civil, Electrical & Networking works** at proposed premises of our **Thanarhat Bazar Branch, Noakhali** with change of nomenclature as **Sonaimuri Branch, Noakhali.**
3. **Supply, installation & commissioning** of 10 (ten) nos. **Note Counting Machines** at different 09 (nine) Branches of our Bank.


Please visit our web site, <https://www.pubalibangla.com/tender.asp> for details. Interested Parties may purchase their Tender document by **10 September, 2020** duly filled up all requirements and submit their offer in the Tender Box by **13 September, 2020** (before 11.00 A.M.). Tender will be opened on **13 September 2020** at 11.30 A.M.



পূবালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
PUBALI BANK LIMITED

Dilip Kumar Paul
General Manager

Establishment Division
Head office, 26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka.



EAST WEST UNIVERSITY
Progoti Foundation for Education and Development

Permanent Sanad Holder

TENDER INVITATION

Tenders are invited from the bonafide / intending suppliers / firms for the following items:

- a) Supply and installation of different types of Networking Accessories for the 10 (Ten) storied Academic Building of EWU
- b) Re-Tender for supply and installation of different types of networking accessories for the Academic Building-03, Practice Lab (ICS) & Labs of the Department of Civil Engineering of EWU
- c) Procurement of CCTV Cameras and related accessories for the 10 (Ten) storied Academic Building of EWU
- d) Procurement of CCTV Cameras for the Academic Building-3 of EWU
- e) Procurement of 83 units 56" Sweep Ceiling Fan for the Academic Building-3 of EWU
- f) Re-Tender for running & commissioning of McQuay Brand Chiller of Unit # 03 of EWU by replacement of Compressor, VFD & Accessories

The schedule for the items with terms and conditions can be obtained from the Finance & Accounts Department of the University up to **16 September 2020** during office hours (**up to 2:00 p.m.**) on payment (non-refundable) of **Tk. 300/-** for each item.

The interested bidders are requested to submit the tender schedule through hard copy by 17.09.2020 within 12:00 p.m. Hard copy of the tenders must be dropped in the tender box kept in the 2nd floor of the Office of the Treasurer (**Room No-316**) of the University. Submitted tenders within the deadline will be opened on **the same day (17.09.2020) at 12:15 p.m.** in the Conference Room (4th floor) of East West University in presence of the bidders (if any) ensuring health safety.

The bidders must mention the **“name of the item”** at the top of envelope, otherwise the bid document will be treated as cancelled.

East West University authority reserves the right to accept any tender in full or part of it or reject all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Chief of HR & Logistics (In-Charge)

SUPPORTING SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES THROUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Daily Star in association with LankaBangla Finance Limited organised an online discussion titled "Supporting small and medium enterprises through the Covid-19 pandemic" on August 23, 2020. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.



Khwaja Shahriar,
Managing
Director and CEO,
LankaBangla Finance
Limited

We are aware that the SME sector is going through a difficult phase due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, there are about 78 lakh SMEs in Bangladesh, with 25 million workers working in the SME sector. According to a BIDS report, there has been an overall decrease in revenue in the SME sector of about 66 percent (FY2019-20). If we do not help the SME sector soon, it will become tougher for them to sustain themselves in future.

The government and Bangladesh Bank have both committed stimulus packages during this pandemic, to help the SME sector overcome its struggles. The government, banks, financial institutions and all stakeholders of the SME sector also need to work together to help revive this sector. For that, it is extremely important now to figure out exactly where the challenges lie.



Syed Ashfaqul Haque,
Executive Editor, The
Daily Star

We should be aware that our SME sector, when fully functional, contributes to 25 percent of our overall GDP. The world has been brought to a grinding halt by the current pandemic. Almost every business globally is experiencing some sort of crisis. However, a crisis also implies that businesses have the opportunity to re-think and re-invent.



Selim R.F. Hussain,
Managing Director
and CEO, BRAC
Bank Limited

A recent report by Access to Information (a2i) indicates that almost 20 million Bangladeshi workers are out of work, including in 11 of the most high-impact sectors in the country. Even many informal sectors are experiencing a downward spiral in employment. At BRAC Bank, we had conducted a survey in June, 2020 amongst 6,000 of our SME customers. According to the survey, our small customers are recovering relatively well. Our estimates from July and August indicate that 80 to 85 percent of our loan disbursements are of the preceding year, which implies a state of normalcy. The recovery and collection rates are also seemingly good. Therefore, there is a segment of SME clients or small clients which is resilient, even though they are under pressure during the pandemic.

I believed if the general holidays across the country went beyond June, many businesses would have crumbled under financial stress. Since June, however, with banking support, businesses around the country have rebounded well. We and other similar service providers are also tailoring our offers to meet the demands of these customers.



Md Mahub ul Alam,
Managing
Director and CEO,
Islami Bank Limited

When it comes to stimulus packages, Bangladesh Bank helped our bank by decreasing our cash reserve ratio (CRR) and increasing our advance-deposit ratio (ADR). It led to a surplus creation amounting to a stimulus package worth around Tk 50,000 crore. When we entered the market to disburse this money, we initially received only 1,500 applications and processed all of them after conducting the credit risk assessment. This led us to encourage and bring in more customers, leading to approving around 2,200 applications. We have approved almost 5,000 applications so far. All stakeholders of the SME sector need

to be aware of the needs of the day, and how they can contribute more to the industry.

The SME sector is making a quick comeback. Orders for the garments industry have picked up again. Construction companies, shops and businesses around the nation have already re-opened and resumed from where they had left off. I am hopeful that the economy will do even better in the coming days and that Bangladesh's growth rate will surpass 10 percent.



Monzur Hossain,
Senior Research
Fellow, Bangladesh
Institute of
Development Studies
(BIDS)

We estimate that there has been a loss of around Tk 92,000 crore to the SME sector, due to the pandemic. The comeback cannot be made as quickly as some have indicated, as many businesses do not have the required capital to reach the levels of past times. The stimulus packages have been accompanied by re-financing schemes and elements alike, but the overall process seems to be bank-based. The risks faced by banks and their liquidity are being focused on, but the demand side is not being addressed properly. Banks cannot themselves build awareness, and the general public must be properly notified of the objectives of the stimulus packages. Also, only bank-based stimulus packages are not suitable as a lot of important documents are unavailable and the customers do not fully abide by the bank rules.

The overall demand in the country has decreased, affecting production levels and demand for SME products. Various incentives and facilities, such as tax benefits, can be provided to revive SMEs. SMEs are engines of growth for an economy and Bangladesh is no different. SMEs also provide great support to Bangladesh's garments industry via backward-linkage. SMEs are responsible for providing a large number of jobs in our country. We have about 54,000 manufacturing SMEs, 49,000 of which are small businesses. The stimulus packages alone cannot help improve the overall situation for SMEs, as MFIs and NGOs will also need to make their own contributions.



Ferdaus Ara Begum, CEO,
Business Initiative
Leading Development
(BUILD)

I would recommend that small and micro entrepreneurs take advantage of the stimulus packages available to them and make use of the time period within which the packages are available; an increase in the number of stimulus packages would also be beneficial. For small entrepreneurs, the repayment time period is one year. We need to reassess this clause because many such businesses would not be able to repay loans quickly, given they need time to start utilising the funds properly. Moreover, the guidelines of Bangladesh Bank stated that the repayment period for new entrepreneurs will be halted for the time being. However, the banks' software is not updated with this information which is making it difficult for these entrepreneurs to cope up.

The financial model for cottage and micro enterprises should be different, especially in relation to the disbursement of funds. Micro and cottage entrepreneurs are accustomed to long-term loans payable in small installments, and not with overdrafts. BIDS and PKSF have already put in the request for 14,000 crore taka for micro and small entrepreneurs to be distributed by MFIs. A solution could be providing them financing on a work-order basis. Bangladesh Bank has a policy in this regard.



Dr Mohammad Abu Eusuf, Professor,
Department of
Development Studies;
Director, Centre on Budget
and Policy, University of
Dhaka; and Executive
Director, Research and
Policy Integration for
Development (RAPID)

I conducted a study on about 102 women-led enterprises with the support of The Asia Foundation. According to that research study, 87 percent women entrepreneurs stated that access to finance was their main barrier

and 95 percent said that they had received no support from any stimulus packages. Banks need to pay attention to their 'women-dedicated desks' at their respective branches and pay attention to how many such women customers at micro levels are actually receiving collateral-free loans at the field level. Usually, personal guarantors are required in such cases which are difficult to manage. Thus, the loans are not collateral-free.

Those who lie outside the realm of the banking system (micro and small entrepreneurs) could be reached through MFIs. Thus, entrepreneurs are not being able to obtain MFI, NGO or government support adequately, making it harder for them to survive. Micro and small enterprises need to be considered independently. With time, women's chambers and local chambers need to be brought within the micro-credit system. Personal guarantors, guarantees from the chambers and even guarantees from SME foundations are all fundamental.

Under the existing system, we will not be able to properly assist micro, small and women-led enterprises. We must think of alternatives to reach out to such women. In fact, I personally got to know of cases where potential entrepreneurs were blocked out by factors like excessive paperwork.



Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem,
Research Director,
Centre for Policy
Dialogue (CPD)

The government was responsible for handling the subsidies associated with stimulus packages; the banks were supposed to shoulder the other responsibilities, but they have not fulfilled them. It seems many businesses which do not necessarily need loans, have been issued funds. Industrial

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Banks, SME Foundation, BSEC, PKSF and other relevant institutions must work together for the effective implementation of the stimulus packages for SMEs.
- Establish a comprehensive database of SMEs and MSMEs
- Establish different financing models for the cottage and micro entrepreneurs
- Ease the supply chain management and make the e-commerce procedures smooth for SME entrepreneurs
- Enhance communication between Bangladesh Bank and SME trade bodies and other stakeholders
- Acknowledge that SME is an individual sector which needs special attention and services from both the government and non-government service providers

loans are important for export-oriented businesses, since they make big contributions to our economy. However, only this sector has been given most loans since banks find them to be risk-free, though SMEs are deemed to be important during this crisis. The government has established a loan guarantee scheme for risky businesses like SMEs and a 2,000 crore taka package has been declared for this purpose. Yet, no proper implementation is being seen by the banks.

The government has built a database for the informal sector. However, this database is still going through various difficulties. Cottage, micro, small and medium enterprises need to be brought under one database. This would allow the government to regulate its plans and schemes in a more concise and clear manner. For example, cottage and micro enterprise owners, who are not currently able to go to banks, could be helped in many other ways (exemptions on electricity, water bills, VAT and tax, etc).

Loan disbursements need to be made available to the marginalised communities in peripheral areas as well. Besides, we can even help cottage and micro enterprises in non-financial ways. BSEC, banks, MFIs and even NGOs can provide the required data in creating a database for enterprises.



Md Kamruzzaman Khan,
Senior Vice President
and Head of SME
Financial Services,
LankaBangla Finance
Limited

85 percent of enterprises of the Cottage, Micro and Small (CMS) sector are involved in trading business. The government has tried to shift the focus to the manufacturing sector but to no avail. The reason why there is not enough focus on the manufacturing sector

is the lack of entrepreneurship. Everyone tries to initiate ready-made businesses and obtain immediate profit. The Ministry of Industries should establish skill development programmes for new entrepreneurs who can work in the manufacturing sector in the future.

Organisations like ours can motivate entrepreneurs to focus on the manufacturing sector. In the CMS sector, we have financed approximately 3,200 people, and 35 percent of them are associated with manufacturing, while 45 percent of the businesses in our portfolio are in trade.



Borhan Uddin,
Executive Director,
IIBM and Senior
Consultant, SME
Sector

A significant amount of work is being done in the SME sector by NGOs on capacity and product development, but no effort was made to develop supply chains or sales. SME Foundation has developed software with a list of goods. However, most of the goods are not always available. If the private sector, government and banks came forward and worked together to give logistical support, then this sector would flourish, improving the supply chain.

USAID conducted a study on why the price of goods worth 10 taka per kg becomes 60 taka per kg when it comes to Dhaka. It is because the middleman who brings the goods to Dhaka does not have any packaging or security for the goods and so half the goods become rotten during transport. The middleman is forced to assume that half of the goods will be wasted and hence prices are set with this situation in mind. If the goods can be packaged in a way that they do not rot, and if the middleman has better logistical support and transportation,

in reaching the supply chain from the sectoral aspect should be increased.



Nazeem Sattar,
General Manager,
SME Foundation

The government has given banks the responsibility to implement the incentive package. Banks are prioritising existing clients and not showing any interest in providing loans to new clients. Therefore, those who are outside of the existing pattern need to be brought within the system. Government banks are even reluctant to fund the SME sector and have shown negligence in implementing the incentive package. The government must address the issue of banks not providing loans for SMEs.

Many government agencies provide loans outside of banks. We should look into whether they can be used as an alternative to banks for the segment of people at the bottom of the pyramid. We also have to increase the agencies' ability to function for these people. The government can take policy initiatives to help these people grow their businesses. An alternative loan delivery channel needs to be established besides banks.



Asif Iqbal, Joint
Director, Bangladesh
Bank

Recently, Bangladesh Bank made the application process much easier for SME entrepreneurs and has introduced a one-page loan application form. We have already launched a digital credit pilot through bKash and City Bank. If it can be launched successfully, then the financing end will be benefited greatly.

The banking system is more comfortable in dealing with collateral-based loans rather than cash flow-based loans. There is a need for a paradigm shift for the banking culture to start to promote cash flow-based loans. Many new businesses have opened during the pandemic. If micro merchant payment and retail merchant payment can be fully digitised, then the transaction will be fast and efficient.

The SME financing sector is continually trying to depend on banks, but, in reality, this might not be feasible. Banks will never be able to offer all kinds of financial activities. If we can focus more on supply chain financing, a lot of problems within the financing landscape can be solved.



Shabbir Shawkut,
Technical Advisor,
Capacity Building
and Public-Private
Dialogue, WEESMS,
The Asia Foundation

There should be alternative methods in evaluating credit ratings based on technological transactions. The utility payment behaviour of entrepreneurs can also be tracked.

Most people in marginal villages have never gone to the information booths in upazilas provided by the government. This shows a need for sync between financial management in these areas and the governmental support system.

During the COVID situation, people moved to their hometowns. There is uncertainty surrounding whether these workers will return after not finding work in the villages. This has caused a break in the supply chain. Many SMEs are unaware of how to overcome the break in the supply chain because they were never at the supply end. They mostly stay at the production end and reach out to secondary suppliers, but never reach tertiary suppliers. The government's attention is important in this matter, for example, through in-kind support.

Trade license renewal fees have increased compared to last year, causing a reluctance to renew licenses. This reluctance affects them in terms of taking bank loans since banks are not interested in providing loans to insolvent customers. The bank's support



M A Mannan MP,
Honourable Minister,
Ministry of Planning

There is a perception in our country that the smaller the borrower, the more fearful they are to approach government banks. This fear is now fading away but at a slow pace. Hopefully, new generation banks will do everything they can to minimise this fear of small borrowers. The government must try to diminish the fear even further.

E-payments for small borrowers should be initiated within a year. Hopefully, an efficient way will be found to ease the process and relax the e-payment schedule for beneficiaries. There is a gap between manufacturers and traders. Traders are faster and more visible, whereas manufacturing units are spread all over the country with single person operators or family operators with lower educational, social, and networking levels. Naturally, the manufacturers are finding it difficult to adapt to the change. With the support of the government, we hope to find a way to strengthen the millions of manufacturers across the country. We are aware of the slow process within government banks, but the Ministry of Finance and Bangladesh Bank must energise and empower them. We also have to familiarise ourselves with alternative delivery mechanisms.

TERRITORIAL ROW WITH INDIA, BHUTAN

China's 'coercive' tactics evident in its claims

Says Pentagon, reports Beijing's push to double its nuke warhead arsenal

AGENCIES

China has been using coercive tactics in pursuit of territorial and maritime claims in the South and East China Seas, as well as along its border with India and Bhutan, the Pentagon has said.

China is engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea. Beijing has built up and militarised many of the islands and reefs it controls in the region. Both areas are stated to be rich in minerals, oil and other natural resources and are vital to global trade.

China claims almost all of the South China Sea. Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims over the area.

"China's leaders use tactics short of armed conflict to pursue China's objectives. China calibrates its coercive activities to fall below the threshold of provoking armed conflict with the United States, its allies and partners, or others in the Indo-Pacific region," the Pentagon said in its annual report on China to the Congress.

China has been fast expanding military and economic influence in the Indo-Pacific region, triggering concern in various

countries of the region and beyond.

"These tactics are particularly evident in China's pursuit of its territorial and maritime claims in the South and East China Seas as well as along its border with India and Bhutan," said the report titled "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020" that was released by the Pentagon.

"Tensions with India persist along the northeastern border near the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China asserts is part of Tibet and therefore part of China, and near the Aksai Chin region at the western end of the Tibetan Plateau," the Pentagon said in its report to the Congress.

The report, however, makes no mention of the latest stand-off between India and China in Ladakh.

The report also said that the Chinese military was pressing to double its 200-plus nuclear warheads within a decade with the ability to launch them aboard ballistic missiles by land, sea and air. A Pentagon official said that although China remains far behind the US in terms of nuclear warheads, the acceleration shows Beijing moving from its traditional "minimum deterrence posture" to full-fledged competition.



The aerial photo shows an area of Amazon rainforest reserve burning south of Novo Progresso, in Para state, Brazil. Despite guarantees from President Jair Bolsonaro's government that it is acting to curb the destruction of world's largest rainforest, there were 29,307 fires in the Brazilian Amazon last month, just 5.2 percent lower than August 2019, official figures showed Tuesday. Fires meanwhile tripled year-on-year in the Pantanal, the world's largest tropical wetlands, according to data based on satellite images from Brazil's national space agency, causing alarm on a new front. Photo was taken on August 16, 2020.

PHOTO: AFP

DEVELOPING COVID-19 VACCINE

US refuses to join WHO's effort

AGENCIES

The Trump administration said Tuesday that it will not work with an international cooperative effort to develop and distribute a Covid-19 vaccine because it does not want to be constrained by multilateral groups like the World Health Organization.

The decision to go it alone, first reported by The Washington Post, follows the White House's decision in early July to pull the United States out of the WHO. Trump claims the WHO is in need of reform and is heavily influenced by China.

Some nations have worked directly to secure supplies of vaccine, but others are pooling efforts to ensure success against a disease that has no geographical boundaries. More than 150 countries are setting up the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility, or COVAX.

That cooperative effort, linked with the WHO, would allow nations to take advantage of a portfolio of potential vaccines to ensure their citizens are quickly covered by whichever ones are deemed effective, reports AP.

The WHO says even governments making deals with individual vaccine makers would benefit from joining COVAX because it would provide



China to allow some int'l flights into Beijing
India's case tally nears 3.8m as country reopens
Pakistan puzzles health experts as virus cases drop

backup vaccines in case the ones being made through bilateral deals with manufacturers aren't successful.

"The United States will continue to engage our international partners to ensure we defeat this virus, but we will not be constrained by multilateral organizations influenced by the corrupt World Health Organization and China," said White House spokesman Judd Deere.

The virus emerged late last year in China and has now infected more than 25.7 million people

globally and killed almost 858,000.

After a freeze of more than five months, China is poised to resume direct international flights to Beijing from several countries with low rates of the deadly coronavirus, aviation authorities said.

The new rules will apply from today to flights from Thailand, Cambodia, Pakistan, Greece, Denmark, Austria, Sweden and Canada, all with low numbers of imported cases of the virus which has hammered global travel, reports AFP.

In India, coronavirus infections rose to almost 3.8 million yesterday, as states continued to relax rules on movement despite the surge in cases. The country reported 78,357 new cases in the past 24 hours, according to federal health data, taking total infections to 3,769,523. Some 66,333 people have died.

Six months after the coronavirus arrived in Pakistan, the country appears to have dodged the worst of the pandemic, baffling health experts and dampening fears its crowded urban areas and ramshackle hospitals will be overrun.

Following an initial surge, the number of infections has plummeted in recent weeks, with Covid-19 deaths hovering in the single digits each day.

Putin critic Navalny poisoned with Novichok nerve agent

Says Germany; demands explanations from Moscow

AFP, Berlin

Tests carried out on Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny showed that he was poisoned by a Novichok chemical nerve agent, the German government said yesterday, demanding explanations from Moscow.

"It is a shocking event that Alexei Navalny has become the victim of an attack with a chemical nerve agent in Russia," said government spokesman Steffen Seibert in a statement.

"The government condemns this attack in the strongest terms. The Russian government is urgently requested to provide clarifications over the incident."

Tests carried out by the German army in consultation with the Charite hospital in Berlin, where Navalny is being treated, had found "unequivocal evidence of a chemical nerve agent from the Novichok family," Seibert said.



Navalny, 44, fell ill after boarding a plane in Siberia last month. He was initially treated in a local hospital before being flown to Berlin for treatment.

The Charite hospital has reported "some improvement" in Navalny's condition but he nevertheless remains in a medically induced coma and on a ventilator.

The case has drawn parallels with two suspected Kremlin-linked poisonings in Britain. In 2006, President Vladimir Putin was blamed for the radiation poisoning death of former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko in the British capital.

In 2018, the Kremlin was also accused of being behind the attempted murder of ex-double agent Sergei Skripal in Salisbury, England, using a Novichok nerve agent.

The German government said it would inform Nato and EU partners over its findings and seek a joint reaction on the case.



US President Donald Trump talks with local people while examining property damage to a Kenosha business in the aftermath of recent protests against police brutality and racial injustice and ensuing violence after the shooting of Jacob Blake by a police officer in Kenosha, Wisconsin, US, on Tuesday. During the visit, Trump said the recent violent demonstrations in the city were acts of "domestic terror" committed by violent mobs.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Trial of Charlie Hebdo attack accomplices begins

REUTERS, Paris

Fourteen alleged accomplices to the Islamist gunmen who attacked the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in 2015 went on trial on Wednesday, as the country recalled a dark episode that marked the onset of a wave of militant violence.

On Jan. 7, 2015, Said and Cherif Kouachi, armed with automatic weapons, went on the rampage in the offices of Charlie Hebdo, whose satire on race, religion and politics tested the limits of what society would accept in the name of free speech. They killed 12 people in an attack claimed by al-Qaeda.

The next day, Amedy Coulibaly, an acquaintance of Cherif Kouachi, shot dead a female police officer. On Jan 9, he killed four Jewish men at a kosher supermarket. In a video, he said he acted in the name of Islamic State.

The three were killed by police in different stand-offs.

Eleven of the 14 defendants appeared in courtroom and told the presiding judge they would answer the court's questions. Three are being tried in absentia.

The defendants face charges ranging from supplying weapons and logistical help to financing terrorism and membership of a terrorist organisation.

More than 250 people have been killed in France in Islamist violence since the attacks, which laid bare France's struggle to counter the threat of homegrown militants and foreign jihadists.

Meanwhile, Charlie Hebdo re-ran a series of cartoons yesterday depicting a very sensitive topic for Muslims that triggered the 2015 attacks.

Charlie Hebdo's no-taboo journalism has for years divided France. Egypt's highest Muslim authority Al-Azhar, Pakistan condemned the decision. Christophe Deloire, head of global media watchdog Reporters Without Borders, said it was an act of courage and a rejection of intimidation.

President Emmanuel Macron said France would remember those killed. "Satire is not a discourse of hate," the president told a news conference in Beirut.

End of a dynasty?

Joe Kennedy defeated in US Senate primary

AFP, Boston

Congressman Joe Kennedy, long seen as a rising star, crashed to defeat Tuesday in his bid for a US Senate seat, the first time the storied American political dynasty lost a state election in Massachusetts.

Incumbent Senator Ed Markey, a political veteran who re-cast himself as the fiery liberal in the race, harnessed the state's progressive energy to handily turn back a primary challenge from Joseph Kennedy III, the grandnephew of assassinated president John F Kennedy.

The 39-year-old Kennedy said he called Markey "to congratulate him and to pledge my support" in the months ahead.

Since he is not allowed to be on the ballot as a candidate for both the House and Senate, Kennedy is not running for re-election to his House seat. Come January, there will be no one from the Kennedy clan in elected office.

The grandson of slain attorney general Robert F Kennedy is part of the family's fourth generation to carry the political torch, entering the House of Representatives in 2013.

"Every race I've ever run, I've made it clear it's me on the ballot," Kennedy told AFP as he stumped for 11th-hour votes Tuesday in Boston.

For the Kennedy clan, there was much on the line. For all but two years since 1947 -- nearly a third of the history of the United States -- a Kennedy has served in elected office.

They are the quintessential American dynasty, one of the closest things the country has to royalty.

Like his presidential great-uncle, the lanky, red-haired Kennedy ran on the promise of a new generation.

And he had received the rare endorsement of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who in 2018 appointed him to deliver the Democratic response to President Donald Trump's State of the Union speech.

New book reveals icy ties between Melania and Ivanka

AFP, New York

A new book released Tuesday dishes on the supposed icy relationship between Melania Trump and her stepdaughter Ivanka, fuel for gossips eager to speculate about first family rivalries.

Author Stephanie Winston Wolkoff says she was once a friend of the president's third wife, also acting as an advisor until 2018 when she fell out of favor after reporting revealed colossal spending on Donald Trump's inauguration, which she played a key role in organizing.

Anecdotes fill the 351-page book "Melania and Me: The Rise and Fall of My Friendship With the First Lady," purporting to lift the veil off the ex-model of Slovenian origin.

Often portrayed as enigmatic, Melania's pouty pursed lips are dissected on social media and at one point the slogan #FreeMelania painted her as the victim of a difficult husband.

Winston Wolkoff, a former Vogue events organizer, describes a much more aggressive figure, notably detailing

how she and Melania choreographed every minute detail of the inauguration -- and prevented Ivanka from appearing in key photos of the ceremony.

The 50-year-old first lady allegedly nicknamed her 38-year-old daughter-in-law "princess," calling her and her husband Jared Kushner "snakes."

The book also leads readers to believe that Melania -- who caused a stir in 2018 after wearing a jacket with the message "I really don't care, do u?" scrawled on the back to visit a child migrant detention center -- might influence certain White House decisions.

The first lady's spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham has dubbed the book "wildly self-aggrandizing" revenge from a woman who joined the ranks of the president's enemies.

But as campaign season heats up, the book appears a likely hit.

Its release comes days after Melania and Ivanka exchanged what appeared to be an icy stare at the Republican Convention where the president formally accepted the nomination to run for a second term.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan's Suga announces PM run with strong party backing

Japan's chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga formally announced his bid to become the country's next prime minister yesterday, with growing party support making him the race's clear favourite. Suga unveiled his candidacy following days of speculation about his plans and shortly after the ruling Liberal Democratic Party set a September 14 vote on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's successor. A parliamentary vote will follow two days later, with lawmakers expected to endorse the new LDP leader as prime minister. He won't run unchallenged, with former defence minister Shigeru Ishiba and LDP policy chief Fumio Kishida already announcing they will stand.

All commitments met for Taliban peace talks: Afghan president

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani yesterday said that the government had met all of its commitments for peace talks with the Taliban, as a team left for Qatar to prepare for negotiations.

Ghani's remarks came after Kabul broke an impasse with the insurgent group on Monday by resuming a protracted prisoner exchange, a key hurdle to long-delayed negotiations between the two sides opening in Doha. Kabul had balked at the release of the final 400 Taliban inmates who Ghani described as "a danger to the world", before a group of prominent Afghans approved their release for the sake of peace talks. Ghani's comment suggests that the government pledge has been met. The prisoner exchange was agreed in a deal between the Taliban and the United States in February, which said Kabul should release 5,000 militants in return for the Taliban freeing 1,000 Afghan troops.

Notorious Khmer Rouge prison commander dead at 77

The Khmer Rouge commander known as 'Comrade Duch', Pol Pot's premier executioner and security chief who oversaw the mass murder of at least 14,000 Cambodians at the notorious Tuol Sleng prison, died yesterday. He was 77. Kaing Guek Eav or 'Comrade Duch' was the first member of the Khmer Rouge leadership to face trial for his role within a regime blamed for at least 1.7 million deaths in the "killing fields" of Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. Duch died at 00:52 am at the Khmer Soviet Friendship Hospital in Phnom Penh, Khmer Rouge tribunal spokesman Neth Pheaktra said. He gave no details of the cause, but Duch had been ill in recent years. In 2010, a UN tribunal found him guilty of mass murder, torture and crimes against humanity at Tuol Sleng prison, the former Phnom Penh high school which still stands as a memorial to the atrocities committed inside. He was given a life sentence two years later after his appeal that he was just a junior official following orders was rejected. Duch - by the time of his trial a born-again Christian - expressed regret for his crimes.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

FRESH OFF THE PRESS: NON-FICTION

There will be darkness again

Cosmologist Katie Mack offers a sobering prediction about the end of the universe

SHADMAN IQBAL

As humans we teeter on the oddest of precipices. We are only animals: apes unusually adept at surviving Earth's harsh playbook for life. Like the multitude of organisms we share it with, we live, multiply, and without exception, we die. But along the way our pattern-seeking brains, so adept at faces and tell-tale signs of the wilderness, stumbled onto something that dwarfs all life on Earth, and then some. We saw the sun rise, and rise again; we saw the stars persist in their baffling nightly routes, and slowly began to piece together the wonderfully vast cosmos.

In her book *The End of Everything* (*Astrophysically Speaking*) (Penguin UK, August 2020), cosmologist Katie Mack ponders briefly on how we have grappled with our place in its seemingly timeless odyssey. Even as she begins with Robert Frost's harrowing prose: "Some say the world will end in fire, some say in ice...", her gaze extends far beyond the poet's horizons.

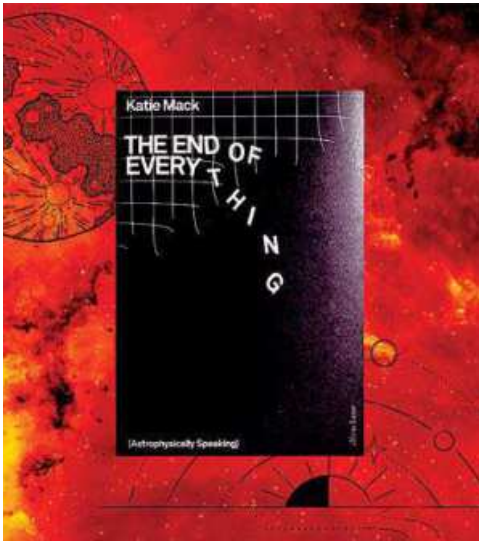
"Definitely fire." And the case is closed. The next step in our sun's journey is its red giant phase. The forecast for our tiny cosmic home is clear: molten hellscapes and oblivion. And as for the universe, there are no happily-ever-afters in sight.

Dr Mack studies cosmic evolution through "time" (a murky concept at such massive scales) and what we know of its beginning

and end. The sheer grandeur of scope means the roles of cosmologists become highly specialised and vary greatly. There are theorists, experimentalists, and a gamut of creatures in between. As a phenomenologist, Mack sits somewhere near the middle, walking seamlessly between faculty doors and offering up a sweeping panorama from the cutting edge of science. It is as close as we will likely get to a cosmic truth.

As it stands, the data we have combined with our current physics leads to five likeliest possibilities. The smallest tweaks to how we interpret this data lead to vastly different endings: from a "cold and beautiful" heat death, to an ever-expanding bubble of annihilation that may be upon us next Sunday. I say "endings" quite literally. It is the one thing these disparate roads

Mack manages the gargantuan task of sticking the universe inside 200 pages without drowning us with esoterica. Deeply mathematical objects like symmetries and quantum field theories are described with refreshing clarity.



DESIGN: SARAH ANJUM BARI

have in common.

Yet the book is somehow far from a morbid read, and quite beginner friendly. Much of science communication is the legerdmain of making highly technical concepts accessible without the only sensible way to describe them: mathematics. Many pop-science books, in an effort to dazzle (and thus sell) can succumb to the lure of taking poetic liberties with the science.

Mack manages the gargantuan task of sticking the universe inside 200 pages without committing this cardinal sin, or without drowning us with esoterica. Deeply mathematical objects like symmetries and quantum field theories are described with refreshing clarity as she tightropes expertly across a field riddled with unknowns and open questions. As insignificant as our roles are in the universe's comings and goings, there is undeniable, inordinate joy in the privilege to understand some of it.

This joy permeates her entire book. What we get is not simply an appendix to the classics of the genre. Instead of Carl Sagan's transportive prose or Hawking's dense compendiums, we are offered a fresh new take on science communication. Many cosmologists grow desensitised to the initial shock value of what they study. But Mack lives comfortably with the vertigo. Her style is personal and her voice shines through, scintillating in snarky footnotes and curious tangents that suffuse the entire experience with the familiarity of your favourite professor on a passionate rant. You take the sidecar on her freewheeling trip through the cosmos, with many pitstops. But these only add to the wonder, and you cannot but be transfixed. Most cosmologists would not fancy

themselves philosophers, but it is an inescapable consequence of their work to inspire art and philosophy. (If any of you've loved Hozier's song "No Plan" but paused confusedly at the lines, "As Mack explained, there will be darkness again", it's our friendly neighbourhood cosmologist making a cameo.) Even as it veers into abstraction and far beyond our discernible realities, the first urge to delve into cosmology comes from the same itch that drove Frost to poetry and Van Gogh to his starscapes. So sometimes, cosmologists do sit down and talk about what it all means.

This is what makes the epilogue shine. The day is done, measurements made, and we are flies on the wall. They muse about what it means to be so little in this indifferent vastness, if legacy has a place in it, and what endures beyond destruction. What does one do in the face of unwavering oblivion, when we do not get to keep any of the things we've worked so hard to learn? Well, cosmologist Renee Hložek puts it best: "The whole point is that you understand it, and then you enjoy it, and then... 'so long and thanks for all the fish.'"

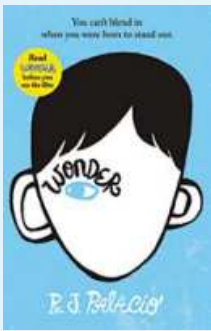
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THE SHELF

BACK TO SCHOOL: Campus novels worth revisiting

DS BOOKS DESK

Instead of the thrill of meeting friends and professors in a bustling, energised campus, going back to school only involves a computer this September. We miss the campus, don't we? Perhaps these five books, each portraying student life from school to university, can let us live vicariously while we attend classes from home.

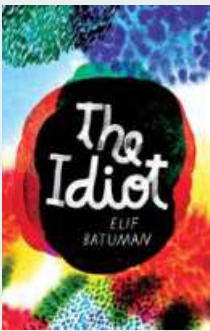


WONDER
R J Palacio

10-year-old Auggie is about to start 5th grade. Being born with a facial disfigurement, he has been home schooled his entire life. But his first encounter with children his own age involves taunts and bullying, but also, eventually, kindness. The book starts out from Auggie's point of view before switching to that of his classmates, and this is what makes the storytelling so poignant. It etches the portrait of a community grappling with difference, and the compassion that requires. At the same time, the novel investigates the roles of status and popularity in a school setting, where children are often driven by an impulse to bully.

NITU AR TAR BONDHURA
Muhammed Zafar Iqbal

Nitu finds herself trapped in an oppressive boarding school. Set within an eerie school campus, Iqbal's narrative explores the issues of freedom of speech, self-expression, and totalitarianism, as Nitu and her gang grow from confused little children to assertive rebels, in their quest to uncover secrets about their tyrannical headmistress and a missing school teacher. The book might seem best suited for school-age readers, but for those of us still kids at heart, *Nitu Ar Tar Bondhura* packs more than enough nostalgia and whackiness to satiate anyone who loves school campuses.

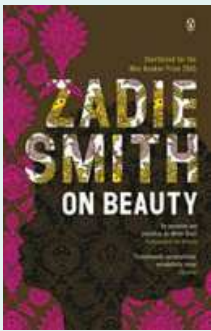
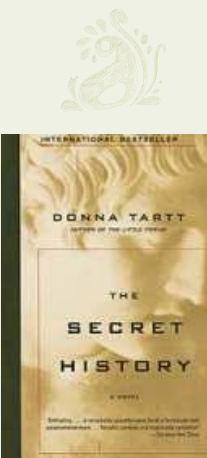


THE IDIOT
Elif Batuman

Selin, a Turkish-American freshman, has just arrived at Harvard University. Beginning college life in the mid-1990s, she discovers the internet and wants to know what books really "mean"; she observes how each person reacts differently when faced with a language they don't understand, and how she herself is shaped by her native English and Turkish. More than Batuman's plot and characters, *The Idiot* is memorable for Selin's perception of classic elements of university life—books, pastries, conversations with strangers—all filtered through a fascination with language, ideas, and the uncertainties of being a newly minted young adult.

THE SECRET HISTORY
Donna Tartt

"The snow in the mountain was melting and Bunny had been dead for several weeks..." So begins *The Secret History*, rife with all the juicy elements of a creepy campus novel: A murder mystery. Hedonism, inspired by an obsession with classical Greece. A brilliant, venerated professor. And a secluded, selective liberal arts college in Vermont, based on the real life Bennington College where author Tartt attended along with Bret Easton Ellis and other literary enigmas. All of this, narrated unreliably in a Nick Carraway-esque narrative, is what make Tartt's book coil tight with tension even as the secret is revealed in the very first page.



ON BEAUTY
Zadie Smith

This one is for the teachers—the academics, researchers, and their families who reside on college campuses—rich with a diversity of voices, cultures, and feuding ideologies. The Belseys have just moved into a Massachusetts college town and the father, a white left-wing English Rembrandt scholar, is at loggerheads with Sir Monty Kipps, a West Indian intellectual with conservative views. As they spar over art, religion, and multiculturalism, their young adult children brew their own mix of shifting ideologies, picking and choosing from the rival side. The result is a moving portrayal of family life, so often intimate yet inevitably porous.

BOOK REVIEW: YA DYSTOPIA

Submission and surveillance in Suzanne Collins' dystopia

Why *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is a prequel done right

SHABABA IQBAL

Twelve years ago, Suzanne Collins introduced us to *The Hunger Games* (Scholastic Press), a dystopian world where children fight to their televised deaths in a brutal annual competition. The story is set in the fictional sovereign state of Panem, comprising of a federal district at the Capitol and 13 outlying districts. Collins' prequel, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* (2020) takes us deeper into this widely popular post-apocalyptic world, emphasising how much media and political control shape our decisions as a society, and how political and surveillance systems become more complex over time.

Ballad begins with the 10th Hunger Games, 64 years before Katniss Everdeen volunteers as a tribute in *The Hunger Games*. The Games are now minimalist: they feature two children (tributes) from each of the 12 impoverished districts, who are thrown untrained into an arena with weapons

happens subtly, gradually. Snow struggles with his beliefs and actions, but repeatedly finds a way to justify himself. The text—as separate from its narrator—does not.

Unlike in the trilogy, here Collins makes us voyeurs. We watch the Games via camera, as young Snow does, desensitised to the suffering of the tributes. This brings us closer to understanding a protagonist who is snooty and ambitious to a fault. Decades later, at the 74th Hunger Games, Katniss will marvel at the high-speed train that brings her to the Capitol and the medicine that saves her life in the arena—inventions that the Capitol hoards while district residents die of starvation. Snow's government will tap their phones, monitor their houses, and use technology as a means to taunt the oppressed.

To witness this transition—from Snow's simpler sinister days to his rule of stifling exploitation—is to understand just how much Collins' fiction is true to our times.

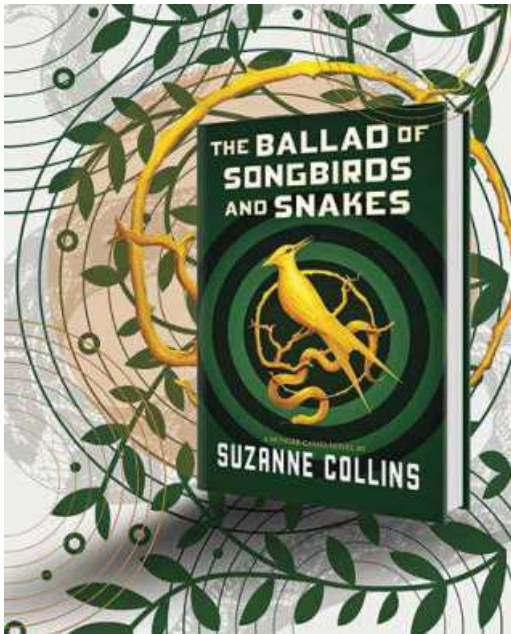
Across the books, Collins confronts us with our uncomfortable similarities with the people of the Capitol, who profit from exploiting the poor and use popular media to distract citizens from the consequences of their lifestyle. This consumption of exploitation is a valid criticism of our entertainment industry which monetises trauma, and gladly puts ratings and sensationalism over honest accountability, increasingly blurring the lines between the shocking and the entertaining.

Meanwhile, we continue to use online platforms such as Google and Facebook which infamously collect our personal information and sell them to advertisers. For authoritarian and democratic governments alike, the potential for abuse presented by advanced online surveillance is staggering. Activists and journalists who might otherwise hold them to account are forced to self-censor, while dissidents and members of marginalised communities think twice before discussing their struggles or political opinions openly.

As we live and breathe through such times, willingly following the surveillance status quo, Collins' dystopian world does not seem too far-fetched. As a prequel, *Ballad* helps raise questions about the horrors that we are willing to accept and justify to ourselves, and reminds us that many nations are still suffering at the boot heels of governments like President Snow's.

A longer version of this article will be available online. Follow Daily Star Books on Facebook and @thedailystarbooks on Instagram for more updates.

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DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

and forced to fight to their deaths. This early arena isn't the as magnificent as the wild forest of *The Hunger Games* or the eerie clock-shaped landscape of *Catching Fire* (2009). It is a broken down, bombed out stadium. The tributes have no tracking devices and the cameras haven't yet begun to follow them around all the time. Under the guise of inspiring unity, 24 students from the Academy—a high school for the Capitol's elite—are selected as mentors for the tributes. Among these students is 18-year-old Snow, who will become Panem's president and the main villain of Collins' original trilogy.

Collins isn't interested in making Snow a protagonist to root for, however. His degeneration

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 3, 2020, BHADRA 19, 1427 BS

Victims of human trafficking thrown in jail

If the government won't protect our citizens, who will?

A report published on Wednesday shows just how vulnerable Bangladeshi migrant workers are to becoming victims of human trafficking, and sadly, how totally devoid of support they are from their own government, even after becoming victims of criminal activities. Out of 107 migrants who were deported from Vietnam on August 18, 81—instead of being reunited with their families at the end of their 14-day quarantine—have been incarcerated instead. They were arrested under the dubious Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which allows the state to detain those suspected of “tarnishing the country’s image abroad.”

Some of these returnee migrants spoke about how Bangladeshi and Vietnamese manpower brokers, in connivance with Bangladeshi recruiting and travel agents, arranged fake job documents and sent them to Vietnam over the past year. However, once they reached the country, their passports were taken away, and they were beaten up when they refused to stay and work. The “crime” they were accused of in Vietnam involved holding demonstrations in front of the Bangladesh embassy demanding justice and repatriation.

After suffering such hardships, one would expect these workers to receive assistance from the Bangladeshi authorities, especially after being sent home. Instead, the arresting SI argued that these trafficking victims are likely to engage in various crimes including robbery, family violence, killing and militancy, if they are released. On what grounds can this claim be made, especially when there is no clear proof of these workers being prosecuted for violating any laws in Vietnam?

What is even worse is the inclination of the authorities to persecute the victims while ignoring the real culprits. About a dozen migrants told The Daily Star’s correspondent that they had immigration clearance from the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) for jobs in Vietnam. The Bangladesh Ambassador to Vietnam also said she wrote several times to the home and expatriates’ welfare ministries on such human trafficking, but received no assistance. The BMET never communicated with the embassy for verification of any companies in Vietnam before issuing immigration clearances. Yet, so far, the only action taken against the BMET has been the formation of a probe committee at the expatriates’ welfare ministry. The recruiting agents responsible for the plight of these workers have not only escaped prosecution; they have also been excused from bearing the cost of repatriation of and compensation to the affected migrant workers.

It is reprehensible that these migrants, after facing such injustices abroad, are being unjustly held and harassed once again at home. We urge the authorities to release these victims of human trafficking and to immediately conduct a judicial investigation into the recruiting agencies and BMET officials who allowed their trafficking to occur in the first place. If this situation is not handled judiciously, our unfair treatment of victims of human trafficking will tarnish the country’s image far more than any acts committed by our workers abroad.

Private healthcare facilities must have price charts for medical tests and services

They must comply with the HC order

WE commend the High Court for ordering private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres to submit revised charts of fees for medical tests to the court. During the hearing of a writ petition, the court also ordered the authorities concerned to inform it of the progress made in formulating guidelines to monitor these private healthcare facilities under the Medical Practice and Private Clinics and Laboratories (Regulation) Ordinance-1982.

Last year, following the same writ petition, the HC had directed the private healthcare facilities to display the chart of their fees in public view. It had then asked the health secretary, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council to execute the directives. Although the authorities concerned were supposed to form a committee to execute the directives within 60 days of getting the order, we still do not know how much progress has been made in this regard.

There have been widespread allegations against the private healthcare facilities of the country of charging exorbitant fees for various medical tests. The irregularities of the hospitals in providing treatment to patients—both Covid and non-Covid—have been vividly exposed during this coronavirus pandemic. While many patients were denied treatment by the hospitals, those which provided treatment charged exorbitant fees for their services. It was reported in The Daily Star last July how Covid-19 patients were handed ghostly bills for getting oxygen support—one patient, for example, was charged Tk 86,400 for less than one hour of oxygen support in a city hospital! Besides, as the media reported, patients also had to pay higher charges for other essential services in the hospitals during this time.

Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that private clinics, hospitals and diagnostic centres have fixed rates for all medical tests and services and have a chart of their fees displayed in public view. This will not only be helpful for the patients but also will prevent the hospital staff from resorting to any corrupt practices. The High Court’s order in this regard is very timely and should be complied with by all private healthcare facilities.

INTERNATIONAL CEDAW DAY

The long and winding road to end discrimination against women



TASMAIH T. RAHMAN

reservations about certain articles that uphold a state’s responsibility towards women and their right to social and economic advantages, and address discrimination in matrimonial and family laws.

It’s about time the government adopted these articles as these are fundamental to ensuring equal rights for women and girls who are subject to various forms of discrimination and violence. Ratification of these articles would commit government ownership as a first step. Then further advocacy would be required to ensure enforcement practices the impact of which would trickle down in our society, where women and girls continue to face practical challenges when it comes to living a life with dignity.

A few examples will shed light on the nature of problems and biases facing women and girls in their everyday life.

Thousands of women went through this kind of violence at home during the lockdown, but lacked the courage to speak up against it. Even though there are laws giving them protection on paper, many women like Rohima opt not to complain.

Violence on the rise
Rohima (not her real name) received a call from her employer informing her that she doesn’t need to come to work because of the pandemic. She is a domestic worker living in a slum. Her husband is a rickshaw puller and found himself out of work after the city went under lockdown in late March. When she was approached by an NGO with cash support to help her in these trying times, her complaint

is a woman. Henna has accepted her fate even though she puts in the same effort as the men in her profession. When her employer was approached, he said that women are often less “productive”. They also miss work when their children and older people in their family are unwell. For men, this is not an issue; thus he thinks it is justified that Henna gets less wage. This is the practice, he said.

While about 84 percent of people work



SOURCE: WWW.BLONCAMPUS.COM

was that her husband beats her every day, because he is “stressed” owing to his being out of work. When advised to call a help line that can support her, she expressed her fear that he would beat her even more if he knew that she had complained.

Thousands of women went through this kind of violence at home during the lockdown, but lacked the courage to speak up against it. Even though there are laws giving them protection on paper, many women like Rohima opt not to complain as our still largely patriarchal society “allows” this behaviour. Violence against women saw a 69 percent increase between 2019 and the Covid-19 crisis in 2020, according to findings by BRAC’s Human Rights and Legal Aid Services.

Reduced wages for women
Henna is a construction worker and often works 10-12 hours a day to make ends meet. However, her daily wage is almost half her male counterpart’s. When asked, she says that she earns less because she

in the informal economy in Bangladesh, the wage gap is more prominent in this sector as wage is unregulated. Even though women produce the same amount of work, with the same hours spent, they end up being paid less, without any additional benefits either.

Do women have the right to rent, let alone have equal share of property?
Onnonna, a young filmmaker, lives in Dhaka city with two other flatmates. The apartment’s guard is her biggest guardian! He seems always curious about what Ononna wears and when she comes home. The other day, he refused to open the gate as she returned home at midnight from a shooting assignment. The guard’s enabler is the landlord himself, who doesn’t like Ononna’s lifestyle and often asks her why she is still single. She is fed up and now looking for another place to rent.

Article 2c of CEDAW (which Bangladesh has yet to ratify) clearly highlights the need to “establish legal

Are we aware of the severity of vitamin D deficiency in Bangladesh?

NAWSHAD AHMED

IF half of the population of Bangladesh and up to 70 percent of children are deficient in vitamin D, then it must be a major cause for concern for us. Despite having the natural advantage of abundant sunshine all year round allowing vitamin D synthesis, why are we having this phenomenon in our population?

The high prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in Bangladesh can be explained by people’s limited exposure to sunlight especially in the urban areas, use of traditional clothing, limited outdoor activity by women and children, and low consumption of vitamin D-rich food including sea fish.

In fact, vitamin D deficiency is not a problem only in Bangladesh; it is a neglected public health issue globally. Almost one billion people in the world suffer from this deficiency. It is prevalent in both the western countries and the tropical countries with abundant sunshine. In South Asia, about 80 percent of the apparently healthy population is deficient in vitamin D ((20 ng/mL) and up to 40 percent of the population is severely deficient ((10 ng/mL).

Vitamin D has been given high importance for its role in calcium homeostasis and bone health since its identification in 1921. Since then, medical practitioners know that vitamin D deficiency leads to bone diseases like rickets and osteomalacia (softening of bones), and other illnesses such as diabetes, different types of cancer, autoimmune diseases, backache, myalgia, muscle weakness, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, chronic ulcers, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, dental problem, pre-eclampsia and psychological disorders like depression.

I have developed an interest in this regard after my own suffering caused by vitamin D deficiency. I am sharing my personal experience below with the hope that it will help raise awareness of the severity of the problem.

In the early morning of April 10, 2020, I was unable to get out of bed due to severe back pain. I had no previous experience of such pain and so got very nervous. I thought I should not visit any doctor given the Covid-19 situation. So I spoke with two friends who I knew had

suffered back pain in recent months. All that they suggested was that I take complete bed rest for a week and I should be fine.

However, after a couple of days, since I could not tolerate the pain, I consulted a doctor over phone. He suggested some medicines which I took for a week. This did not help. I consulted another doctor the following week, and started taking medicine as prescribed, for another two weeks. However, the pain continued and in fact increased more. I could not sleep the whole night due to extreme pain. I was still not prepared to see any doctor due to the worsening Covid-19 situation in the country.

Two months passed by without any improvement in my physical condition. I finally decided to visit a doctor. When I met him, the doctor asked me to do a number of tests. On the basis of the test reports, he prescribed me medicines and advised me to see a physiotherapist.



Limited exposure to sun rays is immensely beneficial to health.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Accordingly, I went to a physiotherapist who I have known for several years, a young man in his mid-thirties. He carefully went through all my medical reports, looked at the X-ray and MRI plates, and came to the conclusion that I was severely vitamin D deficient, and the

only thing I needed to do is either take vitamin D tablets or sit under the sun for 15-20 minutes every day for the next six months.

The next day, I pulled a chair and sat down near the window from where sunlight was pouring in. I felt much better after sitting for only 15 minutes. The next day, I sat again for 15 minutes. And, I could not believe myself as I was soon completely free from pain. Along with the back pain, my knee pain and muscle pain—which I had been suffering from for the last ten years—were also totally gone. I realised the value of vitamin D; I never thought it would work so fast.

I believe we should undergo lifestyle modification in order to reduce vitamin D deficiency. We should expose ourselves to sunshine at least two to three times a week to naturally minimise vitamin D deficiency. Among various micronutrients, vitamin D is an important one for our body which we can easily get from

protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination.” Unless these basic principles are upheld by the country’s law, women will continue to be the subject of such discrimination and harassment.

Dilara’s story is also a telling example of such discrimination. Dilara was attacked on her Facebook page when she mentioned that India’s Supreme Court gave equal inheritance rights to both son and daughter. Immediately, religious references were brought up. She had to answer to about a hundred messages justifying her stand. Many, mostly men, were unhappy that this issue was even being discussed, as the law in this regard is governed by religion, and thus justified. In reality, Dilara has been deprived of her rightful share of her father’s property and was fighting her own brothers in court.

Marriage, divorce and protection after divorce

Beauty was married for 14 years and decided to leave her husband as he was abusive. Often he would hit her and their children. So she decided to leave him and claimed alimony to support their children. It has been three years since, and she is yet to get any support from her husband. She is unable to go to court as even in her own house her family thinks she is a burden and they would want her to go back to her husband. Her family is also open to her remarrying but she is stalling the process, as her ex-husband has threatened to take her children away from her. According to the law, the legal guardian of Beauty’s children is their father and he can take them away if she marries again.

Our family laws are still rooted in patriarchy, and often guarded in the name of “religious sentiment”. It must be acknowledged that Bangladesh has achieved notable progress in women’s empowerment as a collective, but the struggles of individual women—especially the discrimination they continue to face in daily life—remain largely unaddressed. Bold steps are needed to counter these deep-seated problems and to establish women’s rights. The government must take this fight forward and ratify the CEDAW in its entirety.

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Tasmiah T. Rahman works at the Skills Development Programme of BRAC. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessary reflect her organisation’s position.

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abnormalities, growth retardation and stunting. Vitamin D deficiency in adults leads to osteomalacia, osteopenia, osteoporosis and subsequent risks of fractures.

According to the World Health Organization, getting anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes of sunlight on the arms, hands, and face 2-3 times a week is enough to get the required vitamin D for ourselves. To be effective, the sunrays must penetrate the skin. Wearing sunscreen or heavy clothing will not result in vitamin D production. However, we have to remember that overexposure to sunrays might cause harm to our health. Skin cancer is associated with too much exposure to sunrays. There have been numerous studies linking cancer to sunrays but it is well-established by now that limited exposure is not a risk; rather it is immensely beneficial to health.

Due to the current lockdown-like situation imposed by Covid-19, many people are still spending most of their time indoors. Others are spending long hours in offices and their respective workplaces. It is important that they regularly expose themselves to sunshine, if possible during the week days, or at least during the weekends.

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Dr Nawshad Ahmed is an economist and urban planner. He is engaged in research activities after retiring from the United Nations.

Secularism vs religion in politics: by Abul Mansur Ahmad

Today marks the 122nd birth anniversary of writer-politician Abul Mansur Ahmad (1898-1979). This is an abridged version of an article written by him and published in the ‘Concept of Pakistan’ magazine in 1964, during the reign of Gen. Ayub Khan.

Secularism is the most misunderstood word in Pakistan. Though not apparent to the casual observer, secularism versus religion in politics is the most important problem in our country. Its correct appreciation is thus the most pressing need of the hour. Ignorance by itself is bad enough, but ignorance of ignorance is definitely worse. We seem to be utterly oblivious of the evident injury we have been causing both to our people and the country, and indeed our religion, by pitting religion against “worldism” as equals.

This has occurred mainly due to our unthinking rejection of secularism as a principle of ethics of our political life. How defective our political thinking is will be evident from the fact that none of our political parties have found it necessary to speak out in support of secularism. On the contrary, all the parties, including those with the “bad

creative, and commercial rather than industrial. All politicians, active and inactive, including the politically thinking section of the intelligentsia, are under the spell of the very engrossing notion that the people of Pakistan in general are strongly averse to the idea of secularism. So, unless they openly profess their unflinching devotion to Islamisation of politics, they would lose their popularity and also the votes. This has, therefore, become the conventional way of doing politics in our country.

Secularism, however, does not merit the treatment it has so far received in the hand of politicians. It has, wrongly and unjustly, been pitted against religion. There is nothing inherently inimical between the two. History abounds with instances where deeply religious-minded statesmen and philosophers have advocated secularism in politics. Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Cripps

worldly gains by whatever means necessary, without any regard for moral and ethical values of life. The secularists are, therefore, regarded as those who do not believe in any religious moral or ethical principles of life and so are not to be tolerated.

This misunderstanding is entirely due to the improper definition of the word. In my view, however, it is safer to describe rather than define secularism. Better still, to understand it. So let us try to understand what secularism is. In layman’s phraseology, secularism is nothing more than the separation of practical religion and practical politics. This predicate—“practical”—is necessary because there are many things common to religion and politics in their theoretical and academic aspects. Now, this separation has taken place as a result of human experiences gained through centuries. Let us open a few pages of history to see how it happened.

Since the dawn of history, monarchs used to be both temporal and spiritual heads of their subjects. It then suited everybody because the rulers and their subjects belonged to the same faith, the kingdoms were compact geographical areas, and the statehood was very simple autocracies. With the growth and expansion of trade and commerce, colonisation became the order of the day, and building up of empires followed. With this, complications arose. Subjects of the kingdoms and those of the empires could not be expected to be of the same faith. So naturally, the necessity of the emperors’ declaration of impartiality in religious matters arose in the interest of empires themselves.

Queen Victoria’s famous declaration is an instance in point. This was strictly in line with the earlier declaration made by Emperor Akbar. But this convenient liberalism abroad did not apply in the case of the subjects of the monarchs’ own race at home. There, they continued to remain both temporal and spiritual heads. This continued up to the middle of the nineteenth century. During this period, the entire globe was roughly divided into three religious worlds: the Christian world comprising Europe and America, the Muslim world comprising the greater part of Asia and Africa, and the Buddhist world comprising Eastern Asia. In all these worlds, most of the kings and emperors claimed to be, and were actually regarded by their subjects, as temporal and spiritual heads. In the Christian world, they were pontiffs; in the Muslim world, they were Amir-ul-Mominins and Khalifa-tul-Muslimins; and in the Buddhist world, they were Tein Tzas in China and Mikados in Japan. Although England fell out of papal jurisdiction from the sixteenth century and set up her own autonomous Church of England, the Pope of Rome remained the overall pontiff of the continent exercising jurisdiction either concurrent with or supervisory over the monarchs of all regions.

As regards the Muslim world, the combination of the temporal and spiritual headship in the Khalifa practically ended with the first four

Caliphs known as Khulafa-i-Rashidin. After that the Church and the state tended to fall apart into Khilafat and Imamat. The great Imams fought with their life for the independence of the Church from the interference of the temporal monarchs. Imam Abu Hanifa was imprisoned, Imam Malik was flogged, and Imam Jafar Sadiq was threatened with death and his property confiscated by no less a Caliph than the illustrious Khalifa Mansur, and all this for the simple offence of not agreeing to surrender their religious belief to the whims of the temporal lord. The Imams’ suffering bore fruits and the Imamat could maintain at least a semblance of its independence from the interfering hand of the most autocratic of the emperors. Later on, the Ottoman emperors tried to regain spiritual authority over their subjects but their success was nominal. Even that nominal sovereignty over Muslim Church, if it may be so called, came to an end with the advent of the nineteenth-century wave of Renaissance in Europe which penetrated into the Muslim world through Lebanon and Egypt. Arab and Egyptian nationalism rapidly grew as an inseparable adjunct to their struggle for independence from the yoke of Ottoman, British and French imperialism. This was quickly followed by the rise of nationalism in Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. The common ground underlying this rapidly growing nationalism was the basic concept of separation of religion from politics. Mustafa Kamal gave this idea a practical shape by dismantling the institution of Khilafat for good.

So it is clearly seen from the analysis or the historical events above that separation between religion and state was effected by mutual consent in the interest of both. Religion separated itself from the state because as a partner of state powers, it could no longer maintain its right to divinity. The state, on the other hand, separated itself from religion because that was the only way to safeguard its right to the undivided loyalty of its subjects. Another aspect of this separation was that everywhere it was wanted by the weaker of the two parties. In the case of Muslims, it was the Alevis, later known as Shias, who conceived the idea of Imamat as distinguished from Khilafat at a time when they were being oppressed by the Sunni Caliphs. In the case of Christians, it was the Catholics of France and the Protestants of Germany who wanted this separation. Pope Pius, when he accepted the political sovereignty of the king of Italy, was a virtual prisoner in the Vatican City.

Subsequent experiences throughout the world have amply justified this separation of religion and state and have strengthened the grounds on which it took place.

Admittedly, there are three fundamental differences between religion and the state. Firstly, religion in its true sense is a unifying force, whereas the state is definitely a dividing force. Religion has no territorial boundaries whereas the state has and must have

one. Secondly, religion is more directly concerned with the moral and spiritual progress of humanity at large, whereas the state is more directly concerned with the material and social progress of its own citizens. Thirdly, religion is based on the willing submission of its adherents, whereas the state is based on force and coercion applied on its citizens, willing or not.

This observation is related to two undisputed facts: one is that whatever may be the form of government, the politics of a country is governed by either the strength of the arm of the powerful or by the force of the votes of the majority. The other fact is that whatever may be the form of religion, its faithful devotees are in hopeless minority compared to their erring brothers of the same faith so far as its devotional forms, moral precepts and ethical injunctions are concerned. Considering these two realities, it will be unsafe for a devoted faithful to entrust his religious affairs with either the mighty or the majority. To allow politics to interfere in religion will mean either this or that or both.

I have no hesitation in admitting that those who want to introduce or rather reintroduce religion into politics do so with the best of motives. What I do not agree with is that religion can control politics by becoming a partner in the affairs of the state. Instead of controlling politics, it will itself be controlled by politics. From the angle of politics, the life of an individual, as also that of a society, state and nation, has become far more complex than what it was, say, in the nineteenth century. So the reason for which France, Germany and Italy had to separate the Church from the state do apply today with much greater force. No state can permit a divided loyalty in its citizens. In the Muslim history, the Khilafat, which was originally designed to be a unified institutional hegemony transcending territorial and national boundaries to be headed by only one Khalifat-ul-Muslimin, had to be divided country-wise into as many Khalifas having the Khutba read in as many names, instead of one. This division was an unavoidable political necessity to prevent the divided loyalty of the citizens.

There is another point, no less strong, which makes the separation of politics and religion irresistible. The complex nature of the life of a modern nation-state is reflected, amongst other things, in its division into religious majority and minority. The basis of modern politics being counting of heads, no religious minority can afford to subject their faith to the majority interference. This was resisted in the ninth century in the Muslim World, in the nineteenth century in the Christian World and in the twentieth century in the Buddhist World. Now this separation is an internationally closed question.

So let religion succeed where politics fails. Let religion begin where politics ends. The two must not meet. If they do, politics will make religion corrupt and religion will make politics unreal. We can ill-afford either.



Abul Mansur Ahmad (1898-1979)

name” of being leftist, seem to be anxious to conceal their inclination towards secularism. They, more hypocritically than honestly, talk of Islamic republicanism and Islamic socialism, and of their determination not to do anything and not to pass any law against Quran and Sunnah. Even President Ayub and his companions—some of whom are evidently men of enlightenment who, in the beginning of their “revolution”, rightly condemned past politicians for their “exploitation of religion for political purpose”—have now adroitly effected a volte-face and have started talking of Islamic republicanism. This will apparently seem to be a surrender to “public opinion”.

This is so because political thinking in Pakistan is deductive rather than inductive, opportunistic rather than

of England, Bismarck of Germany, Emerson and John Dewey of America are the last persons to be graded as anti-religious persons. On the other hand, it will be seen that those who are opposed to secularisation of politics, because of their love for religion and hatred for secularism, are actually *secularising* religion itself. Secularism is neither anti-religious nor irreligious.

The worst that can be said against it is that it is not pro-religion. In fact, it is neither for nor against any particular religion in a very limited sense. Secularism is full of moral and ethical principles of its own, many of which are akin to religious injunctions. This is what is generally overlooked. It is generally believed, at least in our part of the world, that secularism is sheer materialistic opportunism for achieving

Fighting racism: Building coalition among racial minorities

REZWAN MASUD and HAIDER KHAN

THE protests in the wake of George Floyd’s murder by four Minneapolis police officers rightfully reflected waves of anger and activism in the United States and beyond. Then, the atrocious incident occurred on August 23 in Kenosha, Wisconsin—where a white police officer shot Jacob Blake, an unarmed African-American man, seven times in front of his kids—proves that the heartbreaking assertion of “I can’t breathe, officer!” was not just the plea of Floyd to survive. These words also symbolise historical demands of the black people to be treated fairly and equally in the United States.

In fact, these demands for equal rights extend beyond the United States as well. During the Algerian revolution, Franz Fanon referred to this suffocation in his book *Toward the African Revolution*: “We revolt simply because, for a variety of reasons, we can no longer breathe.” In the recent protests, there have been widespread calls for systemic and structural changes. Cornel West saw signs of hope in a broad coalition of protests in the recent times. The theme that being black should not itself be a death sentence echoed in different parts of the world.

We have seen that different communities of colour as well as white allies participated spontaneously in protests supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. However, in many other communities of colour, there

is a lack of consciousness about the historical and systemic injustice against the black people. The recent incidents of discrimination against the black people have pointed out an important but often ignored aspect: the questionable attitude towards the black people among other communities of colour.

The fact that of the four police officers involved in the killing of George Floyd, one was an Asian American, led to some introspective discussions of a complex dynamics of Asian Americans vis-à-vis the black people. Of course, the incident should not lead to a generalised conclusion that all Asian Americans are anti-black, that they do not face discrimination themselves. Especially after the Trump administration’s rhetoric of calling the Corona virus “China virus”, different types of racist incidents have taken place against Asian Americans. Likewise, there is an urge inside the Hispanic community to confront racial stereotypes. There is a growing call for discussion among South Asians as well to tackle their own anti-blackness. With the rising xenophobic atmosphere against immigrants and Islamophobic incidents, the Hispanic and the South Asian communities are also subject to racial slurs and attacks.

That being said, it cannot be denied that there is a problem of anti-blackness within these communities. It may be uncomfortable for many to admit but being judged by the colour of one’s skin happens in many parts of the world. A darker shade of skin can decrease one’s

likelihood of getting married or having a good job in many countries. Recent discussions of commercial products to whiten the skin and colourism within Bollywood are a glaring example of that.

One essential step towards building progressive coalitions would be to understand the plight of the black people in historical context. Data show that black men are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by the police than white men in the United States. More than eight-in-ten black adults view that they are treated unfairly by the criminal justice system. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Elijah McClain are not exceptions—they are the latest additions in the list of black people who have been murdered by the state.

Studies have shown that inequality is not colour-blind. Black people are discriminated against in accessing equal opportunities for education, health, and job. Consequently, the Coronavirus has also hit the black people harder in a lot of US states. Data show that on average the mortality rate among black people are 2.4 times higher than white people in the United States.

Speaking of change, one positive aspect of recent times is that young people from other communities of colour are increasingly showing signs of solidarity by taking part in protests for the Black Lives Matter movement in different ways. The young Asian-Americans are calling for change, while some South Asian groups have also taken active stance in recent times.

To make this more sustainable, every conscious individual should make active efforts to bridge any existing gap between them and the black community. Rights that the immigrant communities enjoy today are due to the advances made by the civil rights movement spearheaded by black political activists in the sixties. A multiracial, multi-ethnic movement from below can make the progress truly feasible.

There is a lack of consciousness about the history of the black people in the current education curriculum in the US. One way to redress the situation is that all schools, colleges and universities should offer courses on the history of racism emphasising the plight of the black people. This will help fight anti-blackness in other communities and help remove racial stereotypes. If Germany and South Africa can address their histories of holocaust and apartheid in their education systems, so can the United States to highlight its own records.

Academic departments and educators should make active efforts to incorporate the work of African American writers while reviewing the topics of national history, legal and criminal justice system, and policing related studies in their course design. The black people have voices, but often institutions choose not to hear. Christina Sharpe has brilliantly demonstrated in her book *On Blackness and Being* how the black people have been denied agency throughout history and how violence against the black people cannot be detached from being black.

Changing anti-black attitude within other minority communities can begin with their leaders’ organising public awareness campaigns to get rid of the stigma associated with darker skin colour. International students’ associations in different campuses can arrange dialogues and organise activities with the black students’ groups. Different solidarity groups can increase their visible support for the black people through real life and social media campaigns.

More deeply, there needs to be honest soul-searching as to why the current national and global structures do not speak for the black people. Achille Mbembe argues in his book *Necropolitics* that liberal democracy and racism have actually been compatible in the American context. Neoliberal capitalist policies aggravated the plight of the black people in many ways. Academicians and policymakers should look for ways to redress the structural discrimination against the black communities.

These suggestions are not exhaustive, but they can be a stepping stone for building broader coalition of solidarity to address racism in the United States and elsewhere. No nation can progress by putting its minorities in the back seat. Other communities of colour, while fighting their own battles, need to address these biases and build solidarity with all oppressed groups.

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Villagers of Singur in Baramchal union of Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila show the pile of around 1,200 betel plants that were cut down on the night of August 4.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Flee or starve to death

Indigenous communities in Kulaura upazila face continuing repression over the land they possess for generations

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Their only source of income, betel leaf gardens, came under attack four times in seven months. After the last attack almost a month ago, when 1,200 of their betel plants were destroyed, they filed a case with the local police station, mentioning names of the perpetrators. But the accused still roam free. Several indigenous communities in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila are facing such recurring attacks on their livelihood when they are struggling for survival amid dwindling income due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Before and after the attacks in the village or punjee named Singur in Baramchal union, the communities

were asked to vacate the around 300 acres of land on which they have been living and cultivating betel leaf for generations, said community members. It takes around two to three years to nurture a betel plant before leaves can be plucked from it. Now, after so many mature plants lost in such a short time, the communities face severe financial crisis, they said, adding that with their livelihood diminishing and impending risk of further attacks on their lives and property, about 350 members of different indigenous communities, including Mandi and Khasi, in the village are on the verge of starvation. On February 19, in the first of the attacks, 700 of their betel plants were chopped down. On the night

of July 19, nearly 450 plants were destroyed. At night on June 20, 100 more plants were cut down. And finally, on August 4, the attackers damaged 1,200 plants at night. Binet Manar, headman of the village, said on August 4, the day of the last attack, the villagers caught red-handed Fakhru Ali, a resident of Pashchim Singur Gregging village, while he was chopping down betel plants belonging to villagers of Singur. Before being caught, Fakhru and his accomplices -- Khairul Mia and Rafiq Mia, also from Pashchim Singur Gregging village -- locked in an altercation with villagers who resisted them from damaging the betel plants. Following an arbitration meeting, Fakhru was later released

in exchange for a bond, stating that he would never conduct such activities in future, Binet said. The same night, however, 1,200 betel plants were damaged, he also said. The next day, a case was filed in this connection with Kulaura Police Station, naming Fakhru Ali, Khairul Shah and three or four other unnamed individuals, said Ferdous Hasan, officer-in-charge of the police station. They found the allegation to be true during primary investigation and they were trying to arrest the accused, he added. This correspondent failed to reach Fakhru Ali and Khairul Shah for their comments over the allegation as their cell phones were found switched off.

Road collapses within a year in Kurigram

Local people have blamed use of substandard materials in the construction work

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The road stretching from Narikelbari-Satibari to Khamar Government Primary School in Ulipur municipality of Kurigram district has collapsed at several places. Besides, the guide wall of the road has collapsed, causing immense sufferings to commuters. All these things happened within a year of the construction of the road. Local people have blamed use of substandard materials in the construction work of the road. Due to collapse of the road at various places, the width of the road has shrunk to six to four feet from its original width of 10 feet. According to the municipality sources, in November 2018, the construction work of the road was started at a cost of Tk 96 lakh under the JICA project and it was completed in June 2019. Guide walls were constructed at two places to protect the road from being damaged by Buri Teesta river water. Mahbubul Alam, assistant engineer of the municipality, said contractor Shah Alam, owner of Messrs' Sunflower Firm, got the work order but sub-contractor Shahinur Alamgir, owner of Anwasha Traders, did the road construction work. Mahbubul told The Daily Star that the road was damaged in a short time due to heavy rains and waters from the river. The contractor is yet to submit the final bill. The contractor has already been given a show-cause notice and he has been asked to renovate the road. Asked about the poor quality work of the road, the engineer said substandard materials were not used in the construction work. The road is at high risk of collapse as it is on the bank of the Buri Teesta river, he said. Contacted, Shahinur Alamgir, sub-contractor, said the road and guide wall were damaged by the Buri Teesta river water.

If the municipality authorities ask him to renovate the road, he will do it, said Shahinur.


Kamruzzaman Miah, a resident of Narikelbari area, said local people protested when substandard materials were being used in the road construction work. But the municipality authorities did not listen to the protesters then as the contractor is a local Awami League leader. The road is still collapsing at different places, he said, adding that vehicles and pedestrians cannot move smoothly on the road now due to its bad condition.



The road has collapsed in Ulipur municipality of Kurigram within a year of its construction.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

The condition of the road usually turns very bad during monsoon, said Kamruzzaman, adding that due to this, the commuters have to suffer a lot. Abdul Khaleq, a resident of Satibari area in the municipality, said due to use of low quality construction materials, the road collapsed at different places. The road got badly damaged within a year of its construction. The road may fully collapse any time due to heavy rains if it is not renovated immediately, he said.




বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক

হিউম্যান রিসোর্সেস ডিপার্টমেন্ট-১

প্রধান কার্যালয়

ঢাকা।

বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-৪৩/২০২০



তারিখঃ ১৭ ভাদ্র, ১৪২৭

০১ সেপ্টেম্বর, ২০২০

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকে নিম্নোক্ত পদসমূহে নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে পদের পাশে বর্ণিত শর্তে বাংলাদেশী স্থায়ী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহবান করা যাচ্ছে

| ক্রমিক নং | গ্রেড | পদের নাম | পদসংখ্যা | বেতনস্কেল, ২০১৫ | শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা |
|-----------|-------|--|----------|-----------------|--|
| ১ | ১০ | অফিসার(এক্স ক্যাডার- নার্স) | ০৭ | ১৬০০০-৩৮৬৪০ | ক) স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে নার্সিং এ স্নাতক/ স্বীকৃত নার্সিং ইনস্টিটিউট হতে ডিপ্লোমা-ইন-নার্সিং বা ডিপ্লোমা-ইন-নার্সিং সাদেশে এন্ড মিডওয়াইফারি। খ) বাংলাদেশ নার্সিং এন্ড মিডওয়াইফারি কাউন্সিল (বিএনএমসি) কর্তৃক নিবন্ধিত হতে হবে। গ) শিক্ষাজীবনের কোন পর্যায়েই ৩য় বিভাগ/শ্রেণী গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না। |
| ২ | ১৬ | ডাটা এন্ট্রি/কন্ট্রোল অপারেটর(জেনারেল) | ৫০ | ৯৩০০-২২৪৯০ | ক) স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে ন্যূনতম স্নাতক অথবা সমমানের ডিগ্রি। খ) শিক্ষাজীবনের কোন পর্যায়েই ৩য় বিভাগ/শ্রেণী গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না। গ) কম্পিউটার-এ বাংলা/ইংরেজি টাইপিং, ওয়ার্ড প্রসেসিং, এক্সেল ও পাওয়ার পয়েন্ট বিষয়ক ব্যবহারিক দক্ষতা থাকতে হবে। |
| ৩ | ১৬ | কম্পিউটার গ্রাফিক্স অপারেটর | ০৪ | ৯৩০০-২২৪৯০ | ক) স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে ন্যূনতম স্নাতক অথবা সমমানের ডিগ্রি। খ) শিক্ষাজীবনের কোন পর্যায়েই ৩য় বিভাগ/শ্রেণী গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না। গ) কম্পিউটার গ্রাফিক্স-এ ব্যবহারিক দক্ষতা থাকতে হবে। |

১।

গ্রেডিং পদ্ধতিতে প্রকাশিত ফলাফলের ক্ষেত্রে শিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়ের ০২/০৬/২০০৯ ও ০২/০৩/২০১০ তারিখের প্রজ্ঞান নং যথাক্রমে শিম/শা:১১/৫-১(অংশ)/৫৮-৩ ও শিম/শা:১১/১৯-১/২০০৭/১৭৪ অনুযায়ী বর্তমানে প্রচলিত জিপিএ বা স্কোরভেজ, সিজিপিএ এর বিপরীতে পূর্বের ১ম, ২য় ও ৩য় বিভাগ/শ্রেণী নিম্নরূপে নির্ধারিত হবে :
(ক) এস.এস.সি বা সমমান এবং এইচ.এস.সি বা সমমান পরীক্ষার ফলাফলের ক্ষেত্রে -

| জিপিএ ০.০০ বা তদুর্ধ্ব | প্রথম বিভাগ |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| জিপিএ ২.০০ থেকে ৩.০০ এর কম | দ্বিতীয় বিভাগ |
| জিপিএ ১.০০ থেকে ২.০০ এর কম | তৃতীয় বিভাগ |

(খ) অনুমোদিত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সিজিপিএ এর ক্ষেত্রে -

| অর্জিত সিজিপিএ | | সমতুল্য শ্রেণি/বিভাগ |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| ৪.০০ পয়েন্ট স্কেলে | ৫.০০ পয়েন্ট স্কেলে | |
| ৩.০০ বা তদুর্ধ্ব | ৩.৭৫ বা তদুর্ধ্ব | প্রথম শ্রেণি/ বিভাগ |
| ২.২৫ বা তদুর্ধ্ব কিন্তু ৩.০০ এর কম | ২.৮১৩ বা তদুর্ধ্ব কিন্তু ৩.৭৫ এর কম | দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণি/ বিভাগ |
| ১.৬৫ বা তদুর্ধ্ব কিন্তু ২.২৫ এর কম | ২.০৬৩ বা তদুর্ধ্ব কিন্তু ২.৮১৩ এর কম | তৃতীয় শ্রেণি/ বিভাগ |

২।

বয়স(০১/০৯/২০২০ তারিখে):
ক) সর্বোচ্চ ৩০ বছর।
খ) মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তান এবং শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধী প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে সর্বোচ্চ ৩২ বছর।

৩।

'ডাটা এন্ট্রি/কন্ট্রোল অপারেটর(জেনারেল)' ও 'কম্পিউটার গ্রাফিক্স অপারেটর' পদে বরিশাল, কালকান্দি, নড়াইল ও রাঙ্গামাটি জেলা ব্যতীত অন্যান্য জেলার প্রার্থীগণ আবেদন করতে পারবেন। তবে, মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তান/নাতি/নাতনি এবং এতিমাবাসী নিবাসী ও শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধীদের ক্ষেত্রে সকল জেলার প্রার্থীগণ আবেদন করতে পারবেন।

৪।

অগ্রগী প্রার্থীদেরকে ২৪/০৯/২০২০ তারিখের মধ্যে শুধুমাত্র বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত ওয়েবসাইট (errecruitment.bb.org.bd)- এ Online Application Form পূরণের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে।

৫।

O' Level এবং A' Level এর ক্ষেত্রে এদেশীয় সংশ্লিষ্ট শিক্ষা বোর্ড হতে ইস্যুকৃত সমমান সার্টিফিকেট (Equivalence Certificate), বিদেশী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে প্রাপ্ত ডিগ্রীর ক্ষেত্রে দেশী সংশ্লিষ্ট বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়/বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী কমিশন/উপযুক্ত কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক ইস্যুকৃত সমমান সার্টিফিকেট (Equivalence Certificate) অনুযায়ী ডিগ্রী ও ফলাফলের তথ্য প্রদান করতে হবে।

৬।

Online Application Form এ পরীক্ষা নিয়ন্ত্রক কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত পরীক্ষার ফলাফলের তারিখ অবশ্যই উল্লেখ করতে হবে।

৭।

আবেদন করার সময় ফরম পূরণ করার নিয়ম ও অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী ও ওয়েবসাইটেই পাওয়া যাবে। Online এ আবেদন করার পর CV Identification Number, Tracking Number ও Password যথাযথভাবে সংরক্ষণ করতে হবে। পরীক্ষার প্রবেশপত্র Download করা এবং পরবর্তী বিভিন্ন কাজে বর্ণিত তথ্যসমূহ প্রয়োজন হবে।

৮।

প্রার্থীদেরকে প্রাথমিকভাবে কোনো কাগজপত্র প্রেরণ করতে হবে না। লিখিত/ব্যবহারিক পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ প্রার্থীদেরকে আবেদনে উল্লিখিত তথ্যাদির সমর্থনে প্রয়োজনীয় দলিলসিদ্ধ মৌখিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য পছন্দের খাতকতে হবে। দাখিলকৃত দলিলাদির সঠিকতা যাচাই সাপেক্ষে তাদেরকে মৌখিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের সুযোগ দেয়া হবে।

৯।

চাকরির প্রার্থীগণ তাদের নিয়োগপত্রী কর্তৃপক্ষের পূর্বানুমোদনক্রমে আবেদন করতে পারবেন এবং লিখিত/ব্যবহারিক পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হলে মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুপস্থিতিতে ৮নং ক্রমিক উল্লিখিত শর্ত মোতাবেক প্রয়োজনীয় দলিলাদি দাখিল করতে হবে। অন্যান্য প্রার্থীর আবেদন বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।

১০।

পদের সংখ্যা কম/বেশী হতে পারে।

১১।

অসম্পূর্ণ/ভুল তথ্য সম্বলিত দরখাস্ত কোনো প্রকার যোগাযোগ ব্যতিরেকেই বাতিল করা হবে। Online আবেদনপত্রে প্রার্থী তার স্বাক্ষর(স্বার্থে ৩০০ x প্রস্থ ৮০ pixel) ও রঙিন ছবি(স্বার্থে ৩০০ x প্রস্থ ৩০০ pixel) স্ক্যান করে নির্ধারিত স্থানে Upload করবেন। অন্যান্য প্রার্থীর আবেদন বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।

১২।

'অফিসার(এক্স ক্যাডার- নার্স)' পদের প্রার্থীদের লিখিত ও মৌখিক পরীক্ষা এবং 'ডাটা এন্ট্রি/কন্ট্রোল অপারেটর(জেনারেল)' ও 'কম্পিউটার গ্রাফিক্স অপারেটর' পদের প্রার্থীদের Standard Aptitude Test, ব্যবহারিক ও মৌখিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে হবে।

১৩।

মহিলা প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে আবেদনের সময় স্থায়ী ঠিকানা হিসেবে যদি স্থায়ী ঠিকানা ব্যবহার করা হয় সেক্ষেত্রে উক্ত স্থায়ী ঠিকানার সপক্ষে সংশ্লিষ্ট সীলি কার্পোরেসনের সেরয়/ওয়ার্ড কমিশনার/পৌরসভার সেরয়/কাউন্সিলর/ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ চেয়ারম্যান/মেট্রি পাবলিক কর্তৃক স্বাক্ষরিত সনদপত্র মৌখিক পরীক্ষার বোর্ডে জমা দিতে হবে।

১৪।

নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কোনো সংক্রান্ত সরকারি সর্বশেষ নীতিমালা ও অন্যান্য বিধিবিধান যথাযথভাবে অনুসরণ করা হবে।

১৫।

কোন ক্ষেত্রে কাগজপত্রাদির ঘাটতি থাকলে বা পরবর্তীতে কোন প্রার্থীর যোগাধার ঘাটতি পাওয়া গেলে বা দুর্নীতি, অসত্য তথ্য প্রদান, কোন জাল সনদ দাখিল, অসদুপায় অবলম্বন, প্রভাবশালী আশ্রয় নিলে বা আবেদনপত্রে গুরুতর (Substantive) ত্রুটি বা ঘাটতি দেখা গেলে বা প্রদত্ত তথ্য মিথ্যা প্রমাণিত হলে নিয়োগ প্রক্রিয়ার যে কোন পর্যায়ে উক্ত প্রার্থীর প্রার্থিতা বাতিল করা হবে।

১৬।

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক কর্তৃপক্ষ প্রার্থীদের কাউকে নিয়োগ প্রদান করা বা না করার ক্ষেত্রে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণের অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করে।

ডিসিপিঃ ৪৮/২০২০-২১৬৭

তারিখঃ ০২/০৯/২০২০


GD-1373

ব্যাংকিং ও আর্থিক সেবা পেতে হয়রানির শিকার হলে কিংবা কোনো অভিযোগ থাকলে ১৬২৩৬ নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

স্বাক্ষরিত/-

রাজী আকতারুল ইসলাম

(মহাযথ্যবাহক)




Eastern Refinery Limited

(A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)

North Patenga, Chittagong-4204

Bangladesh




Corrigendum Notice

Following corrections have been made regarding tender dates in the Tender Documents of the Invitation for Tender Ref. No. ER/PUR/IT-20-22/2020 dt. 12.08.2020.

| Serial No. | Tender Reference Number & Subject | Corrections |
|------------|---|--|
| a) | ER/PUR/IT-20/2020 3 Phase Explosion Proof Induction Motor (225 KW) | Tender closing date & time: 13 September 2020, 11:15 Hrs |
| b) | ER/PUR/IT-21/2020 Electric Motor (4kw-55kw) | Tender opening date & time: 14 September 2020, 11:30 Hrs |
| c) | ER/PUR/IT-22/2020 Annunciator System for Reforming & Utility Unit | |

All other terms and conditions of the tenders shall remain unchanged.

GD-1368




Bangladesh Shipping Corporation

Chartering & Tramping Department

BSC Bhaban

Saltgola Road, Chittagong-4100

Bangladesh



Memo No. 18.16.0000.373.97.002.19/v03

Date: 01.09.2020

International Limited Freight Tender for Transportation of 100,000 Mt (+/- 10% supplier's option) Arabian Light Crude Oil from Rastanura, Saudi Arabia To Chittagong, Bangladesh A/C BPC

Sealed tenders are invited from brokers enlisted with the Inter-ministerial Chartering Committee for transportation of 100,000 mt (+/- 10% supplier's option) Arabian Light Crude Oil from Rastanura, Saudi Arabia to Chittagong, Bangladesh basis lay-can 07-09 October 2020 on account of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 1. | Ministry/Division | Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Division. |
| 2. | Charterer | Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), Chittagong, Bangladesh. |
| 3. | Charterer's agents | Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC), Chittagong, Bangladesh. |
| 4. | Name of procuring entity | Chairman, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), Chittagong, Bangladesh, Dated: 05.04.2020. |
| 5. | Invitation for | Transportation of 100,000 mt (+/- 10% supplier's option) Arabian Light Crude Oil from Rastanura, Saudi Arabia To Chittagong, Bangladesh. |
| 6. | Invitation Ref No. | 18.16.0000.373.97.002.19/v03 COMC-001920 |
| 7. | Date | 01.09.2020. |
| 8. | Procurement method | International Limited Tendering Method. |
| 9. | Budget & source of funds | Government of Bangladesh (GOB). |
| 10. | Tender closing date, time and place | Date: 20.09.2020 & Time: 11:30 Hours at Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chittagong. |
| 11. | Validity of offer | Offer must remain valid for at least 168 working hours or 7 working days from the time of opening of offers. |
| 12. | Tender opening date, time and place | Date: 20.09.2020 & Time: 11:35 Hours at Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chittagong. |
| 13. | Eligibility of tenderer | Brokers enlisted with Inter-ministerial Chartering Committee. |
| 14. | Lifting lay-can | 07-09 October 2020. |
| 15. | Loadport/terminal | 1/2 Safe berth(s) 1 Safe port Rastanura, Saudi Arabia. |
| 16. | Discharging port | 1/2 Safe anchorage(s)/place(s), Chittagong including Kutubdia Anchorage. |
| 17. | OAP, DUTY, VAT, Etc. | If any, on freight will be on owner's account. |
| 18. | Name & address of office inviting tender | Chartering and Tramping Department, Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, Chittagong, Bangladesh. |
| 19. | Designation of official inviting tender | General Manager. |
| 20. | Contact details of official inviting tender | Tel: + 88-031-725879 Fax: + 88-031-710506/722380 E-mail: gm-cht@bsc.gov.bd |
| 21. | Other terms and conditions | All other terms and conditions as per tender schedule Ref: COMC-001920 dated: 01.09.2020. |
| 22. | The procuring entity reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason. | |

General Manager
Chartering & Tramping
Bangladesh Shipping Corporation

GD-1369

Nations League set for blockbuster start

AFP, Paris

With the second edition of the UEFA Nations League starting on Thursday, here are some potential highlights as international football returns after 10 months in hibernation.

A blockbuster start
Two recent world champions meet in Stuttgart in their first competitive encounter since the 2010 World Cup semifinal in Durban, which Spain won 1-0 before going on to lift the trophy.

A decade on and there are few traces left in either squad. Toni Kroos is the only remaining German, while Sergio Ramos, Sergio Busquets and Jesus Navas are the only survivors in what is, remarkably, Luis Enrique's first Spain squad of his second spell in charge, despite being re-appointed in November last year.

Seventeen-year-old Ansu Fati of Barcelona is in the Spanish squad, as is Bayern Munich's Thiago Alcantara, while Germany will be weakened by the absence of most of their Bayern stars, rested by coach Joachim Loew after their recent Champions League exertions.

However, winger Leroy Sane -- Bayern's summer signing from Manchester City -- is included, and others to look out for are Chelsea new boy Timo Werner and Kai Havertz, who could be set to move to the London club too from Bayer Leverkusen.

Bale in Wales squad
Gareth Bale hardly featured for Real Madrid in their title run-in in La Liga after football restarted in Spain in June and July. His club future remains extremely



Luis Eneique (L), back in charge of the Spain national team following a sabbatical owing to personal tragedy, looks over his charges from a vantage point while German players (R) tie their boot straps as the two European heavyweights clash on Matchday 1 of the UEFA Nations League in Stuttgart tonight.



PHOTO: TWITTER/REUTERS

uncertain, but Wales coach Ryan Giggs named the 31-year-old in his squad to play Finland and Bulgaria. Bale scored twice for Wales in their successful qualifying campaign for Euro 2020.

Netherlands without Koeman
The Netherlands, who reached the final of the inaugural Nations League before losing to Portugal, will be in action for the first time since the departure of coach Ronald Koeman when they host Poland in Amsterdam on Friday.

Koeman took over in early 2018 and helped revive the fortunes of a team who failed to qualify for Euro 2016 or the 2018 World Cup.

As well as leading the 'Oranje' to the Nations League final with notable wins over France, Germany and England, he helped them qualify for Euro 2020. But Koeman has now taken over at Barcelona leaving Dwight Lodeweges to take

interim charge of the team.

New-look England
Gareth Southgate's England go to Iceland and Denmark for their first games since rounding out Euro 2020 qualifying with a 4-0 win in Kosovo last November, and the matches could see several new faces feature.

While Harry Maguire was withdrawn from the squad after his court case in Greece, and his Manchester United team-mate Marcus Rashford pulled out injured, their club colleague Mason Greenwood is one of a handful of players called up for the first time.

Aston Villa's Jack Grealish, Phil Foden of Manchester City, Leeds United's Kalvin Phillips, Wolverhampton Wanderers centre-back Conor Coady and Arsenal full-back Ainsley Maitland-Niles are all targeting first caps.

There was also a place in the

squad for prolific Southampton striker Danny Ings, who made his only previous England appearance in 2015.

A WC final re-run
France host Croatia next Tuesday in a re-run of the 2018 World Cup final, but plenty has changed since that game in Moscow, which Les Bleus won 4-2. For starters, Croatia came without Luka Modric or Ivan Rakitic, while Mario Mandzukic has since retired from international football.

Meanwhile Paul Pogba, one of France's goal-scorers in Moscow, is a high-profile absentee after testing positive for coronavirus.

So this could be the big chance for arguably the most exciting teenager in Europe to make his debut.

Eduardo Camavinga of Rennes, still just 17, is the youngest player called up to the full France squad since World War II.

'Difficult for Messi to remain with Barca'

REUTERS, Barcelona



It will be difficult for Lionel Messi to remain at Barcelona after he made public his desire to leave the Spanish club, his father and agent Jorge Messi said on Wednesday as he arrived in the city to negotiate his son's future.

After flying in on a private jet, Jorge Messi is expected to meet club president Josep Maria Bartomeu later on Wednesday to discuss his son's future, Spanish media reported.

A club spokesman declined to comment.

The six-time world player of the year insists he has a clause in his contract that allows him to leave on a free transfer - a claim disputed by Barcelona and La Liga, who say the Argentine can only leave if a rival club is willing to pay a 700 million

euro (\$830.20 million) buyout clause.

"I don't know, I know nothing," Messi's father told Spanish TV channel Cuatro when asked if the 33-year-old would leave the only club he has played for professionally.

But when pressed if it would be hard for him to remain, he said "yes". And asked how he sees Messi's future at Barcelona, he replied "difficult, difficult."

He dodged questions on whether Manchester City would be a good option for his son. A move to Manchester City would allow Messi to link up with his former Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola.

"I don't know, there's nothing yet," he said, adding he had not had any discussions with Guardiola, who enjoyed trophy-laden years as Barcelona manager with Messi in his pomp.

Messi did not show up on Monday for the first training session of the season under new coach Ronald Koeman.



Jorge Messi, father and agent of Lionel Messi, arrives at the airport in Barcelona for a meeting with Barcelona President Josep Maria Bartomeu on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Pirlo meets Ranieri as Juve begin title bid

AFP, Rome

Juventus will launch their bid for a 10th successive Serie A title at home against Claudio Ranieri's Sampdoria on the weekend of September 19-20, according to the 2020/21 calendar unveiled on Wednesday. Juve will be the sole Italian club involved in the Champions League to play in the opening round.

League runners-up Inter Milan travel to promoted Benevento while Atalanta, who finished third, are away at fourth-placed Lazio, those two matches a week later because of their European involvement.

The opening weekend also sees Zlatan Ibrahimovic's AC Milan hosting Bologna and Napoli making the trip to Palermo.

Both showdowns between Juve and Inter fall in 2021: January 17 in Milan and May 16 in Turin.



SHAKIB'S LONG-AWAITED RETURN

Shakib Al Hasan returned to Bangladesh in the early hours of Wednesday following a five-month stay with his family in the United States. The ace all-rounder is in self-isolation at his home in Dhaka and is expected to undergo a Covid-19 test. With his one-year ban from all cricket activities, imposed by the ICC, scheduled to end on October 28, the all-rounder is expected to train in BKSP, following a quarantine period, with an eye on joining Bangladesh in the middle of their Sri Lanka tour.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Record-chasing American tennis star Serena Williams lets out a shriek following her victory in the first round of the US Open over compatriot Kristie Ahn at Flushing Meadows on Tuesday.

PHOTO: US OPEN

Clijsters, Venus fall as seeds march on

AFP, New York

Venus Williams and Kim Clijsters bowed out of the US Open at the first hurdle on Tuesday as seeded players dominated the women's draw for a second straight day.

Hours after younger sister Serena had battled into the second round, Venus, 40, was back in the spotlight in what was an incredible 22nd US Open appearance.

But Williams, who reached the final of the US Open on her debut at the tournament in 1997, was beaten in the first round for the first time in her glittering career by Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic.

'Our football is orphaned'

One of the country's most famous footballers has been at the helm of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for the past for 12 years. BFF President Kazi Salahuddin is now set to contest another term at the helm in the upcoming elections of on September 3.

Achievements have been few and far between, with the 2010 SA Games gold a highlight. But a string of losses, including a first-ever to Bhutan, is seen as a certain sign of the sport's regression in the nation. The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman spoke to different stakeholders of the beautiful game, asking them their thoughts on the future of football and how the outcomes of the elections could take the sport forward. For the second part, we speak to renowned organiser Manzoor Hossain Malu, who had been directly involved in football for 35 years from 1977 to 2012 as an organiser and was behind the emergence of numerous notable players. He has kept himself away since due to dirty politics, but still keeps tabs on the sport.

"Football is now a platform for fake organisers to draw cheap publicity," Manzoor Hossain Malu lamented. "There was no grouping or politics before. Everyone worked together regardless of their political identity. After 1990, sports leadership has always had a political colour. It was not only at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) but at the club level too. Real organisers were forced out of clubs that they had once spent out of their pockets to run due to pressure from political organisers."

"They occupied the clubs to do business using their political identity and made the clubs income sources by allowing gambling and extortion, and used the clubs as a platform to climb up the ladder in the political arena," added the 71-year-old, who was a victim of politics and had to leave Fakirerpool Youngmen's Club in 2010 before later being defeated in the 2012 BFF polls.

"Our football is orphaned. And people are simply using it. Football's condition is dire. If you want to make a building, you need a blueprint and the involvement of many others such as architects, civil engineers, masons, carpenters. In the same way, you need a solid plan and a lot of people to develop football. But I see nothing. It is not possible to develop football with only former footballers. If you look at the BFF executive committee, 90 per cent are former footballers but they are not organisers."

However, he also blames himself and other organisers for the current vacuum of 'real organisers' in the football fraternity.

"A lack of real organisers at clubs and the BFF is one of the major reasons for football going downhill. Blame must also go to organisers, who brought former footballers into the BFF. Who brought Kazi Salahuddin,



Badal Roy and Sheikh Mohammad Aslam into the organising arena? Of course, organisers brought them into this arena. Now, you even can't find a real organiser at upazila level," added Malu, had himself nominated Kazi Salahuddin as Fakirerpool Youngmans councillor to contest in the 2008 BFF polls after Salahuddin had resigned from then SA Sultan-led BFF committee.

The former organiser also worked under Salahuddin from 2008 to 2012 as vice-president of the BFF and he believes Salahuddin did not put much thought into his work at the time.

"Salahuddin never did his homework when trying to develop football. He started implementing things without much thought. It was a bad virtue. Salahuddin was a good footballer with great technical and tactical sense, but he is not a good organiser. He was initially not a bad guy, but he was made into one by many BFF members, who played dual roles and misguided him," evaluated Malu, who believes Salahuddin has

failed to bring any change to the football in 12 years.

"What change did Salahuddin bring? He brought no change in football. He damaged it. He established fake organisers at BFF. If I know someone is a thief, then why would I give him space instead of stopping him. It is not possible for Salahuddin to bring more change to football. He can't save football from the dire situation he took it to. He should leave with his honour and dignity intact," Malu added, refusing to rate the BFF executive committee "higher than minus" on a scale of 1-10.

He also added there were a few BFF executive member-cum-former-footballers who refused to fasten the laces of their boots before matches until their payments were cleared and that is the kind of mentality with which they serve football.

"It is not possible to bring professionalism just by introducing a professional football league. We needed to bring professionalism into clubs step-by-step. The professional football league is still immature and no one knows how many years we need to correct it. Professionalism must come through the grassroots level, where young players, their parents and their clubs are prepared for it," said Malu.

Urging all to stop the flow of black money in the BFF polls to pave the way for real organisers, the veteran said: "I believe former footballers do not need a role in BFF activities. I would instead request well-off former footballers to make a limited company and invest in football academies, from which they and the country's football can be benefited. I think former footballers will be honoured in this way, but they don't need to come to the BFF."



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

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT BSRM building a safer nation



GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES

World's Largest VRM

SHAH CEMENT

PVT CLINICS, TEST CENTRES Govt has no list of those without any licence

DGHS tells HC; 12,543 entities applied for renewal of licence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate General of Health Services has informed the High Court that 12,543 private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres have applied for renewal of their licences.

The government has lists of private healthcare facilities having licence, but it has no lists of those without a licence, the DGHS said in a statement submitted to the HC yesterday during the hearing of a writ petition.

Deputy Attorney General Amit Dasgupta placed the DGHS statement before the HC bench of Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice SM Kuddus Zaman during virtual hearing on the petition, filed by rights organisation Children's Charity Bangladesh Foundation, seeking necessary orders.

In the statement, the DGHS said the health ministry uploaded information of the number of Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 hospitals on its official website.

But the bench refused to continue holding the hearing and pass any order on the issue.

The bench dropped the petition from its cause list as petitioner's lawyers Abdul Halim and Ishrat Hasan and Deputy Attorney General Amit locked into heated arguments over uploading relevant information on the health ministry's website.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Dhaka North City Corporation removed an illegally placed billboard near Airport Road in the capital yesterday morning. The DNCC has recently taken the decision to knock down all illegal structures built in areas under its jurisdiction.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

OC Pradeep sued over two more murders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Suspended officer-in-charge Pradeep Kumar Das and some others were accused in two more murder cases filed with a Cox's Bazar court yesterday.

Judge of Senior Judicial Magistrate Court-3 (Teknaf) Md Helal Uddin took the complaints into cognisance and asked the OC of Teknaf Police Station to submit the reports of the incidents before the court.

Pradeep, who was the OC of Teknaf Police Station, was suspended in connection with the murder of Major (retd) Sinha Md Rashed Khan.

Shahina Akhter, of Khraingakhali village in Teknaf upazila, lodged the first complaint yesterday.

In her complaint, she said police on February 27 set her husband's elder brother's house on fire. Later, police arrested her 85-year-old father-in-law and sister-in-law (wife of her brother) and they were

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Love for country, not for money

Dr Bijon tells Star amid quizzical citizenship, work permit debate

GOLAM MORTOZA

Reputed around the world, scientist Dr Bijon Kumar Sil says he has been working for the love of his motherland Bangladesh and its people and not for money.

"I have worked in Singapore and if you consider the financial aspect, it was handsome pay. Even when I worked in an organisation based in USA, the financial benefits were 10 times higher than the benefits I am enjoying in Bangladesh," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bijon, who is now a citizen of Singapore, made the remarks at a time when the issue of his nationality is being discussed by some media outlets that have reported that he was relieved of his duties from Gono University as he does not have an employment visa.

"I was born in a very ordinary family [in Natore] but have grown up with love from people around me," said Dr Sil, adding that his love for the people of this country was the driving force behind continuing as lead scientist of Gono University.

He further said that he took up the Singapore citizenship under special circumstances decades back.

"I worked there but that does not mean I forgot Bangladesh or that this is my motherland. I don't know exactly who

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Bangabandhu asks about food situation

September 3, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

PHONE CONVERSATION WITH NAZRUL

Acting Prime Minister Syed Nazrul Islam has a talk with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today. Bangabandhu enquires about the food situation of the country and he is very much eager to return home within a short time. Syed Nazrul Islam informs the prime minister about the steps the government has taken to solve the food problems now facing the country.

Bangabandhu is still weak in his movements and, according to doctors' suggestions, his date of return may be delayed further.

NO POSSIBILITY OF TALKS WITH BANGABANDHU

Pakistan President Z A Bhutto today rules out the possibility of any talk between him and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the near future. He tells newsmen in Karachi that the question of recognising Bangladesh could not be discussed because Sheikh Mujibur Rahman refused to talk with him. Bhutto further says that China vetoed the entry of Bangladesh into the UN to expedite the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war.

BHASHANI SUBMITS MEMO TO NAZRUL

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani leads a "hunger march" to Gono Bhaban today and hands over a memo to acting Prime Minister Syed Nazrul Islam. The memorandum contains various suggestions to combat the manifold problems that the nation is facing.

Earlier, addressing a public meeting at Paltan Maidan today, the NAP (Bhashani) chief called for the formation of an all-party government under the leadership of Bangabandhu and Awami

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



REGENT GROUP

Court freezes 52 bank accounts of Shahed, MD

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the authorities concerned to freeze 52 bank accounts of Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed and its Managing Director Masud Parvez in connection with a money laundering case.

Shahed has 43 while and Masud has nine accounts in different banks of the capital where Tk 11 crore was deposited.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after Moniruzzaman, an inspector of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police and also the investigation officer of the case, submitted a petition in this regard.

Shahed was arrested from Sathkira on July 15 when he was trying to leave the country. Masud was arrested from Gazipur the day before.

After arrest, Shahed was placed on a 61-day remand in different cases filed with

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Giant fossilised tree discovered in Peru



MAIL ONLINE

A giant tree fossil found in Peru has given researchers a new picture of how the environment in the Andes mountain has changed over the past 10 million years.

On an expedition to the Central Andean Plateau, researchers from the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) discovered the fossil buried in a cold, grassy plain.

The plant fossil record from this high-altitude site in southern Peru contains details about dramatic changes in the Andes mountains environment.

The team found that the environment in the mountains was more humid than existing climate model predictions they would have been 10 million years ago.

The anatomy of the petrified wood the researchers found is very much like the anatomy of wood found in low-elevation tropical forests today.

But that ecosystem did not last for long. Today, the tree fossil sits amid an arid, intermountain plateau that lies at 13,123 feet above sea level.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

COVID PANDEMIC

Australia falls into recession

Brazil's economy shrinks by 10pc

AFP, Sydney

Australia has fallen into recession for the first time in three decades and Brazil's economy shrank by almost 10 percent because of the coronavirus, leaving China as the only major nation still recording economic growth during the pandemic.

A raft of bleak data from India to Europe in recent days has laid bare the toll from lockdowns as nations try to keep a lid on an illness that has killed more than 850,000 people and infected over 25 million.

The challenges were further highlighted yesterday when Australia

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PRAYER TIMING SEPTEMBER 3

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:30 12:45 4:45 6:23 7:45
JAMAAT 5:05 1:15 5:00 6:26 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Battery-run auto-rickshaws and boats, which travel to Dhaka from different villages along the Trimohoni river, lie idle as there has been a lack of passengers due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has left auto-rickshaws drivers and boatmen out of work.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

AB Bank's 38th AGM held

5% stock dividend approved

The 38th AGM of AB Bank Limited was held on September 02, 2020 on digital platform. The meeting unanimously approved 5% Stock Dividend for the year ended 2019.

The listing category of the Bank has been placed in category "A" with effect from September 02, 2020 as per directives of Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission.

AB Bank Limited completed 38th year of successful operation on April 12, 2020. Net Asset Value (NAV) of the Bank stood at Tk.2,284 crore and total assets stood at

38th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



2 September, 2020, Wednesday at 4.00 PM (DIGITAL PLATFORM)

AB Bank

Tk.36,557 crore in 2019 which registered 13.33% growth over last year.

The AGM also adopted Directors' Report, Audited Financial Statements and appointed Mr. Moshtaque Ahmed Chowdhury and Mr. Shajir Ahmed as

Directors. Shareholders also appointed ACNABIN, Chartered Accountants, as Statutory Auditor of the Bank for the year 2020.

Chairman of the Board Mr. Muhammad A (Rumee) Ali, presided over the meeting. Mr. Tarique

Afzal, President & Managing Director, Honorable Directors of the Board and a good number of Shareholders attended the Annual General Meeting over digital platform