



'ATTACK
AGAINST
RULE OF LAW'
ICC condemns US
sanctions on its top
prosecutor
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Your Right to Know

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Fire fear still stalks old town

Govt doing little to relocate chemical warehouses despite 2 blazes that killed over 200

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The government has made little progress in relocating hazardous chemical businesses and warehouses from Old Dhaka, leaving the residents in constant fear following the two devastating fire incidents that claimed over 200 lives.

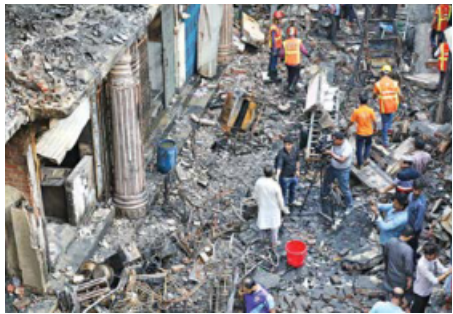
The chemical-induced Nimtoli inferno in June 2010 claimed 126 lives, prompting the government to embark on four projects as part of the relocation plan.

Ten years have passed after the tragedy, but the projects, taken at different times, are still at the preliminary stage. According to the latest update, land was either being acquired or filled in one or two projects, while the others face further uncertainty due to a dearth of fund allocation.

The only "considerable progress" over the years has been made at one front -- constant revision of the primary project proposals -- which contributed to cost escalation and time extension.

The cost of the four projects, which was around Tk 686 crore at the beginning, has now increased to around Tk 2,667 crore, according to documents.

With the four projects related to chemical, plastic, printing and light electronics in



virtual limbo, another devastating fire broke out in Chawkbazar in February last year that claimed 80 lives, giving a cruel reminder of the Nimtoli tragedy.

More than a year after the Nimtoli fire, the government had decided to set up two temporary warehouses to immediately shift hazardous chemical warehouses from the old part of the city. But the temporary projects -- one in Tongi and other in Shayampur -- are still in the "work in progress" state.

A cabinet meeting on February 25, 2019, decided to cancel all licences for preserving and storing chemical and petroleum products in residential areas. The cabinet also restricted issuing any new licence in

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Four-year-old Mayna is supposed to spend all her day playing, but she is often seen helping out her mother, who sells flowers on the street to make a living. At such a tender age, Mayna has learned to make garlands using sewing needle and thread. The photo was taken at the capital's Shahbagh a couple of days ago.

PHOTO:
PRABIR DAS

Politico-police nexus feeding chemical trade

TIB study finds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chemical trade still goes on in Old Dhaka under the patronage of a section of political leaders and corrupt officials of different enforcement agencies, exposing its dwellers to the danger of major fire incidents like the last year's Churihatta blaze, finds a research by Transparency International Bangladesh.

"The Nimtoli tragedy repeated in Churihatta because of lack of good governance," reads the research, carried out following qualitative methods between October 2019 and August 2020.

The TIB yesterday launched the research paper titled "Nimtoli, Churihatta and Afterwards: Governance Challenges in Ensuring Fire Safety in Old Dhaka and Way-out" through a video conference.

Reading out the summary of the research, TIB Deputy Programme Manager (research & policy) Mostafa Kamal said at least 468 fire incidents were reported from Lalbagh, Hazaribagh, Sadarghat and Siddikbazar in 2018, a year before the tragic Churihatta fire incident took place which claimed 80 lives.

The devastating blaze at a chemical warehouse in Nimtoli on June 3, 2010 had left 126 people dead.

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4 projects taken in last 10 years to relocate chemical, plastic, printing and light electronics industries.

All the projects are still at preliminary stage and facing uncertainty due to dearth of fund allocation.

The cost of the projects, which was around Tk 686cr at the beginning, has now increased to Tk around Tk 2,674cr

Chemical business and storage in Old Dhaka still on despite several fire incidents that took over 200 lives.



Khaleda out of jail for 6 more months

Suspension of her jail sentence extended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to extend the suspension of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's jail sentence for six more months on some conditions, Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star last night.

Replying to another question, the minister said, "She would not be allowed to go abroad."

The decision came after the family members

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Vicious hammer attack on UNO

Brought to Dhaka in critical state; father too hurt in attack at her official residence; motive unknown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Ghoraghat Upazila Nirbahi Officer Wahida Khanam and her father were seriously injured in an attack by unidentified assailants early yesterday.

The thirty-four-year-old officer of Dinajpur is in critical condition from the blunt trauma to her head, said doctors at the National Institute of Neuroscience and Hospital (NINH) in the capital.

Her father Omar Ali tried to rescue her and was attacked as well, police said, adding that he was being treated at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Police said it appeared that two intruders broke into the UNO's official residence between 2:30am and 3:00am and one of them hit the officer and her father with a



Wahida Khanam

hammer.

Prof Zahid Hossain, surgeon at NINH, said, "She was hit in the head with something heavy. It broke her skull, injuring her brain and causing internal bleeding. Her condition is not stable. The blood pressure is low. She is trying to speak, but the level of consciousness is not like a regular person's. The pulse rate is high and she is restless. She needs to be stabilised first then operated. It will be risky to operate now. Her condition has to be improved first. She has been given blood, rehydration, and a lot of medication."

Asked how risky her condition is, the surgeon told reporters that anything could happen anytime. "It is difficult to specify the level of risk. ... She is in substantial risk

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THE THIRD VIEW



MAHFUZ ANAM

INJUSTICE, SO WHAT?

Those who "tarnish the country's image" must be taught a lesson

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BANGLADESH
UPDATE

2,158

New cases in 24hrs



3,19,686

Total cases



4,383

Deaths



2,13,980

Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE

869,219

Deaths



26,286,878

Total cases

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Many countries reject requests for UN visits

Says UN Working Group official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

States around the world must act urgently to investigate cases of enforced disappearances even during the pandemic and the search for the victims must continue without delay, said Professor Tae-Ung Baik, vice-chair of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances while addressing a virtual discussion yesterday.

The discussion was organised by Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), an international human rights coalition of organisations tackling the issue of enforced disappearances across Asia.

"Our working group's position is very strong. No matter what, we cannot justify enforced disappearances. Enforced disappearances must remain strictly prohibited under any circumstances," Prof Baik said.

"Many countries are not accepting the invitation request," he said, adding that if a visit is not possible, they are reliant on that country's civil society and non-governmental actors to help them intervene.

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A bus stops right near a road sign that says "stopping of buses is prohibited" to pick passengers on the Airport Road in MES area near the capital's Kurmitola. Such violation of traffic rules remains rampant throughout the city. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO:
PRABIR DAS

Free all detained returnees from Vietnam, ME

44 eminent citizens, 19 rights groups urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of eminent citizens and several migrant rights bodies have demanded immediate and unconditional release of the migrants who were arrested upon their return from Vietnam and the Middle East.

In two separate statements yesterday, 44 eminent citizens and 19 rights bodies called for an independent investigation and punishment to the manpower brokers, recruiting agents and the officials responsible for the fraudulence and exploitation of the migrants.

On September 1, a total of 83, including two from Qatar, were sent to jail on the ground that "they have tarnished the image of Bangladesh abroad".

Several returnee migrants told The Daily Star that each of them was charged Tk 4-5 lakh by the recruiting agents for jobs in Vietnam. They travelled there between late last year and early this year but were not provided jobs as promised though they had clearances from the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training.

The migrants started showing up at the Bangladesh embassy in Hanoi in early July to seek justice and demand repatriation. Eventually, the Bangladesh

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Free all detained returnees

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embassy arranged their repatriation. After returning home, they were put into quarantine for 14 days and then were shown arrested under Section 54.

Police said the arrestees were “convicted or sentenced to different terms for their involvement in criminal activities abroad.”

The law enforcers said their sentences were commuted and they were sent back to Bangladesh when the coronavirus outbreak surged worldwide.

Police also said after returning to Bangladesh, they allegedly divided into groups while in quarantine and were planning subversive activities against the government.

“If these returnees are released, they can engage in various crimes, including robbery, family violence, killing and militancy,” police said.

Surprisingly, the same allegations were made earlier when 219 migrant workers from Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain were jailed. Both the groups of returnees were arrested under Section 54.

In the statement, the 44 eminent citizens strongly condemned the case and arrest.

“Such acts by the state are disrespect to the international and national laws and are a matter of serious concerns.

“We got to learn that none of the returnee migrants from Vietnam was convicted or sent to jail,” said the statement, adding that they also learned that the Bangladesh embassy in Vietnam did not take timely actions to address the complaints of the migrant workers.

The language of the police report in regard to the arrest of 219 migrants on July 4 also was the same, said the statement and added that a person cannot be punished more than once for a crime.

“It is not understandable for us how the returnees tarnished the country’s image after returning from the jails abroad and by holding meetings during the quarantine,” it said.

At the same time, arresting under Section 54 without arrest warrant contradicts the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution.

The High Court has clear instructions for police, magistrates and tribunals about starting criminal proceedings against a person.

“We think arrests of migrants in two incidents are violations of the important High Court instructions,” the citizens and rights activists said.

They demanded compensating the migrants for the losses caused to them.

The statement was signed among others by Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury, Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury of Gonoshastya Kendra, Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University, jurist Shahdeen Malik, Prof Parveen Hasan of Central Women’s University, Prof Ali Riaz of Illinois State University, Prof Golam Mostafa of Chittagong University, Prof CR Abrar of Dhaka University, Prof Swapan Adnan of London University and photojournalist and writer Shahidul Alam.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants, a civil society network of organisations working on migration, said such arrests on unfounded allegations are violations of human rights.

“We demand an impartial investigation into this incident. All concerned persons and organisations including sub-agents, licensed recruiting agents and others must be brought under investigation,” it said.

It also urged the foreign ministry and the expatriates’ welfare ministry for immediate measures.

The signatories to the statement, among others, include Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, WARBE Development Foundation, BRAC, Ain o Salish Kendra, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Bangladeshi Ovhibashi Mohila Sramik Association, BASUG and OKUP.

Vicious hammer attack on UNO

FROM PAGE 1
unless the blood pressure, pulse, and level of consciousness improve.”

Wahida was attacked in her official residence, a duplex in the gated community of Upazila Parishad Complex, in Osmanpur area of Ghoraghat.

The officer, her three-year-old son and her father were on the first floor and a domestic help was on the ground floor, police officers said.

Wahida’s husband, who is the UNO of Pirganj upazila in Rangpur, was not at the scene.

The Upazila Parishad Complex has a boundary wall with three gates, two of which were found locked by police.

The UNO’s duplex is also on an enclosed land. There are barbed wire fences on top of its boundary walls.

There is a room for guards at the entrance gate, officers said, adding that the suspects entered into the premises using a ladder and locked the guard’s room from outside.

The suspects then used the ladder to break into the first floor of the building by removing a ventilator in the bathroom wall, they said.

They attackers then went to the UNO’s bedroom and hit her with a hammer.

Her father sleeping in the next room was woken up by the commotion and as he rushed to her room, one of the assailants hit him.

The attackers fled as the three-year-old boy started crying in panic, police said.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Wahida Khanam, the upazila nirbahi officer of Dinajpur’s Ghoraghat upazila, being taken to Dhaka for treatment yesterday.

Many countries reject

FROM PAGE 1
Khurram Parvez, chairperson of AFAD, noted that while denying requests for visits, these countries are also contesting elections to be seated at the UN Human Rights Council.

According to a report presented by the UN Working Group during the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council in September 2019, the Group had reiterated its request to visit Bangladesh, but the government is yet to respond favourably.

Bangladesh was elected member of HRC in 2018.

“Some governments are going back on the promises they have made. In Asia we have seen an aggravation of the situation. Victims are forgotten and families are waiting not knowing the fate of their loved ones,” said Prof Baik.

Brian Dooley, special advisor to the UNSpecial Rapporteur, said, “We’ve seen over the years it takes a lot of pressure internationally and nationally to get a real invitation issued. A rapporteur would make two country visits a year.

The alternative is weaker -- academic visits where special rapporteurs can go in, invited by a university.”

Adilur Rahman Khan, secretary of Odhikar Bangladesh added, “The whole of South Asia is in denial. The UN working group has wanted to visit but how many South Asian countries have allowed it?”

“It is a situation where everything is in a limbo. The wives are half-widows, the children cannot access resources. They move from door to door, from the offices of one agency to those of another,” he said.

Others who spoke included Ruth Llanos, president of The Association of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared (Bolivia), Maria Adela Antokoletz, Mother’s Delegate Latin American Federation of Association for Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared (Argentina), Fatia Maulidiyanti executive coordinator of Kontras (Indonesia) and Nilda Lagman-Sevilla, co-chair of Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearances (Philippines).



Hundreds of buses and other vehicles line the Shimulia ferry terminal in Munshiganj, where ferry services were suspended yesterday due to navigation problems. This photo was taken around 11:00am.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Fire fear still stalks old town

PROJECT NAME	LOCATION	INITIAL COST	REVISED COST	INITIAL AREA	REVISED AREA
BSCIC Chemical Industrial Park	Boalkhali, Shirajdikhan, Munshiganj	Tk 201.80 crore	Tk 1615.73 crore	50 acres	308 acres
BSCIC Printing Industries Estate	Baroborta, Sirajdikhan, Munshiganj	Tk 138.70 crore	Tk 345 crore (Proposed)	50 acres	42.21 acres (proposed)
BSCIC Plastic Industry Estate	Baroborta, Sirajdikhan, Munshiganj	133 crore	Tk 397.45 crore	50 acres	50 acres
Light Engineering Electrical Goods	Tungibari, Munshiganj	Tk 213 crore	Tk 309 crore	50 acres	50 acres

FROM PAGE 1
this regard and directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to relocate this kind of go-downs promptly.

Accordingly, Dhaka South City Corporation stopped issuing new licences or renewing the old ones for any chemical shops or warehouses in Old Dhaka.

But chemical businesses in the old part of the city remained as it was before.

Although the traders claimed that they have relocated their go-downs to “safe locations”, they said they were unable to move their entire businesses elsewhere unless the government relocated them according to an MoU signed in 2017.

But a drive by Rab on August 17 at a warehouse inside a residential building in Tikatuli only justified experts’ fear that chemical go-downs that had previously been concentrated to a particular pocket in the old part of the city have now grown covering a bigger area.

“We found huge amounts of explosive chemicals which might cause a devastating fire anytime,” Rab Executive Magistrate Polish Kumar Bashu, who led the drive, told this newspaper on Wednesday.

He said there might be many warehouses in Dhaka like this one and that they were collecting information about them.

During a recent visit to some areas, including Mitford Road, Nimtoli, Chawkbazar, Armanitola, Babu Bazar, Islampur, Mohuthtuly and Chhurihatta last week, these correspondents found many chemical shops were being run and many buildings being used as chemical warehouses.

Md Ripon, who lost six of his family members in the Nimtoli tragedy, said they do not allow any warehouse in their area, but there are chemical warehouses nearby.

Selim, who runs a shop on Abul Hasnat Road, said there are many residential houses in the area where chemical products are stored and that those might cause a devastating fire.

Arif Hossain, general secretary of Bangladesh Chemical and Perfumery Merchants’ Association, said, “We will leave the area after getting a plot from the government. Otherwise, it is not possible for us to leave.”

He said there are around 2,000 shops in Old Dhaka which are doing chemical business.

Arif claimed that every chemical item is not explosive or flammable and those who are doing the business of the flammable items have arranged separate warehouses outside Dhaka.

He, however, did not deny that some traders might be secretly running warehouses in the old part of the city despite strict instructions from their organisation against it.

He urged the government to quickly implement the relocation plan in line with the MoU signed between BSCIC and the three organisations -- Bangladesh Chemical and Perfumery Merchants’ Association, Bangladesh Chemical Importers and Merchants’ Association, and Bangladesh Acid Merchants’ Association -- in 2017.

Prof Dr Syeda Sultana Razia, head of the chemical engineering department of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, said the failure of the authorities to relocate the chemical go-downs from the old town might cause another devastating fire.

“Nothing has changed in Old Dhaka,” she told The Daily Star.

The Buet professor also said apart from 35 chemicals identified as extremely hazardous or flammable, there were many more.

“The Department of Explosives prepared the list of hazardous chemicals which are explosive and flammable, but there are some chemicals which do not generate fire. However, those are toxic and if released through vapourisation can create serious problems and kill people,” said Prof Razia.

She said the authorities should have prioritised the relocation plan taking the risk into consideration.

The BSCIC as the implementing authority is constructing “Chemical Polli” for the three merchant associations and another three separate estates for plastic, printing and light electronic industry at different sites in Munshiganj, a neighbouring district of Dhaka.

STATUS OF CHEMICAL POLLI
The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation Chemical Industrial Park at Boalkhali village in Munshiganj’s Sirajdikhan upazila is running behind schedule. The park will have around 2,000-2,500 plots on around 308 acres of land.

The cost of the project, which will have a central effluent treatment plant and incinerator, now stands at Tk 1,615.73 crore, said Project

Director Saiful Alam.

He hoped to get the possession of the land, for which BSCIC paid Tk 531 crore, from the district commissioner (DC) and start earth filling after the rainy season.

“We will be able to accommodate most of the shops and warehouses of the old town in line with MoU signed in 2017.”

About the delay, he said initially the project was going to be implemented on 50 acres of land, but now it has been expanded to 300 acres land for which it took around one year to complete the land acquisition work.

“We will be able to complete the project by June 2022,” he said.

The project, drafted in 2011, was supposed to be implemented on 20 acres of land. It was then extended to 50 acres at a cost of Tk 201.80 crore and was scheduled to be completed in June 2021, according to documents.

However, the latest completion date of the project might be pushed behind if fund allocation is delayed.

“We needed Tk 200 crore in the current fiscal year for earth filling and other works. But we have so far received only around Tk 60 crore. If we do not get funds timely, we will miss the schedule,” said Mohammad Ataur Rahman Siddique, director (engineering and implementing) of BSCIC.

PLASTIC
The progress of BSCIC Plastic Industry Estate Project has been very slow due to fund crisis.

Director Ataur of BSCIC said they did not get money for acquiring land for which they could not complete land acquisition.

He said 300 plastic factories on 50 acres of land could be relocated from old town under the project.

The Ecneec approved the project in July 2015 and the work was scheduled to be complete by June last year. The Ecneec then approved the revised budget on February 11 this year with an extended project cost of Tk 397.45 crore.

A BISIC official said they have got Tk 49 crore out of Tk 218 crore for land acquisition in the last fiscal year.

PRINTING
The BSCIC Printing Industries Estate Project, whose site is located between the two bridges over the Dhaleshwari in Munshiganj’s Sirajdikhan upazila, is now facing uncertainty due to complication in land acquisition, although the project was scheduled to be completed in December 2018.

The Ecneec passed the project worth Tk 138.70 core in January 2016.

A BSCIC official, preferring anonymity, said around Tk 78.61 crore out of Tk 79.14 crore for acquiring 43 acres of land for the project has been paid to the deputy commissioner’s office on different occasions.

Sources said a revised Development Project Proposal (DPP) of around Tk 345 crore was sent to the planning commission and

Vaccine group says 76 rich countries now committed to “Covax” access plan

REUTERS, London

Seventy-six wealthy nations are now committed to joining a global Covid-19 vaccine allocation plan coled by the World Health Organization (WHO) that aims to help buy and fairly distribute the shots, the project’s co-lead said on Wednesday.

Seth Berkley, chief executive of the GAVI vaccines alliance, said the plan, known as Covax, now has Japan, Germany, Norway and more than 70 other nations signed up, agreeing in principle to procure Covid-19 vaccines through the facility for their populations.

“We have, as of right now, 76 upper middle income and high income countries that have submitted confirmations of intent to participate - and we expect that number to go up,” Berkley told Reuters in an interview.

the Project Evaluation Committee was waiting for Ecneec meeting.

LIGHT ELECTRONICS

The work of the Light Engineering Electric Goods project on 50 acres of land at a cost of Tk 213 crore is going on. The earth filling has already been completed, construction of boundary walls and some other works are going on, said BSCIC director Ataur.

He said the project in Tongibari upazila in Munshiganj is expected to be completed by June 2022 with a revised cost of around Tk 309 crore.

TEMPORARY PROJECTS

The government in August last year approved the Chemical Warehouse Project in Tongi to relocate 55 warehouses on six acres of land.

Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC) has been implementing the project. “We will complete the first phase of work to construct seven one-storey warehouse buildings by November this year,” said Project Director Maniruzzaman Khan.

However, a revised project proposal on spending Tk 170 crore to construct an eight-storey building to accommodate an additional 48 chemical warehouses is now waiting at the planning commission for approval.

Maniruzzaman said if they get the approval, they will be able to complete the revised project by June 2022.

SHAYMPUR

The construction work of another temporary project named “Go-down for Temporary Facilitating Chemicals Storage Project” at Dhaka’s Shayampur has been facing slow progress.

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation is implementing the Tk 77.89 crore project on 6.17 acres of land. The project, scheduled to be completed in June 2020, was later extended by a year.

The project is aimed at facilitating 54 warehouses for traders doing businesses of extremely hazardous chemical.

Project Director Md Liakat Ali said the project implementation slowed down due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1
of the former prime minister sought a six months’ extension on the government order that released her for six months in March.

Her younger brother Shamim Iskandar recently applied to the home ministry seeking the extension. The ministry later forwarded the application to the law ministry seeking legal opinion.

Suspension of her sentence is scheduled to expire on September 24. Khaleda, who has been convicted in two corruption cases, was freed from prison on March 25 after she had spent there 776 days.

The government through an executive order released her for six months on conditions that she will stay home in the capital and not leave the country.

It suspended her sentence as per section 401 of the Criminal Code of Procedure on “humanitarian grounds”.

On the day of her being freed, Khaleda went to her home “Firoza” in Gulshan in her brother’s car directly from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, where she was taking treatment for several months. She has been living in Firoza since then.

The 75-year-old former prime minister has been suffering from rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, and ophthalmological and dental ailments, said her physicians.

The BNP chief landed in jail on February 8, 2018, after a special court sentenced her to five years in prison in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. On October 30 that year, the High Court raised her punishment to 10 years in the case.

In the Zia Charitable Trust graft case on October 29, 2018, a court jailed Khaleda and three others for seven years.

Besides, she has been facing more than 30 cases on different charges and the cases are now at different stages.

Dhaka-5, Naogaon-6
by-polls on Oct 17

UNB, Dhaka

By-elections to two parliamentary constituencies -- Dhaka-5 and Naogaon-6 -- will be held on October 17, according to a schedule declared by Election Commission (EC) yesterday.

As per the schedule, deadline for submission of nomination papers is September 17, while the date for scrutinising the papers is September 20. The last date for candidacy withdrawal is September 27.

Md Alamgir, senior secretary of EC, announced the schedule in a press conference at the capital's Nirbachan Bhaban.

The by-elections will be held from 9am to 5pm through electronic voting machines (EVMs) instead of traditional ballot papers.

The Dhaka regional election officer and Naogaon district election officer will act as returning officers for the by-polls.

Dhaka-5 fell vacant following the death of Awami League MP Habibur Rahman Mollah on May 6, while Nagaon-6 became unoccupied after the demise of AL MP Israfil Alam on July 27.

The commission has legal obligation to arrange a parliamentary by-election within 90 days after the constituency falls vacant.



A PPE-clad staff takes a sample for Covid-19 testing at BITID in Chattogram city's Fouzdarhat area yesterday. Although people had to go through quite a bit of trouble to get tested and then wait a while to receive the results, the process has been made much smoother lately. People can get their test results via SMS and through a website within a day, and the facility can collect up to 300 samples now.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Efforts on to speed
up metro rail work

120 Thai, 240 Indian engineers and consultants to be brought back this month

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The metro rail authorities have taken initiatives to bring back more foreign engineers and consultants to accelerate the construction work of country's first metro rail project.

Twenty-four Thai engineers have already been brought back in charter flights last month, as regular flights between Bangladesh and Thailand has remained suspended.

Now, Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), which is implementing the project, has taken steps to bring back 120 more Thai and 240 Indian engineers and consultants within this month, officials said.

However, the authorities continued to face problems in bringing back Japanese nationals involved in the project as the Japan government has not lifted an embargo it imposed on its citizens to come from Japan.

Most project contractors and consultants are from Japan and regular flights to and from Japan have been suspended since mid-March, they said.

The development came as the authorities are trying to accelerate the construction work, which remained halted for more than two months after the government declared a national holiday in late March to contain spread of Covid-19.

The project -- formally known as Mass Rapid Transit-6 or MRT Line-6 -- is being implemented to build an elevated rail line from capital's Uttara Third Phase to Motijheel at the cost of Tk 20,000 crore. But the fast-track project witnessed only 5.03 percent progress in the last five months.

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BAN ON RAG DAY

DU clears air after
'misunderstanding'

DU CORRESPONDENT

In light of huge criticism, Dhaka University authorities yesterday backtracked from their earlier decision to ban Rag Day celebrations on the campus, claiming the issue was a misunderstanding.

In a press release yesterday, the authorities claimed that the information on the previous press release -- issued on Wednesday -- regarding the ban was inadvertently misrepresented.

"In a meeting (of the academic council), authorities concerned were asked to remain alert so that no untoward, inhumane, disrespectful and anti-disciplinary act takes place on the campus and dormitories in the name of celebrating Rag Day," reads the press release.

"Policies need to be formulated regarding the hosting of any programme or rally to celebrate completion of education or graduation festivals," the release also added.

The authorities also regretted sending out the previous press release.

HINDU WIDOWS

MJF welcomes
HC rule on their
right to property

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has welcomed the High Court's rule on Hindu widows' right to both agricultural and non-agricultural lands that belong to their husbands, terming the verdict a "breakthrough".

In order to create a nondiscriminatory law, regardless of the Hindu women and men, MJF has already created a draft Hindu Inheritance Law and exchanged its views with lawyers and Hindu leaders in seven divisional cities.

In addition to that, to implement the Hindu Marriage Registration Act, MJF has been working with different networks.

It has also been working for the formation of divorce law of the Hindu women.

Hindu women and girls in Bangladesh have been facing discrimination in terms of their right to inheritance.

MJF hoped this verdict will protect the rights of Hindu widows as well as pave the way for achieving other rights of Hindu women.

Man 'beaten to death by
rehab staff' in Barishal

Owner, four staffers shown arrested after murder case filed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A man was allegedly assaulted to death in Barishal on Wednesday night by staff of a rehabilitation centre, while they were trying to restrain and take him to the centre after he apparently became violent at home.

Police have shown the owner of the Dream Life drug rehabilitation centre and four other staff arrested in a case filed by the mother of the deceased.

The incident took place in the area adjacent to the radio station in the city's Rupatli.

The deceased was identified as Sumon Khan (30).

His mother Khadija Begum said, "Sumon had drug addiction problems, and used to beat me and my relatives up on various pretexts. He was sent to Dream Life drug rehabilitation centre several month ago. He was at home for a month and a half. When Sumon attacked me last night, his two brothers Sultan and Rumman were informed about the matter. They then informed the rehab facility, who sent seven or eight people on Wednesday evening to take Sumon."

Khadija claimed that staff of the rehabilitation

centre tried to take Sumon away without discussing anything with her. At one stage, some furniture of the house was also vandalised in a scuffle. Then they took Sumon out of the house and threw him on the ground.

Three or four of them got up on his back and grabbed him, and asked relatives for towels and ropes to restrain Sumon. At one point, Sumon fainted, and was rushed to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital by locals, where doctors confirmed his death.

Eyewitnesses also corroborated Khadija's statement.

Locals detained four staff of the rehab while they were trying to flee the scene. When the owner of the company came to the spot, he was also chased and detained by locals, and handed over to police.

Khadija Begum filed the murder case against the staff and owner of the centre yesterday, said Abdur Rahman Mukul, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Barishal Kotwali Model Police Station.

He said the five people were shown arrested in the case, and the body was sent to morgue for autopsy.

CTG FUEL TANK BLAST

Another victim dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Another victim of an oil tanker blast at Patenga of Chattogram on Wednesday has passed away.

Rabiul Hossain (32) was on his way to Dhaka when he succumbed to his injuries on Wednesday night. Doctors at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) had referred him to Dhaka for better treatment, said police.

With the death of Rabiul, four people have been killed from the blast. Another two are undergoing treatment at CMCH.

Jobayer Hossain, officer-in-charge of Patenga Police Station, said Rabiul had suffered over 90 percent burns. He succumbed to his injuries as the ambulance carrying him reached Cumilla on the night of the blast.

On Wednesday, an oil tanker went off as fuel was left inside it when the workers were welding. They were working at a workshop of Incontrade Container Depot.

Rabiul, hailing from Cumilla, was a staff of the container depot. After the incident, the depot authorities formed a three-member committee to investigate the incident.

An unnatural death case was lodged with Patenaga Police Station.

HIGH-RISK COUNTRIES FOR COVID-19

Malaysia to ban entry
from Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysian government will impose an entry ban on citizens of countries recording more than 150,000 cases of Covid-19, including Bangladesh, starting from September 7, Malaysia's Security Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob reportedly said yesterday.

The senior minister said among the countries in the list were the US, Brazil, France, UK, Spain, Italy, Saudi Arabia, and Russia, as well as previously announced, India, Indonesia and the Philippines, reports The Star, citing Malaysia's national news agency Bernama.

"We will add more countries deemed high-risk, which have more than 150,000 positive cases, into the list. Their citizens will be barred (from entering Malaysia)."

"However, for emergency cases or involving bilateral relations, such as if a person needs to come for a meeting between countries, we will allow entry. But it requires permission from the Immigration Department," he told reporters after chairing the special committee meeting on the Embracing New Norms Campaign.

He added that the country's health ministry would be announcing the details on countries which have recorded more than 150,000 positive cases of Covid-19 later.

Last Tuesday, Ismail Sabri announced an entry ban on long-term pass holders from India, Indonesia and the Philippines beginning September 7 due to a spike in Covid-19 cases in those countries, says The Star report.

The ban involves six categories of pass holders, namely those with permanent resident status (PR), Malaysia My Second Home Programme participants, expatriates including professional visit pass (PVP) holders

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



A man holds a pigeon, out of the many displayed, in his hands to examine it before making his valuable purchase at the capital's Banasree yester. Pigeon fancying has a rich culture and history in the capital, with a thriving community of those who love these birds as their companions.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Jakir, a recent master's graduate from Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research, has been living in Chankharpool area of the capital as he continues his job search. However, with the pandemic causing an economic crunch, he decided to move to the far end of the city in Rayerbag, gathering up all his belongings in a rickshaw van. "The new accommodation will save me some money, and also it is not as crowded so I hope the risk of Covid-19 will be a little lower," said the enterprising youth.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Road accidents
killed 379 last
month: report

40pc of casualties from
motorbike crashes

STAR REPORT

At least 379 people were killed and 368 injured in 302 road accidents across the country in August, according to a report of Road Safety Foundation, a non-government organisation.

Of the deceased, 66 were women and 32 children, as per the report released yesterday.

Around 129 people died in 121 motorcycle accidents, which is 40.06 percent of the total fatality, the organisation said.

Some 81 pedestrians were run over, while 47 drivers and helpers of vehicles were killed in accidents.

Meanwhile, around 47 people were killed, 32 injured and six went missing in 13 waterway accidents, while six died in six train accidents.

Road Safety Foundation collected the data based on reports published in seven national dailies, five online news portals and electronic media.

NAIMUL ABRAR'S DEATH

Anisul Hoque gets bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to Kishor Alo Editor Anisul Hoque and four others in a case filed over the death of Naimul Abrar Rahat, a student of Dhaka Residential Model College.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Jasim passed the order after the five surrendered before the court and sought bail in the case.

The four others are: Kabir Bakul, head of event and activation of Kishor Alo; Shuvashish Pramanik Shuvo and Shah Paran Tushar, assistants at event and activation of Kishor Alo; Mahitul Alam Pavel, senior assistant editor of Kishor Alo.

The court also withdrew the attachment order on the properties of them.

Earlier, the same court ordered to confiscate their properties after the complainant's lawyer appealed to it to issue such an order.

Abrar, a ninth-grader, was electrocuted during the anniversary programme of Prothom Alo's youth magazine Kishor Alo on November 1 last year.

Mojibur Rahman, the victim's father, filed the case against Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman and nine others with the Fourth Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka on November 6 last year.

On January 16 this year, another Dhaka court issued arrest warrants against them after Mohammadpur Police Station Inspector Abdul Alim, also investigation officer of the case, submitted the probe report to the court.

Following the arrest warrants, the High Court on January 20 granted bail to Matiur Rahman for a period of four weeks and directed him to appear before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court of Dhaka after expiration of the period.

While granting the anticipatory bail to Matiur, the HC directed law enforcers not to harass or arrest him or any of the five other accused until the charges were framed in the case.

Matiur Rahman is now on bail in the case.

Fourth death anniversary of M Abdur Rahim

CITY DESK

Today is the fourth death anniversary of M Abdur Rahim, chairperson of the western zone of the then Mujibnagar government and a close associate of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

A Liberation War organiser, Rahim was a veteran lawyer and recipient of the Swadhinata Padak, said a press release.

On this occasion, family members and various organisations have arranged different programmes including a doa mahfil, Qurankhwani and more.



Rohingya youth held trying to get passport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Carrying a Bangladeshi National Identity Card (NID), a Rohingya youth was detained from Chattogram Panchlaish Passport Office, while he was trying to get a passport yesterday noon.

He was caught during document verification and later handed over to Panchlaish Police Station.

The detainee is Obaidul Haque (25), a resident of Chattogram's Lohagara upazila.

Masaum Hasan, deputy director of the passport office, told The Daily Star, "Obaidul applied for a passport by showing his NID card and documents of local administration, but his fingerprint was found in the Rohingya database during biometric verification."

"Later, we also checked his NID number and found his information in the election commission (EC) server," he continued.

"His information in the NID server and Rohingya database is the same," Masum said, adding that later, he was handed over to police.

Last year, Chattogram police and passport officials said some Rohingya refugees were making Bangladeshi passports using fraudulent NID cards, with the help of some locals and Rohingya brokers.

The Rohingyas were using fake names and addresses while applying for identification documents, and a section of unscrupulous EC staffers provided NID cards in exchange for money.

Journo stabbed dead in Dhamrai, two arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A journalist was stabbed to death in Dhamrai yesterday.

The deceased, Julhash Uddin, (35) was Dhamrai correspondent of private television channel Bijoy TV.

After the incident, police in separate drives arrested two people -- Shahin (35) and Moajjem (32). Shahin is former husband of Julhash's second wife.

Quoting witnesses, Dipak Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge of Dhamrai Police Station, said Julhash was talking to some acquaintances at Barbaria village near Kali Mandir area in the afternoon.

Around 3:30pm, Shahin and his accomplice Moazzem came to the area and stabbed Julhash in the neck and abdomen.

Julhash was taken to Manikganj Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead, said the OC.

Law enforcers suspect the incident took place over previous enmity. "We are looking into the matter," said the OC.

They have also recovered the knife used in the killing, he said, adding that filing of a case was underway.

PPE PROCUREMENT GRAFT ACC summons owner of Jahid Automobiles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission has summoned Shamimuzzaman Kanchan, owner of Jahid Automobiles, that supplied masks, PPE and other medical equipment to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Under a project, DGHS made a Tk 32 crore contract with Jahid Automobiles, an automobile parts supplier. The supplier has already been paid Tk 9 crore.

According to a letter signed by ACC's Director Meer Md Zainul Abedin Shebly, there is allegation against DGHS and hospital officials of making huge amount of money through procuring sub-standard PPE, masks and other medical equipment for doctors.

"For the sake of proper inquiry, it is necessary to record your statement," reads the letter, asking Kanchan to appear before it with necessary documents on September 9.

Besides, ACC issued two separate letters to DGHS and Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA).

ACC asked DGHS to provide attested copies of contract paper with Jahid Automobiles and supply order and delivery receipt of equipment. It also asked DGHS to provide the list of equipment supplied by Jahid Automobiles till August 31, 2020. The ACC director also asked DGDA to provide the attested copies of application submitted by Jahid Automobiles for approval.

Sources said DGDA pointed out some discrepancies in the contract to DGHS. Both DGHS and DGDA are asked to submit the paper by September 8.

Biman plans to resume Dhaka-Doha flights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has planned to resume flight operation on Dhaka-Doha-Dhaka route from September 7, paving the way for a huge number of Bangladeshis to return to their workplaces in Qatar.

The national flag carrier suspended its flight on this popular destination in Qatar since middle of March following outbreak of global Covid-19 pandemic.

A Biman official said the national flag carrier is yet to finalise how many flights will be operated on this route.

Besides, he said passengers will have to go through various terms and conditions to visit Doha.

"We are working to prepare a detailed plan to resume the Dhaka-Doha flight," said the Biman official.

Wishing anonymity, the Biman official also said passengers will be able to get all related information by tomorrow through Biman's website.

Several thousand Bangladeshi expatriate workers -- who came to visit the country from Qatar after taking leave -- have remained stranded since March.

POSSESSION OF TWO NIDS Sabrina placed on two-day remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed JKG Health Care Chairman Dr Sabrina Arif Chowdhury on a two-day remand in a case filed against her on charges of possessing two National ID cards with fake information.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Tofazzal Hossain passed the order after Md Mominul Islam, a sub-inspector of Badda Police Station and also the case's investigation officer, produced her before his court with a five-day remand prayer. On August 30, Abdul Momin Mia, Gulshan Thana Election Officer, filed the case against Sabrina with Badda Police Station.

According to the case statement and EC's NID division, Sabrina who is involved in Covid-19 test report forgery, became a voter for the first time in 2009.

At that time, she used her current and permanent address in Mohammadpur. She mentioned December 2, 1978 as her date of birth. She enlisted her husband's name to be "Haque" and educational qualification as post-graduation.

But in her second NID issued in 2016, she mentioned her permanent and current address in Badda and her husband's name as "Ariful Chowdhury". In that ID, she used December 2, 1983 as her date of birth. She also changed her mother's name, as well as educational qualifications, declaring herself to be a graduate.

According to Voter Talika Ain 2009, acquiring dual NID is a punishable offence.

VANDALISM, ARSON CASES

SC upholds stay of Fakhurul's trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld the High Court orders that stayed trial proceedings against BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir in two cases filed in 2012 and 2013 over vandalism and arson.

The Appellate Division of the SC, however, asked the HC to hold hearing and dispose of the rules issued in connection with the cases.

A six-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain came up with the orders after virtually hearing two separate leave to appeal petitions filed by the state challenging the HC orders.

Following two petitions filed by Fakhru, the HC on November 7, 2017 stayed the trial proceedings against him in two cases lodged with Sher-E-Bangla Nagar and Ramna Police Stations in 2012 and 2013 respectively.

The HC also issued two rules asking the state to explain why the case proceedings should not be scrapped.

Yesterday, Sagir Hossain Leon, a lawyer for Fakhru, told The Daily Star that his client is accused in total 86 vandalism, arson and defamation cases, which were filed from political purpose.

Fakhru is now on bail in all the cases filed against him. Additional Attorney General Momtaz Uddin Fakir represented the state while lawyer Zainul Abedin appeared for Fakhru.

DU clears

FROM PAGE 3

On social media, a number of students condemned the council's branding of such programmes as "inhumane, brutal, and unethical celebrations", instead of focusing on more pressing issues.

"Whereas ragging and guest room cultures are supposed to be banned, what inhumane and unethical deed occurs at Rag Days?" wrote Prof Gitirai Nasreen of the university's mass communication and journalism department.

"Perhaps they thought Rag Day means 'ragging'," sneered one Rayan Kamal.

"I was shocked to hear the decision. Banning it permanently means snatching a festival from the students. It is a whimsical decision. The authorities could have imposed some restrictions to check exaggerations, but banning it permanently would not be wise," Sakhawat Al Amin, an alumnus of the university told The Daily Star.

Some current and former students were also seen posting Rag Day photos in response, with relevant captions condemning the decision.

Contacted, DU VC Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said, "False information was represented inadvertently in Wednesday's press release. The Public Relations officer has sought an apology for that. The decision taken regarding Rag Day has been sent to the mass media again."

In a similar controversy earlier in October 2017, university authorities directed every TSC-based sociocultural organisation to finish all activities by 8pm, but they eventually had to withdraw the decision in the face of similar criticism from the public.

In January 2018, the authorities evicted all makeshift tea stalls in the TSC area but reinstated them the next day amid students' protest.

MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

Regent's Shahed remanded for 8 days

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed and its Managing Director Masud Parvez on an eight-day remand each in connection with a money laundering case.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Ziaur Rahman passed the order after Mohammad Moniruzzaman, an inspector of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police and also the case's investigation officer, produced the duo before the court with a 10-day remand prayer each. Before that, Shahed was shown arrested in six other fraud cases filed with Uttara Paschim Police Station in July and August.

On August 25, CID Inspector Mohammad Ibrahim filed the money laundering case with Uttara Purba Police Station.

According to the prosecution, it was alleged that Shahed embezzled about Tk 12 crore from 2017 to 2020. He embezzled Tk 7.9 crore from 10-12 different people and organisations from 2017 to 2020.

Shahed also embezzled about Tk 3 crore through Covid-19 test forgery in past few months. He was transacting the money with 43 bank accounts which he opened after names of Regent Hospital, Regent KCS Limited and 12 other companies which barely existed.

Shahed was arrested on July 15 from Satkhira when he was trying to leave the country while Masud was arrested from Gazipur on July 14.



Partners in Population and Development (PPD)

An Inter-Governmental Organization Promoting South-South Cooperation

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

PPD is an Inter-Governmental organization of 27 Developing Countries working in the field of Reproductive Health, Population and Development having its Headquarters in Dhaka. PPD invites the Expression of Interest (Eoi) from the audit firms based in Bangladesh having affiliation/membership with an internationally reputed audit firms for conducting its corporate audit for the fiscal year 2020 and 2021.

The Interested firms are requested to submit their Eoi with financial proposals to the Executive Director at the following address by 15 September, 2020 with sealed envelope.

Partners in Population and Development (PPD)
Plot # 17 B & C, Block # F, Argagaon Administrative Zone, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.

For detailed Terms of Reference (ToR), please visit our website:
<http://www.partners-popdev.org/audit-eoi/>

Malaysia to

FROM PAGE 3

Also barred were spouses of Malaysian citizens and their children as well as students from the three countries who wanted to return to Malaysia.

Meanwhile, Ismail Sabri said the government has no problem to allow Malaysians from high-risk countries to return home but they will be subjected to the 14-day mandatory quarantine as stipulated in the standard operating procedures (SOP).

On the Embracing New Norms Campaign, he said it would be carried out until December 31 to ensure the people continue to adhere to the SOP in order to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

Efforts on

FROM PAGE 3

Overall, it witnessed 49.15 percent progress till August, according to project documents. The first phase of the project -- from Uttara to Argagaon -- saw 75 percent progress while the second phase -- from Argagaon to Motijheel -- saw 42.50 percent progress till last month.

DMTCL earlier set December 2021 for starting operation of the metro rail, but the Covid-19 pandemic has slowed down the works, casting doubt whether the authorities would be able to meet the deadline.

Once completed, metro rail would carry 60,000 passengers per hour.

At the latest meeting of Fast Track Project Monitoring Taskforce in June, the prime minister's principal secretary Ahmad Kaikaus, also the head of the taskforce, asked metro rail authorities to take initiatives to bring back foreign engineers and consultants to expedite project work.

"We have taken multiple steps to bring back foreign engineers and consultants to speed up our works," MAN Siddique, managing director of DMTCL, told The Daily Star recently. He said 120 Thai nationals will be brought by air charter of a contractor firm -- Italian-Thailand Development Public Company Ltd -- within next week.

They have already received approval from the authorities concerned for this special arrangement, he said.

He said some 240 Indian nationals involved with the project will reach Bangladesh within this month. They were asked to reach Kolkata first and then would be brought back through Benapole border, he said.

In July, DMTCL wrote to the foreign ministry to give special waiver for Japanese nationals involved in metro project so that they can return to Bangladesh.

Asked about development of this initiative, MAN Siddique said they are hopeful that relatively younger Japanese nationals will return to Bangladesh soon, as the older ones may not be allowed to come back.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, DPHE
Natore District, Natore

Email: ee.natore@dphe.gov.bd

Invitation for Tender Notice


Memo No. 46.03.6900.061.18.001.20-1192 Date: 01/09/2020

1. Ministry/Division	Local Government Division.
2. Agency	Department of Public Health Engineering.
3. Project name	Fourth Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-4).
4. Procurement nature	Works.
5. e-Tender ID	487712.
6. Description of work	Major maintenance works of govt. primary schools at different upazila of Natore district under Fourth Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-4).
7. Tender closing date and time	16-Sep-2020 12:00pm.

This is online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Interested persons/firms can see details in the website www.eprocure.gov.bd.

Md. Alamgir Miah
Executive Engineer, DPHE
Natore District, Natore

GD-1375



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কাউন্সিলিং ফি	১৫ অক্টোবর, ২০২০ থেকে শুরু	প্রতি বিষয় ৪৫০/- টাকা

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* রেজিস্ট্রেশন ফি, পরীক্ষার ফি, কাউন্সিলিং ফি, মেধারশীল ফি Dutch Bangla Mobile Bank (A/C No. 1973) এ জমা দিতে হবে।

* ভর্তির জন্য যোগ্যতাঃ ন্যূনতম স্নাতক ডিগ্রি।

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পরিচালক
বিআইএ

জিডি-১৩৭৯

অত্যাধুনিক ব্রান্ডেরিড বেডি ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়

লালমার্গায়ার "এ্যাটেড ডেভেলপমেন্ট" নির্মিত ফুলফোয়ার ফেইজ বিল্ডিংয়ের কর্নার প্রটে সিসেল ইউনিটের গ্যাস সংযোগসহ ২৮৩৫ বর্গফুটের বেডি ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়।

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মোবাইল-০১৯১২৮১৯৭৮

সচিব, বিএসপি ও

নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত বিবরণ কোন পদের সাথে কোন প্রকার যোগাযোগ এবং আর্থিক কেন্দ্রের আলাদা পাওয়া গেলে তা প্রার্থীর যোগাযোগ হিসেবে গণ্য করা হবে এবং তাত্ক্ষণিক প্রার্থীর আবেদনপত্রটি বাতিল হিসেবে বিবেচিত হবে।

জিডি-১৩৩৮

A 'serious' attack against rule of law

Says ICC as US slaps sanctions on its top prosecutor; EU 'not happy', pledges support to war crimes court

AGENCIES

The European Union yesterday said it will defend the International Criminal Court against attempts to undermine it after Washington slapped sanctions on the Hague-based tribunal's top prosecutor -- a move that The Hague-based tribunal called a "serious" attack against the rule of law.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday announced sanctions against ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and another senior court official, Phakiso Mochochoko, over a war crimes probe into US military personnel in Afghanistan.

Washington has long rejected the ICC's jurisdiction over US citizens, but the court's investigation into allegations of atrocities in Afghanistan has seen President Donald Trump's administration turn low-level opposition into a concerted campaign against the institution.

"The International Criminal Court is facing persistent external challenges and the European Union stands firm against all attempts to undermine the international system of criminal justice by hindering the work of its core institutions," Peter Stano, spokesman for EU diplomatic chief Josep



Borrell, told reporters.

US earlier imposed visa bans on Bensouda and others but failed to head off the court's war crimes probe into US military personnel in Afghanistan.

The ICC quickly fired back. "These coercive acts, directed at an international judicial institution and its civil servants, are unprecedented and constitute serious attacks against the court, the Rome Statute system of international criminal justice, and the rule of law more generally," it said in a statement.

The sanctions freeze the US assets of the two officials, and bar any US individuals from doing business with them.

The United States -- like Russia, China, Israel, Syria and a number of other countries -- is not a member of the ICC, and its opposition to the court is longstanding.

The United States argues that it has its own procedures in place to investigate accusations against troops.

Also underpinning Washington's enmity is the ICC's investigation into alleged war crimes by US ally Israel against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok said his country was disappointed over the US move.



A Filipino crew member of Gulf Livestock 1 is being rescued by a Japan Coast Guard boat at the East China Sea, to the west of Amami Oshima island in southwestern Japan, on Wednesday. Japanese coast guard rescuers were searching yesterday for the remaining 42 crew of the ship believed to have sunk by Typhoon Maysak, after a lone survivor was found bobbing in a lifejacket. The Gulf Livestock 1, which was carrying a cargo of nearly 6,000 cows, issued a distress call in the early hours of Wednesday from a position 185 kilometres west of Japan's Amami Oshima island. The typhoon drenched both Koreas yesterday, killing at least one person in the South and inundating streets across a port in the North as it churned its way up the peninsula.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWSIN brief

FB bans BJP MP for policy violation

REUTERS, New Delhi

Facebook Inc has banned a member of India's ruling party for violating its policies covering violence and hate, as Mark Zuckerberg's company finds itself caught in a political debate over alleged bias in its handling of content in India. The company said it had banned politician Raja Singh from Facebook and Instagram under its "dangerous individuals and organizations" policy. The Wall Street Journal reported the move earlier.

Last Taliban prisoners freed except 'few'

AFP, Kabul

The Afghan government yesterday said they have released the remaining 400 Taliban prisoners agreed in an exchange, except for "a few" opposed by foreign nations, and expected peace negotiations to start soon. A drawn-out prisoner swap including the contentious release of hundreds of hardened militants has delayed the start of planned negotiations between the two warring sides, scheduled to take place in Doha.

Pakistan eyes a billion from hemp production

AFP, ISLAMABAD

Cash strapped Pakistan has unveiled plans to allow the industrial production of hemp, spurring hopes farmers and businesses in the conservative Islamic country will be able to tap into the lucrative global cannabis market. "This hemp market could provide Pakistan with some \$1 billion in the next three years," science and technology minister Fawad Chaudhry told reporters.

INDIA-CHINA BORDER TENSIONS

Beijing fumes over more apps ban

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday decried a fresh ban by India on scores of Chinese apps -- including the hit game PUBG -- as a bitter border showdown seeped out into the tech sphere.

Internet giant Tencent is among the Chinese makers of 118 more apps be targeted in the latest Indian ban, which follows a rumbling territorial dispute along a disputed Himalayan frontier. At least 20 Indian soldiers were killed in hand-to-hand combat during a battle in June.

India has hit back by pulling scores of Chinese apps from its massive domestic market, including video-sharing platform TikTok.

The latest salvo announced on Wednesday whipped in blockbuster shoot-'em-up game PUBG, and has angered Chinese authorities and dismayed Indian gamers.

"India has abused the concept of national security and adopted discriminatory restrictive measures against Chinese companies," Chinese commerce ministry spokesman Gao Feng told an online press briefing on Thursday.

China firmly opposes the measure, he said, urging India to "correct its wrong practices".

Beijing also implied India had imposed the ban in the face of pressure from the United States, with foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying yesterday warning against "short-sighted" participation in US restrictions against Chinese technology.

Indian authorities say they are moving against the proliferation of Chinese tech because it promotes activities "prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order".



The New Diamond, a very large crude carrier (VLCC) chartered by Indian Oil Corp (IOC), that was carrying the equivalent of about 2 million barrels of oil, is seen after a fire broke out off east coast of Sri Lanka, Yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'POISONING' OF PUTIN CRITIC WITH NOVICHOK

Russia defiant amid outrage

AFP, Moscow

The Kremlin yesterday rejected claims that Moscow was behind the poisoning of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, as calls mounted for international action after Germany said he had been dosed with Novichok.

Western leaders are demanding answers from Moscow after Berlin said Wednesday there was "unequivocal evidence" that the 44-year-old Kremlin critic had been afflicted by the infamous nerve agent.

Navalny, one of President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critics, fell ill on a flight last month and was treated in a Siberian hospital before being evacuated to Berlin. He is still in the intensive care unit and remains on a ventilator.

Germany's claim that he was exposed to Novichok -- the same substance used against Russian ex-double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the English town of Salisbury two years ago -- prompted widespread condemnation and demands for an investigation.

Russia denies there is any evidence that Navalny was poisoned and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that Berlin had not provided Moscow with proof.

"There is no reason to accuse the Russian state,"



Peskov said, rejecting talk of economic sanctions and urging the West not to "rush to judgement".

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the Novichok findings raised "some very serious questions that only Russia can and must answer", while the United States, Britain, France, the EU and Nato all expressed shock.

Already suffering from wide-ranging Western sanctions imposed over its 2014 annexation of Crimea, as well as the effects of the coronavirus pandemic and the drop in oil prices, Moscow will be anxious to avoid any further pressure on its economy.

A new crisis in relations with the West could also threaten Russia's Nord Stream 2 project, a 10 billion-euro (\$11 billion) pipeline near completion beneath the Baltic Sea which is set to double Russian natural gas shipments to Germany.

Germany has been battling US pressure to scrap the project, but the country's biggest newspaper Bild yesterday called for the project to be suspended, saying that "if the (German) government does not stop the construction of Nord Stream 2, we will soon be financing Putin's Novichok attacks".

Peskov rejected such calls as "emotional statements," saying the project "is in the interests of Russia, Germany and the entire European continent."

Youth sue 33 countries over climate inaction

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION

Six Portuguese children and young adults, who have faced deadly wildfires and heatwaves, yesterday filed a lawsuit against 33 countries with the European Court of Human Rights, claiming government inaction on climate change jeopardises their future.

The applicants, aged between eight and 21, want the governments to ramp up efforts to curb planet-heating emissions, saying failure to do so threatened their lives and wellbeing.

Thousands of climate lawsuits have been filed against governments and companies worldwide in the past few years, but this case is the first to be brought before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), lawyers for the applicants said. The action targets the 33 largest greenhouse gas emitters among the 47 member states of the Strasbourg-based ECHR, including all EU countries, Britain, Switzerland, Norway, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine, they said.

According to research consortium Climate Action Tracker, those 33 countries are not doing enough to meet an internationally agreed goal of limiting global warming to well below 2C (3.6°F) above pre-industrial times.

Microsoft unveils 'deepfake' detector ahead of US vote

Microsoft has unveiled software that can help spot "deepfake" photos or videos, adding to the list of programs designed to fight the hard-to-detect images ahead of the US presidential election. The Video Authenticator software analyzes an image or each frame of a video, looking for evidence of manipulation that could even be invisible to the naked eye. Deepfakes are photos, videos or audio clips altered using artificial intelligence to appear authentic and are already targeted by initiatives on Facebook and Twitter. "They could appear to make people say things they didn't or to be places they weren't," said a company blog post on Tuesday. Microsoft said it has partnered with the AI Foundation in San Francisco to make the video authentication tool available to political campaigns, news outlets and others involved in the democratic process.

Arctic wildfires have caused record CO2 emissions: EU

This year's Arctic Circle wildfires, still ablaze, have already surpassed the record set in 2019 for CO2 emissions, adding to the carbon pollution humanity needs to curtail, the European Union's Earth observation programme said yesterday. Uncontrolled forest fires across one of the planet's coldest regions has sent a quarter of a billion tonnes of CO2 spiralling into the atmosphere since January this year, topping by more than a third the total for 2019, according to satellite data. Almost all of the fires are in Russia, the EU's Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts jointly reported.

Modi's Twitter account hacked



The Twitter account of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been hacked, the social media giant confirmed yesterday. Tweets were sent from the prime minister's feed asking for charitable donations using a cryptocurrency, but have since been taken down. "We are actively investigating the situation," a spokesman for Twitter said. In July former US president Barack Obama and tech bosses Bill Gates and Elon Musk were among dozens of high-profile figures to have their Twitter accounts breached in a massive hack by scammers trying to dupe people into sending bitcoin. Twitter said it had not found any link between the Modi hack and the July breach.

SOURCE: REUTERS, AFP

IN REMEMBRANCE

Group Captain (Retd) Taher Quddus
7 September 1936 - 4 September 2013

In loving memory of our beloved Managing Director sadly missed along life's way, quietly remembered everyday, no longer in our lives to share, but in our hearts, you're always there you shall never fade away

Fondly remembered by:
The Securex Family

KSA opens airspace for UAE-Israel flights

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia has agreed to permit UAE flights to "all countries" to overfly the kingdom, as Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu signalled more direct flights linking the UAE with the Jewish state.

The announcement comes after the first direct commercial flight from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi on Monday, which passed through Saudi airspace, to mark the normalisation of Israel-UAE ties.

Riyadh's decision marks another concrete sign of Saudi Arabia's cooperation with Israel even after it refused publicly to follow the UAE in establishing diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.

Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan insisted that Wednesday's decision does not change the kingdom's "firm and established" position towards the Palestinian issue.

But the kingdom has cultivated clandestine relations with Israel in recent years based on a shared animosity towards Iran.

This is not the first time the kingdom has opened its airspace for Israel-bound flights. In March 2018, Air India launched the first scheduled service to Israel that was allowed to cross Saudi airspace.

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Nishonkoch Foundation volunteers at their event, 'Spirit of Ramadan', in 2019.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

Ensuring youth involvement in community development

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Nishonkoch Foundation started their journey in December 2016. They strive to ensure youth involvement in social development and accessibility to quality education. The organisation was formed as a New Year's resolution by Mohammad Fahim, a student of North South University (NSU), and his friends.

Their annual projects include an event called 'Education For All', during which they distribute school supplies among underprivileged students. Their environmental project, 'TrashTag Challenge', is a daylong drive inviting young volunteers to clean up the streets and raise awareness about cleanliness. 'Spirit of Ramadan' is the organisation's flagship event, during which they distribute food packages to underprivileged communities in the month of Ramadan. They also conduct a street food hygiene campaign, to encourage vendors to serve food after maintaining



Volunteers distributing food packages during 'Spirit of Ramadan', earlier this year.

hygiene protocols. "Being able to bring smiles to people's faces is the best part of our work. They inspire us to keep working," said Shakir Ahmed, Co-founder of Nishonkoch Foundation and a student of NSU. Every year, the team celebrates their founding anniversary with underprivileged kids.

Nishonkoch Foundation carried out a number of distribution drives during the pandemic. They distributed leaflets and soaps among slum dwellers, to generate awareness about the spread of the coronavirus disease. Furthermore, they distributed 500 packages of monthlong groceries for those in need during Ramadan and arranged meals for more than 2,000 individuals on Eid.

In the future, the foundation plans to establish a digital lab in the city to facilitate technological education for underprivileged children. "We also want to conduct basic English spoken courses for people of all ages," concluded Fahim.



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YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

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Apply for the 2020 GCSP Prize for Innovation in Global Security. The prize is designed to reach across all relevant disciplines and fields. It is intended to encourage and recognize excellence in contributing to new approaches to enhancing sustainable global security. A broad range of projects could qualify for consideration, including, but not limited to, technological and conceptual innovations, original research, or grassroots initiatives.

DEADLINE: September 25, 2020 | Competitions



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DEADLINE: September 22, 2020 | Scholarships

World Meteorological Organization Calendar Competition 2021

World Meteorological Organization is looking forward to high-quality and artistic photographs, and especially those which illustrate the theme of World Meteorological Day 2021, "The Ocean, our climate and weather" for the Calendar Competition 2021.

DEADLINE: September 15, 2020 | Competition



A ray of hope for the less fortunate

Sombhabona is a registered social welfare organisation that works for underprivileged children in Bangladesh. Ever since their inception in 2011, they have been providing quality education to children, to shape them into productive members of the society. They also aim to build shelter homes for underprivileged communities. "We believe these children are an asset to our country," says Sombhabona's Co-founder, Ariful Islam. "If we can ensure their quality and skill-based education, we can build a bright future for them. We are developing an ecosystem where a child will grow up in a nurturing environment."

SADIA TAHSIN

Sombhabona's Pushpokoli School is a free, open institute for underprivileged children. Their lessons revolve around patriotism, discipline and health awareness, among other things. They have two branches of the school, one in Mirpur 2 and another in Dhanmondi, facilitating education for 200 children. Their institute, Pushpokoli Academic School Kalsi, is in Mirpur 12, where they currently have 95 students. This project has a duration of five years, after which the children are enrolled into secondary education programmes.

Sombhabona's Mahafuz Merit Scholarship is named in memory of Mahafuz, a volunteer of the organisation, who passed away in a road accident in 2014. Through this scholarship, they help underprivileged children to continue their studies, by distributing educational materials among them and paying their



Sombhabona's team distributed cooked meals among 500 underprivileged kids on Eid, earlier this year.

tuition fees. The students further receive school admission and exam fees as well as free house tuitions. So far, this scholarship has been awarded to 10 students. "We want to rehabilitate our students, especially those who have no homes and families.



Sombhabona's team provided food packages to 6,000 people across 1,335 underprivileged families in urban and rural areas, amid the pandemic.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

We want them to be able to go to school and have a place to live," says Mushfika Nishat, Secretariat of Organisational Relation, Sombhabona. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the teachers of Sombhabona's schools have been visiting their students in the slums on a weekly basis to check on them and remind them and their families about the health risks related to the coronavirus disease. They have further delivered solutions of the course materials to their students, facilitating a study-from-home initiative. Since March, they have been providing grocery packages to the families of their students. They are also accommodating some students for the time being at their open school in Dhanmondi.

Sombhabona's project, Onindito Naree, is for underprivileged women, especially the mothers of their students, facilitated at Pushpokoli School. It trains women in tailoring, showpiece making, boutique management and handicrafts making for small, cottage industries, providing them

with job opportunities. Currently, this project is serving 15 women.

Sombhabona arranges different events, including Pushpokoli Book Festival, Sports Festival, Eid Festival and Boshonto Boron for the children. Every Eid-ul-Azha, their volunteers distribute meat among underprivileged communities. At their annual event, 'Esho Moja Kore Khai', they distribute beef and polao among destitute children in Dhaka. They also run different awareness, cleanliness and blood donation campaigns. In this pandemic, the organisation provided food packages to nearly 6,000 people across 1,335 families. This year, they plan to ensure skill-based jobs for 100 unemployed women through Onindito Naree. Over the years, Sombhabona has come a long way, with unconditional support from their Chief Advisor, Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury, Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh and Mohammad Tofazzal Ali, Executive Director of Standard Group.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 4, 2020, BHADRA 20, 1427 BS

Lifting of restrictions untimely and dangerous

The pandemic is far from being under control

THE decision taken by the government to lift all restrictions on public movement and activities which were imposed to contain the spread of coronavirus is untimely and dangerous. The decision came at a time when the number of Covid-19 patients, including critical ones, is on the rise in our hospitals. It is also unfortunate that the government allowed public transport to operate at full capacity. According to health experts, in order for the Covid-19 outbreak to be brought under control, the positivity rate will have to fall below 5 percent. However, the current positivity rate in the country is still 20.16 percent, which is much higher than the global average. On what possible grounds did the government make such a decision?

The government's response to the pandemic has been slow and inadequate from the very beginning. It took quite some time for it to impose lockdown in the first phase of the outbreak. Then, it took some containment measures in consultation with the experts and formed a few committees to oversee the situation. However, when it came to implementing the measures, it failed miserably. Then the government withdrew the lockdown and experimented with a new strategy—marking the districts and city areas as red, yellow and green zones according to the number of patients. Unfortunately, this also could not be enforced properly for lack of an efficient plan. And during the last one month, we did not come across any measures from the authorities concerned to contain the outbreak. And in the absence of any strict containment strategy, the country has been witnessing a high number of deaths since last month.

Understandably, the government took the decision to revive the country's battered economy as well as to ease people's economic hardship. But questions remain as to what precautionary steps have been taken before lifting all these restrictions. Did the government take experts' suggestions before reaching the decision? Is there currently any monitoring mechanism in place to ensure that health safety guidelines are maintained in public places, including markets? It is common sense that maintaining physical distancing in overcrowded public transport is not possible. Therefore, we might see further transmission of the virus in the coming days. Will the government give the issue a second thought before it is too late?

Rapist of minor girl fined Tk 10,000

This is outrageous!

ACCORDING to a report in this newspaper, a local Awami League leader—chairman of No-1 Mahalchhari Union Parishad—in Khagrachhari has “settled” the rape of an underage Marma girl by fining the rapist a meagre Tk 10,000. The victim's family are not even being able to file a case, as a result. How can the chairman even consider pardoning someone who raped an underage girl for Tk 10,000? How is that justice?

Unfortunately, hundreds of such cases in our country get “mitigated” out of court due to the victims or their families not having the means to pursue long-standing legal cases, or because of the power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator. Social stigma and lack of awareness about the legal assistance that is available are other reasons that prevent victims and their families from pursuing legal action. Whereas the authorities are supposed to help fight these problems, here we see a case where a local leader is actually downplaying the seriousness of the offence and allowing the perpetrator to walk away scot-free.

Earlier in June, this newspaper reported how a village leader took Tk 90,000 from another rapist, and forced the victim's mother to sign an affidavit saying that she was content with the arbitration even though the victim received nothing—not a single penny. Clearly, these examples show that leaving such cases to “local leaders” to arbitrate is not working.

Out-of-court settlement of civil cases is one thing, however, criminal cases should never be settled out-of-court, as many legal experts argue. Still, according to a 2017 report, less than 2 percent of rape cases filed in the country in the previous five years had ended in conviction. And such figures surely give victims very little hope of getting justice should they decide to pursue legal channels. What then are the victims to do, when neither arbitration nor the legal system are willing to deliver the minimum justice that they are owed?

We would like to draw the attention of the authorities to this case, and urge them to punish the perpetrator and also take action against the local leader who saw it fit to let him off the hook for a paltry sum of Tk 10,000—despite committing a most egregious offence of raping a minor girl. Moreover, the authorities need to look at the bigger picture too, and take measures that can change this overall grim scenario.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

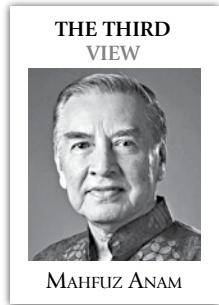
letters@thedailystar.net

Walking the talk on skin colour

While we often talk about the equality of skin colours and every race deserving equal rights, it all goes in vain if we fail to act accordingly in our life. The white colour, in our society, represents superiority while being dark is synonymous with being ugly, a notion exaggerated by the beauty advertisements.

In truth, a person should never be judged by their skin tone. As human beings, we have come a long way but we have yet to get rid of certain prejudices that are entrenched in our minds. It is high time we filtered our thoughts and learned to respect all people, irrespective of the colour of their skin. We need to be more inclusive and open-minded as a society.

Fariha Alam Nijhum, Dhaka



THE THIRD VIEW

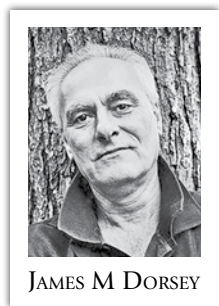
MAHFUZ ANAM

our hands on their hard-earned foreign exchange—which we recklessly waste or allow scamsters to syphon away for their second, third or umpteenth home (or shall we call them villas or palaces?) in Canada, Malaysia, Dubai, or wherever.

But when it comes to helping our workers who are exploited, cheated, beaten, tortured, thrown out of jobs, or never given the job that was promised or at the level of pay promised, we turn our face away as if they don't exist and we even have the temerity to jail them when they—after indescribable hardship—manage to return home. On what grounds? “They have tarnished the image of the country.” The realm of the absurd appears to have no bounds when it comes to official justification to incarcerate ordinary and poor citizens. The case of expatriate workers is especially ironic because we so greedily seek the money they send home.

Of the two contrasting stories, the first entails praising them for sending 36 percent higher remittance this August compared to last year, belying dire predictions of economists. It was the third straight month of growth. It marked a 50 percent growth year-on-year for the July-August period amounting to USD 4.56 billion. The remittance continued to grow despite falling employment, much to the credit of our workers whose love for their families and the country makes them undertake perilous journeys, suffer immense indignity, and perform unbelievable hours of hard labour so that we are better off.

The second story deals with 81 migrant workers being thrown into jail on Tuesday after a court order following the expiry of their 14-day mandatory quarantine. In arguing for their internment, a sub-inspector (SI) of Turag Police Station reasoned, “Their criminal activities have tarnished the country's image and also put a negative impact on the labour industry.” If these workers were released, they could engage in various crimes including robbery, family



JAMES M DORSEY

recognition in return for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 Middle East war even if it has not proven to be much of an asset.

Historically, forging diplomatic relations with the Jewish state has not been a magic wand to resolve a seemingly intractable dispute.

The carrot of recognition has not helped solve the Palestinians' problem 72 years after they were first displaced by Israeli occupation and independence and despite the conclusion of peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan—two states that, unlike the UAE, had and still have a direct stake in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Nor did it stop US President Donald Trump from accepting the legitimacy of annexation of occupied Palestinian land.

Nevertheless, the UAE move contributes to salvaging options for a peace settlement that could be acceptable to both Palestinians and Israelis.

Most importantly, it has helped take immediate Israeli annexation of parts of the West Bank off the table by giving Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the opportunity to temporarily set aside his pledge to incorporate Palestinian land before the November US presidential election without being seen as caving in to American pressure.

To be sure, Mr. Netanyahu has suspended, not cancelled, plans for annexation in exchange for UAE recognition.

The reality is, however, that Mr. Netanyahu or whoever will eventually succeed him will unlikely get a US green light in the foreseeable future irrespective of who wins the American presidential election. Neither Mr. Trump nor his Democratic challenger, Joe Biden, will want to jeopardise evolving relations between Israel and Arab states that annexation no doubt would disrupt.

What that does is keep options open; it does not open doors, nor does it create

Injustice, so what?

Those who “tarnish the country's image” must be taught a lesson

THE September 2 issue of *The Daily Star* had two contrasting stories that dramatically expose our hypocritical attitudes towards our expatriate workers. On the one hand, we are so eager to lay

violence, killing and militancy, the SI argued. Are we to understand that they trained to become militants in Vietnam? Wow, ISIS has really spread. May be we are doing the Vietnamese government a great favour by letting them know something they are still to find out.

The police want them in jail till the “probe” is complete. The magistrate sent them to prison without specifying how long they would have to be there. If we follow the process of the probe, it will most likely consist of letters from the police being sent to the home ministry, which will forward it to the foreign ministry, then forward it to our embassy in Hanoi, which will contact the local police, who, having no reason or motivation to investigate the allegations anew, will send back

welfare ministry. Where is the “welfare” for the expatriate workers in this case?

The story from the side of the workers is totally different—one that the government is apparently not interested in learning about or investigating. Towards the end of last year and early this year, manpower agents offered these job-seekers employment opportunities in Vietnam for a salary ranging from USD 500-600. It was all official and seemed above board.

The plot thickens as we examine the role of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), the government body authorised to check, do due diligence, and give official “clearance” before workers are permitted to go abroad. The BMET is meant to prevent workers from going abroad on



81 Vietnam returnees are being led to prison vans outside the isolation centre in Diabari area of Dhaka on Tuesday, September 1, 2020.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

the same official complaints that they lodged before, which will then follow the same serpentine route and find its way back to Turag Thana, which will then submit the “proof” of their crimes and seek conviction, all the while these “tarnishers” of country's image will rot in jail unless... and here, the possibilities are endless depending on the resource base of the workers, for whose hard-earned green bucks we send them all over the world.

When asked why the Vietnam returnees were in jail, the expatriates' welfare minister told *The Daily Star*, “Ask the Home ministry, they arrested them; we did not.” A correct answer, but not an empathetic one. It may fit a bureaucrat but not a people's representative which the minister is supposed to be. After all, he is the one heading the expatriates'

“fake jobs”. In case of the hundred-plus workers proceeding to Vietnam, the official clearance for all of them was duly issued by BMET. The agents were paid Tk 4-5 lakhs by each of them for these jobs that BMET gave clearances for.

While travelling, each of these workers were asked to carry on their person USD 1,000 to USD 5,000 to be handed to the agents' representatives in Vietnam. This amounted to money laundering as these transfers were completely unauthorised. On arrival, their passports and of course the money were seized, and they were sent to various factories without any work permit. What happened then was what usually happens to all helpless, paperless and passport-less people in any foreign land. They are exploited to the hilt, made to work as slaves, mercilessly beaten under any pretext, whimsically

UAE geopolitical gamble keeps Palestinian peace prospects on life support

LIKE it or not, the United Arab Emirates may have done the Palestinians a favour by forging diplomatic ties with Israel. On the face of it, the agreement deprives the Palestinians of a perceived trump card: Arab

recognition in return for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 Middle East war even if it has not proven to be much of an asset.

Historically, forging diplomatic relations with the Jewish state has not been a magic wand to resolve a seemingly intractable dispute.

The carrot of recognition has not helped solve the Palestinians' problem 72 years after they were first displaced by Israeli occupation and independence and despite the conclusion of peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan—two states that, unlike the UAE, had and still have a direct stake in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Nor did it stop US President Donald Trump from accepting the legitimacy of annexation of occupied Palestinian land.

Nevertheless, the UAE move contributes to salvaging options for a peace settlement that could be acceptable to both Palestinians and Israelis.

Most importantly, it has helped take immediate Israeli annexation of parts of the West Bank off the table by giving Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the opportunity to temporarily set aside his pledge to incorporate Palestinian land before the November US presidential election without being seen as caving in to American pressure.

To be sure, Mr. Netanyahu has suspended, not cancelled, plans for annexation in exchange for UAE recognition.

The reality is, however, that Mr. Netanyahu or whoever will eventually succeed him will unlikely get a US green light in the foreseeable future irrespective of who wins the American presidential election. Neither Mr. Trump nor his Democratic challenger, Joe Biden, will want to jeopardise evolving relations between Israel and Arab states that annexation no doubt would disrupt.

What that does is keep options open; it does not open doors, nor does it create

interests. Palestinians, moreover, were divided between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement—that clings to the hope of some miracle that will get decades of peace talks back on track—and Hamas, the Islamist group that controls the Gaza Strip.

Stripped of its rhetoric, Hamas essentially argues that the Palestine Authority's strategy of surrendering its trump cards—recognition of Israel and abandonment of the legitimacy of political violence—has not persuaded Israel to make the minimal concessions needed. Those include an end to Israeli settlement policy in the West Bank, a Palestinian administrative stake in East Jerusalem, and an agreement on the final



Palestinians take part in a protest against the United Arab Emirates' deal with Israel to normalise relations, in Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, August 14, 2020.

PHOTO: REUTERS/RANEEN SAWAFTA

borders between Israel and Palestine based on the pre-1967 war frontiers, albeit modified by land swaps that recognise facts on the ground.

The UAE's halting annexation for now and keeping the door to negotiations open constitutes a gamble. The primary risk is grey swans or predictable disruptions, not black swans or unpredictable events.

The biggest risk beyond an Israeli decision at some point to move forward with annexation is West Bank protest against Israeli policy to which Israel responds with a heavy hand and military escalation in Gaza. Palestinian protest is almost a given in a world that has just ended a decade of defiance and dissent, with the 2011 and 2019/2020 popular

fed or not fed, and treated without minimum pay or human dignity.

The story gets chilling when we hear that fellow Bangladeshis are as much a part of this inhuman chain of exploiters as the Vietnamese. These “wretched of the earth” went to local police who, as can be expected, did not extend any help. These fellow Bangladeshi workers, on whose “earnings” so much of our development depends, then found their way from various parts of Vietnam to Hanoi and sought help from our embassy there.

Our Ambassador in Vietnam, Samina Naz, speaking to this newspaper, said that she wrote several times over the last two years to our home and expatriates' welfare ministries, informing them of the rise of gangs that exploit our workers and have been carrying on this nefarious trade in human trafficking for some time. She did not receive any reply to her letters, not even an acknowledgement.

Given the above reality and the inhuman sufferings already endured by our fellow citizens, to jail them for “tarnishing the image of the country” and “harming our overseas labour market” can only be termed as the height of hypocrisy, corruption and exploitation of our expatriate labour class. As we have shown earlier, after having been robbed of their possessions, freedom and human dignity abroad, they will now rot in our jail till the “probe” is complete.

As for “tarnishing the image of our country” and “negatively impacting our labour market”—who are responsible, really? The victims of exploitation, or their perpetrators and the officials who are making such exploitation possible? How can the BMET shrug off its responsibility? If the home and expatriates' welfare ministries listened to our ambassador in Hanoi, much suffering and “tarnishing” could have been avoided.

Due to reporting in this newspaper and others, the concerned minister did set up an “enquiry committee” last July. Obviously, its works have not finished yet. The minister has already said that he does not want to be harsh on the agents because they have been adversely affected by the pandemic. I suppose he will also not want to be harsh on BMET officials who gave those official clearances, after all they are serving the country by sending workers abroad whether their jobs are real of fake. As for the real earners of the foreign exchange—the workers—who cares if they rot in jail?

.....
Mahfuz Anam is Editor and Publisher, *The Daily Star*.

Arab revolts as its centrepiece and the prospect of global social unrest in the 2020s as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the worst worldwide economic downturn since World War Two. Add to this the worldwide awareness of entrenched social injustice and racial inequality.

Protest is likely whatever happens. With hope for a two-state solution fading, the alternatives are a one-state solution or continued occupation. Both are potential drivers of social unrest.

Israeli warplanes pounded Gaza, one of the world's most densely populated regions blockaded by Israel as well as Egypt, on a nightly basis as Israeli and Emirati diplomats finalised terms of their establishment of diplomatic relations. The bombings were in response to the firing of rockets and flying of balloon bombs from Gaza into Israel.

Potentially, heavy-handed Israeli responses to Palestinian protest and Gaza attacks could put the UAE in an uncomfortable position.

With freedom of expression in the UAE and much of the Gulf severely repressed and in the absence of credible public opinion polls, it is hard to assess public empathy for the Palestinians. A rare poll in Saudi Arabia by a credible non-Saudi polling company showed that the Palestinian issue ranked second after Iran among foreign policy concerns of the kingdom's public. It is fair to assume that the UAE would not be much different.

While UAE-based tweeters overwhelmingly welcomed the UAE's outreach to Israel, it was left to Emiratis abroad to be more critical. “The dustbin of history accommodates all traitors, whatever their names and the names of their families,” tweeted an Emirati activist in exile.

The UAE may hope that diplomatic relations will enable it to nudge Israel towards credible peace negotiations with the Palestinians, in part by empowering Palestinian leaders beholden to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed. It is a strategy that the United States adopted for much of the past four decades with little result. It's not clear why the UAE would succeed where others have failed.

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Dr James M. Dorsey is an award-winning journalist and a senior fellow at Nanyang Technological University's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. He is also a senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute and co-director of the University of Wuerzburg's Institute of Fan Culture in Germany.

Pranab Mukherjee: A Mentor for Mass Leaders

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

A major disappointment in the public life of India's first Bengali President Pranab Mukherjee, who died on August 31, 2020, was that he could never contest and win direct elections to parliament, which would have helped him shed the tag his critics gave him: "a politician without a mass base and following." He won his first and only Lok Sabha poll in 2004 from the Jangipur constituency in West Bengal and that too with covert help from the state's then ruling CPI(M) whose top leadership, including late Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, had a strong rapport with Mukherjee.

Mukherjee's stint as a lawmaker mostly consisted of his membership of Rajya Sabha, whose electors, unlike that of the Lok Sabha, are not the people. But Mukherjee's success as a politician makes him a rare example of a person whose steady rise never depended on mass politics. He was always a key backroom strategist and the chief trouble-shooter of the Congress, riding on the back of his photographic memory and thorough knowledge of history, the Constitution, and the rules of administration. Indira Gandhi got a glimpse of these qualities in Mukherjee when she spotted him at a public rally in Medinipur in 1969 and wanted him to be drafted into the Congress. His preoccupation with national politics and parliamentary system and governance hardly allowed him to devote his time to the rough and tumble of grassroots politics.

Mukherjee was a mentor for politicians with mass base. These qualities have always ensured that Mukherjee—or "Poltu Da" to a coterie of Congressmen—remained at the centre of attention and action during the decade-long rule of Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) since 2004, heading an unprecedented number of committees dealing with various key issues facing the country. Every time the Congress or the Congress-led UPA government faced a crisis triggered by the quicksand of coalition politics in India, Mukherjee had to play the role of a crisis manager. Yet, he remained the

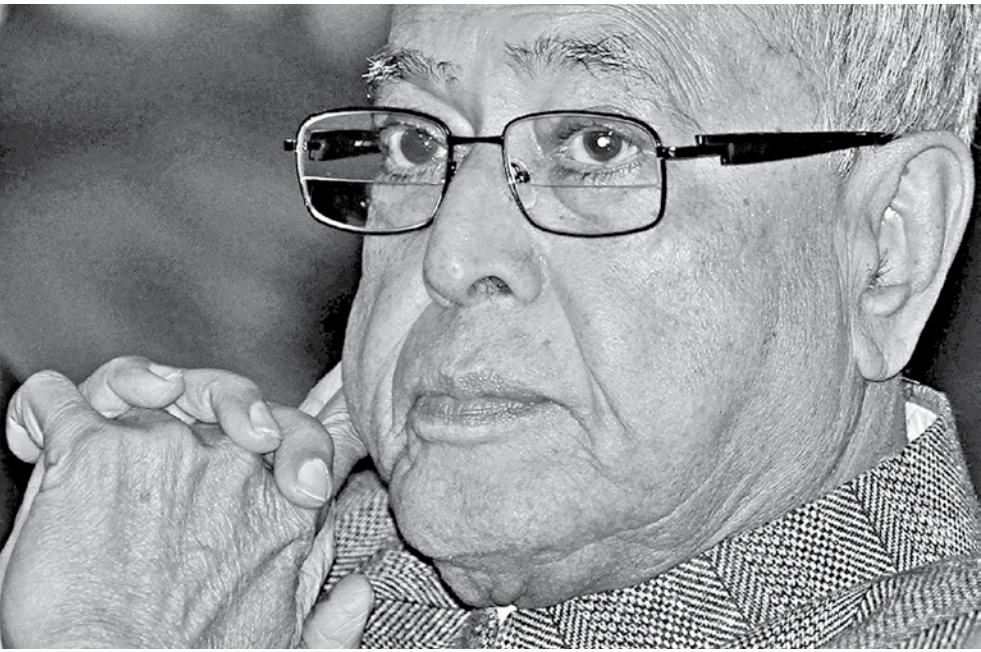
"best" prime minister India never had, mainly due to the trust deficit with the Gandhi family. It was this deficit that saw him being ignored for the top job thrice—first after Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984, second when Sonia Gandhi declined to become PM in 2004, and then again in 2009 when Manmohan Singh was the undisputed choice of Sonia to head the Indian government.

Though handpicked by Indira Gandhi to enter the Congress, the seeds of cold vibes between Mukherjee and the Gandhi family emerged when the Congress was forced to choose a successor to Indira in October 1984. Indira's son Rajiv Gandhi not only became the PM but he saw to it that Mukherjee was shunted out of the Congress Working Committee, the party's top decision-making forum, the Congress Parliamentary Board, and finally out of the party in 1986. The political grapevine has it that Rajiv was convinced by some of his Doon School friends like Arun Nehru about Mukherjee's prime ministerial ambitions and that he could pose a leadership threat.

But Mukherjee was too important to be kept out of the Congress for long. He returned to the party six years later and once again proved his mettle as a reliable Sherpa for the Gandhi family after Sonia emerged from a long-secluded life following Rajiv's assassination, plunged into politics, and made her debut in parliament in 1999. The Congress could not do without Mukherjee's help as a political manager par excellence, having excellent networking across the political spectrum and the business world.

Mukherjee served the Gandhi family for three generations from Indira to Sonia. But the family decided to ignore him when the crunch time came to make him India's first Bengali PM. Ironically, it was Mukherjee whose ingenious interpretation of a clause in the Congress Party's constitution helped Sonia Gandhi pip her nearest challenger Sitaram Kesri in the race for the post of party president in 1998—a journey that ended with Rajiv's wife becoming the longest-serving chief of the Congress till 2017.

There was always an undercurrent of



Pranab Mukherjee (1935-2020).

PHOTO: REUTERS/B MATHUR

unease between Mukherjee and the Gandhi clan in the years after Indira's assassination, and it never went away. In fact, that unease almost prevented Mukherjee from missing out on moving into the Rashtrapati Bhavan as Sonia was not willing to spare his services as a strategist of the Congress. But Mukherjee's brilliant political acumen, particularly his wide acceptability among all opposition parties, saw the Samajwadi Party and Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress change their stand on supporting him, forcing Sonia's hand on backing him as the consensus presidential choice in July 2012.

Mukherjee had grabbed with both hands the opportunity of working with Indira Gandhi as her trusted lieutenant. Indira shaped his evolution into an enlightened and accomplished modern backroom politician. He not only became the Indira government's finance minister but also the second man in her cabinet, ahead of veterans like P.V.

Narasimha Rao and R. Venkataraman who went on to become India's prime minister and president respectively. Mukherjee did not stop at that. He reinvented himself as a man for all seasons as far as the Congress was concerned. With his sharp mind and vast knowledge, he emerged as an eloquent parliamentarian with exemplary poise and absolute familiarity with the nitty-gritty of the functioning of the government, parliament and India's political system. His strong grasp of intricate power politics within the Congress helped him create an aura of indispensability in the party.

Bangladesh always held a special place in his heart not just because his wife Suvera Mukherjee was from the Bhadrabila village in Narail, but also because of the close bond his family built and nurtured with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana and their children. During the darkest phase of Hasina's life after the brutal

assassination of her family on August 15, 1975, Mukherjee and his wife were guardian angels to them in New Delhi where the two sisters had taken asylum. Mukherjee's close relations with Jyoti Basu, developed during the latter's stint as West Bengal's deputy chief minister in a coalition in late 1960s, helped work out the Ganges water-sharing treaty with Bangladesh in 1996.

Mukherjee had been the quintessential Congressman till the last day of his life being on the left-of-centre ideological trajectory of the party. He was a strident critic of communalism, a stand he never deviated from. But that did not prevent him from pursuing what he thought was an inclusive political philosophy that includes all shades of opinion not only within the Congress but also in national politics in a diverse country like India. It was pragmatism so typical of Mukherjee, pragmatism that was born out of his association with Ajoy Mukherjee, the first non-Congress chief minister of West Bengal, under the aegis of Bangla Congress, a breakaway group of the Congress. Breakaway Congress leaders Ajoy Mukherjee and Jyoti Basu were part of the same government.

It is in this light that one needs to see Pranab Mukherjee's controversial visit to the RSS headquarters after his departure from the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The visit had split the Congress down the middle but Mukherjee stuck to his gun and just recalled how Jyoti Basu, Vishwanath Pratap Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee had shared the dais at a rally in Kolkata in June 1988, driving home the point that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was no longer politically untouchable.

Pranab Mukherjee belongs to a vanishing tribe of politicians who live their life on their own terms when it comes to matters of conviction, never hesitating to do blunt-talking both within the party or government and reminding the RSS in its den about the need for rising above a monolithic worldview and acknowledging the religious, ethnic and linguistic plurality of India.

Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent of The Daily Star. He writes from New Delhi, India.

Air travel in the time of corona is surreal



I don't know why I was expecting that I would not be fazed at embarking on a journey across the Atlantic at a time when just stepping out of my bedroom had the potential to kill me. It could be irrational bravado or the complete blocking out of reality as a poor coping mechanism. Or perhaps, it was just the thrilling prospect of actually getting to see my child after many anxious months, thousands of miles away, which threw all caution to the wind.

Whatever it was, I was not prepared at all for the strange, dystopian reality show I was about to become a part of.

By now, a mask is an essential accessory and part of one's regular wardrobe, like shoes or eyeglasses or a belt that keeps it all together. So it wasn't really weird that everyone was wearing masks and that nobody asked me at Dhaka airport to remove them. But then I started to muse: how could they know if it was indeed me checking in my luggage and going through the gate to immigration? I couldn't help thinking of all the unsavoury possibilities. It could be, after all, my evil twin trying to escape the law, my kidnapper who was stealing my identity while I lay, gagged and bounded in some ditch in Gazipur; it could be a member of a drug network or a terrorist organisation... sometimes I wish my brain would just shut up.

So I was practically euphoric when the immigration officer told me to take off the mask for a picture. Finally, someone with some guts to follow regular security protocol. I must have grimaced badly at the tiny camera as he almost instantly "sign-linguaged" me to put it back on.

In the lounge where I went mainly because the bathrooms are cleaner, waiters in masks walked silently like ghosts to serve nonexistent passengers, save for one young lady who had the full PPE on as well as the head gear (like a blue shower cap) and

surgical gloves. She might have had shoe covers too but I forget. I was going to ask for tea but the thought of all the hands that had touched the teacups and spoons made me quickly decline, while bathing the little water bottle they gave me with hand sanitiser.

I realised these two items, masks and hand sanitiser, have become the most crucial and precious items one can have at all times these days—more precious than the diamond ring that apparently guarantees faithful monogamy forever. *Next Feb, instead*



"To say my journey had been unusual would be the grossest understatement."

PHOTO: REUTERS

of chocolates and flowers or silly stuffed animals, be a real man and show her a basket full of hand sanitiser, Dettol soap, disinfectant spray and a PPE—they come in pink too.

But it was at the boarding gate that I realised I was now part of the new normal of travel, the parallel reality that lay beyond my cocoon, my bedroom from where, for the last four months, I had been working, socialising virtually, binging on Netflix, and spending more time with my better half than all our 27 years together. The reason for this epiphany? Well, the airlines I was flying was

giving protective visors to each and every passenger and telling us that we had to wear it throughout the flight. Were they serious? Did they expect us to wear this futuristic face shield for the next five hours and then another 14 hours in the connecting flight? How were we supposed to eat our much-anticipated plane breakfasts at dinner time and lunches at bedtime—considered the best perks of air travel?

Oh well, how bad could it be, I thought, and so like a good sport I put on the Darth

through the swarm of fellow soldiers in their masks and shields trying to locate a relative who was supposed to be on the same flight, but how could I figure out from the sea of masked, shielded masses?

I called her and finally realised that the person whose face was covered by a mask and shield and hair with a protective cap, frantically waving at me, was her. We made muffled conversation before proceeding to our seats.

Inside the plane another surprise awaited us. Instead of the good-looking stewards and stewardesses in impeccable uniforms were these ethereal figures in full protective armour—masks, gloves, hair cap, flowing PPE—all in pearly white. Like a team getting ready for open heart surgery, they ushered us into our seats.

The flight itself was uneventful apart from the fact that it was long and lonely enough to drive me crazy thinking of all the ways I could have caught the virus while just sitting in my seat. I vigorously wiped everything with sanitising gel—the hand rest, the tray table, screen, buttons on the screen, remote. Then I put my seat belt on only to realise that I had left out that crucial piece of metal from the disinfecting ritual.

Even while watching reruns of *Friends* (easiest way to escape any kind of unpleasant reality), I managed to work myself into semi-paralysis with anxiety over the impossible task of avoiding exposure on a plane.

Going to the restroom in a plane is always semi-traumatic, but during a pandemic, it is like being the protagonist of a psychological horror movie where "it" is that dreadful, invisible, diabolical "thing" that is just waiting to get you. This is because there are so many points of contact that you must be cautious of. You must push the door open, nimbly get inside, sanitise your hand, place the toilet seat cover before using the toilet, wash your hands and use the hand tissue to press the flush button, and then throw the tissue into the bin which is of course stuffed to the brim and requires some shoving resulting in contact with the surface of the disposal shoot, and demands sanitising your hand again and pushing the door with a tissue in one quick movement so as to avoid

your body touching the walls or door. The problem is, when you come out sweating and panting with a small tissue in your hand, which may be a disturbing sight for other passengers, how do you get rid of it? This is why you need some forethought and should have a plastic bag in your seat to use as a trash bag.

The good news is that by the 9th time of this ritual you will have mastered the whole process, managing to get into your seat apparently unscathed. Until, of course, you realise the soles of your shoes have walked to all sorts of nasty corners including the sticky floor of the restroom.

Sleep, therefore, was quite redundant amidst such disturbing realisations.

Finally, as I reached Logan airport, Boston, my final destination, I wondered what lay ahead. In the plane they had announced that we needed to fill out a travel form online and also show our Covid-19 negative results.

At the airport, it seemed we were the only passengers and we almost immediately found our respective immigration officer, who didn't even ask if I had a test result or whether I would be self-quarantining. After asking me some basic questions, I was done. Unbelievable. I tried to smile through my mask but I don't think he noticed.

I was almost sprinting towards the greeting area when a security officer stopped me and scanned my luggage to see if I had brought any "meat"! It was a struggle getting the two suitcases with unnecessary clothes onto the scanner and then offloading them onto my trolley. I felt like a failed weight lifter as I tried to lift the second suitcase and heave it on the first. After three attempts and with a giant leap, I got it on top of the first one and I walked away, sweating and panting, but feeling like Xena the warrior princess.

To say my journey had been unusual would be the grossest understatement. It was not just surreal but also extraordinarily stressful. But at the greeting area, all I felt was intense joy and gratitude at the sight of a lanky girl in a mask calling out "Ma", making me forget all those bizarre hours of panic and unease.

Aasha Mehreen Amin is Senior Deputy Editor, Editorial and Opinion, The Daily Star.

QUOTABLE
Quote

B R AMBEDKAR
(1891-1956)
Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer.

I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Fuel sources

6 Storybook elephant

11 Stan's buddy

12 Chicago airport

13 Witch trial town

14 Newborns

15 Brio

17 Early hour

18 Try out

19 Nanny

22 Dr's field

23 Makes broader

24 Jeans material

25 Firm customer

27 Period

30 Trio of writing sisters

31 Monk's title

32 Firm focus

33 Infant, derisively

35 Diminished

38 Seething

39 Lower in esteem

40 Circus worker

41 Pithy

42 Abrasive powder

DOWN

1 American marsupial

2 Go by

3 In cahoots

4 Stadium section

5 Like some chocolate

6 Short cut

7 "That's it!"

8 Mandrill, e.g.

9 Game settings

10 Bowler's button

16 Painter's need

20 Spot for cutting a film

21 Setting item

24 Clamor

25 Buster of serials

26 Easy standard to achieve

27 Steep-roofed home

28 Kitchen tool

29 Place for a meal

30 Flock sound

34 Mass unit

36 Snaky shape

37 Ruby of films

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

TUESDAY'S ANSWERS

B	I	S	O	N		S	A	V	O	R
A	D	O	R	E		O	V	I	N	E
R	O	U	S	T		C	I	R	C	A
		T	O	S		A	G	E	D	
C	A	H	N		S	A	N	T	I	E
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BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

4 lakh Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 12
workers in Qatar at the mercy of abusive employers,” Steve Cockburn, Amnesty International’s head of economic and social justice, said in a statement on Sunday.

The two reforms were first announced by the Emir of Qatar in October, 2019, and were signed into law on Sunday, Amnesty said.

The Qatar Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs has introduced the laws to “protect the interests of employers and employees”, reports The Peninsula, an English daily published from Doha.

According to the Bangladesh Embassy in Doha, more than 80 percent of Bangladeshi male workers in Qatar are involved in the construction sector.

In recent years, Qatar has hired about 2.8 lakh semi-skilled and less skilled workers from Bangladesh mainly for its construction projects aimed to develop infrastructures for the World Cup and to implement their “National Vision-2030”, according to the mission.

In 2018, Bangladeshis remitted about \$983.91 million from Qatar, whereas last year the amount of remittance sent from the Gulf country was \$1.1 billion, shows the government data.

On March 26 this year, Bangladesh Ambassador to Qatar Ashud Ahmed said the Qatar government in the last few years has undertaken several “modern and bold” initiatives to protect rights of migrant workers.

The Qatar government also helped the Bangladesh community fight the coronavirus pandemic, he said

in a video message, on the occasion of Bangladesh’s 49th anniversary of independence.

“About 4.16 lakh Bangladeshis live in Qatar and a large part of them are migrant workers. Bangladeshis constitute the second-largest expatriate community in the Gulf country,” he had said.

The expatriates’ welfare ministry data shows 7,129 migrant workers returned from Qatar amid the pandemic from April 1 till August 26 because they had no jobs.

Following Qatar’s enactment of the new laws, International Labour Organisation in a statement on Sunday said migrant workers can now change jobs before the end of their contract without first having to obtain a No Objection Certificate from their employer.

To terminate an employment contract and change jobs, workers must provide at least one month’s written notice if they have worked with the employer for two years or less, or two months’ notice if they have worked with the employer for over two years.

Besides, the new minimum wage will apply to workers of all nationalities and in all sectors, including domestic workers, the ILO said.

In addition to the basic minimum wage, employers must ensure that workers have decent accommodation and food, it added.

Amnesty International said the minimum wage replaces a temporary minimum wage of 750 Qatari riyals set in 2017. However, some nationalities like Nepali and Filipino workers already had higher minimum wages negotiated via bilateral agreements.

Online media policy

FROM PAGE 12
Nayapaltan central office arranged by Dhaka College unit Jatiyatajadi Chhatra Dal in memory of ex-student leaders Abdul Awal Khan and Shafiu Bari Babu.

The Cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, endorsed the National Online Media Policy 2017 (Amendment 2020) incorporating some new provisions on last Monday.

As per the draft amendment to online media policy, newspapers, television channels and radio stations will require to be registered for running their online news portals.

“If the print and online content of newspapers are the same, then they won’t need approval (registration). If they bring variation (to contents) in the online versions, they’ll require approval,” said Cabinet Secretary

Khandker Anwarul Islam at a press briefing after the meeting.

Rizvi said the government has long been imposing different restrictions by enacting various laws and acts to give the “one-party Baksal rule” a final shape. “Sheikh Hasina is moving towards the one-party, one-leader and one-country and one newspaper policy of her father which has exposed through her efforts to control the media.”

He said the Prime Minister now has no alternative to controlling the media to hang onto power by hiding the misdeeds of her government and party.

The BNP leader urged the young generation to come forward and prepare for a strong struggle to get rid of the situation and “restore” democracy in the country.



People throw stones during clashes with the police after authorities tried to halt the annual Buddhist chariot procession of Rato Machindranath amid restrictions to prevent spread of coronavirus in Lalitpur, on the outskirts of Kathmandu, Nepal yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Canada, Netherlands join Gambia

FROM PAGE 12
crimes related to sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, it said.

The Gambia, with support from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), filed the case with the ICJ more than two years after some 750,000 Rohingya fled a brutal military campaign in Myanmar’s Rakhine state and joined some 300,000 others who fled earlier waves of violence in Myanmar since the 1980s.

The UN Security Council could not take any concrete actions against Myanmar because of opposition from veto powers China and Russia. Gambia filed the case, but not many countries supported it.

The ICJ in January this year issued a rule asking Myanmar to prevent any acts of genocide against the Rohingya and to preserve the evidence of atrocities. The UK welcomed the ICJ decision and European Union called on Myanmar to comply with the order.

In the statement, Canada and Netherlands said the Gambia’s application shows the discrimination and persecution of the Rohingya population in Myanmar, which created the conditions for Myanmar’s security forces to perpetrate targeted and systemic atrocities against them.

According to the Gambia’s application, Myanmar’s violations include the commission of genocide against the Rohingyas, mostly by way of the systematic and widespread

perpetration of mass murder, sexual violence, torture, forced displacement and denial of access to food and shelter.

Canada and the Netherlands lauded the Gambia’s case saying it is a step towards ending impunity for those committing atrocities in Myanmar, and called for the states party to the Genocide Convention to support the Gambia.

Welcoming the decision, the Burmese Rohingya Organization UK (BROUK) said it is a historic decision that will further the cause of justice for Rohingya victims and survivors of the 2017 genocide, and help hold those responsible for war crimes to account.

“Slowly but surely, the net is closing in on Myanmar’s leaders -- they will not get away with this genocide,” BROUK President Tun Khin said.

“In supporting the Gambia’s genocide case against Myanmar, Canada and the Netherlands are not just standing with Rohingya victims, they are standing on the right side of history,” he said urging other governments to demonstrate similar leadership by supporting the Gambia’s case.

BROUK said lasting peace and stability in Myanmar cannot be achieved in the absence of justice. Signs are evident that history is repeating itself, it said, adding that in Rakhine, the genocide against the Rohingyas is ongoing.

Rohingya civilians continue to be forced from their homes and placed

into cramped internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, cut off from the outside world and denied internet access. Across the country, Rohingyas are denied citizenship and are being denied the right to vote and compete in the upcoming parliamentary elections, Tun Khin said.

It is critical that the international community move quickly to stop the ongoing genocide against Rohingyas in Rakhine State, support independent, impartial accountability efforts, enable Rohingya enfranchisement and support a safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation process, he added.

Star staffer

FROM PAGE 12
Almighty for the salvation and eternal peace of the departed soul of Shyamal Biswas. May the Almighty give his bereaved family members the strength and courage to bear this irreparable loss.”

The Daily Star was the first newspaper in the country to opt for work from home ever since the pandemic broke out in March.

With Shyamal, at least 19 journalists and media workers have died from Covid-19 so far in the country while 11 others passed away showing symptoms, according to Our Media, Our Rights, a Facebook group operated by journalists.

More than 800 journalists and media workers are so far infected, it added.

War criminals’

FROM PAGE 12
deliberating a five-day International Criminal Law Conference being held in Milan.

FRANCE WILL GIVE \$3M AS GIFT
France will provide three million dollars as gift to Bangladesh, which will be used to finance, among others, studies of the Kurmitola International Airport and Triple Super-Phosphate factory in Chittagong. This is announced by the French Ambassador to Bangladesh Pierre Berthlot after his meeting with the Acting Prime Minister Syed Nazrul Islam in Dhaka today.

STEPS TO SUPPLY FOODSTUFF TO OUTLYING AREAS

Food Minister Phani Bhushan Majumdar says in Dhaka today that a special arrangement is being made to get food grains to outlying areas to ease the situation. He informs that a curfew is being imposed on the borders to stop smuggling. He urges the political parties and others to cooperate with the government to keep the price of foodstuff in control. SOURCES: September 5, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Positivity rate

FROM PAGE 12
With the new confirmed cases in 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday, the total number of novel coronavirus cases in the country rose to 319,686. The overall positivity rate is slightly over 20 percent.

During the same period, another 32 people died from Covid-19 in the country.

With them, the total number of deaths from the virus rose to 4,383. The death rate now stands at 1.37 percent, according to a DGHS press release.

Of all confirmed Covid-19 patients in Bangladesh, nearly 2.14 lakh have recovered till yesterday. The recovery rate is about 67 percent.

The rest of 101,323 patients are now undergoing treatment -- mostly at home. These are called active cases.

Of all active cases, only 3,798 were receiving treatment in general beds of hospitals and 316 in ICU beds.

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


Among the 32 latest deceased, 31 died at hospitals and one at home. Eight of them were females and 24 males.

Two of the deceased were aged between 41 and 50, 12 between 51 and 60, and the highest 18 were aged over 60.


Nearly half of all deceased were aged over 60. More than 48 percent of them were from Dhaka division.

In the 24-hour period till 8:30am yesterday, 613 people were placed in institutional isolation.

With them, the total number of people under institutional isolation now stands at 19,869.



বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক
ডিপার্টমেন্ট অব কমিউনিকেশন্স এন্ড পাবলিকেশন্স
প্রধান কার্যালয়
ঢাকা



২০২১ সালের দেয়াল ক্যালেন্ডার মুদ্রণের উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের ২০২১ সালের দেয়াল ক্যালেন্ডার মুদ্রণ ও বাঁধাই এবং তৎসংশ্লিষ্ট খাম মুদ্রণ ও প্রস্তুত করে সরবরাহের জন্য পূর্ব অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন দেশের স্বাভাবিক ও প্রতিষ্ঠিত এবং বৈধ ট্রেড লাইসেন্সধারী যোগ্যতাসম্পন্ন মুদ্রণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের ওয়েবসাইট (www.bb.org.bd) এ e-Tendering পদ্ধতিতে online-এ উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। এ সংক্রান্ত প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্যাদি নিম্নে বর্ণিত হলোঃ

১.	দেয়াল ক্যালেন্ডার ও খামের সাইজ, সংখ্যা এবং কাগজ	তিন রঙে ২০২১ সালের ১,৪০,৭০০ (এক লক্ষ চল্লিশ হাজার সাতশত) পিস দেয়াল ক্যালেন্ডার মুদ্রণ ও বাঁধাই এবং তৎসংশ্লিষ্ট ৪২,৪০০ (বিয়াল্লিশ হাজার চারশত) পিস খাম চার রঙে মুদ্রণ ও তৈরি। ক্যালেন্ডারের সাইজ ১৯.৫ ইঞ্চি X ১৪.৫ ইঞ্চি, খামের সাইজ ২০ ইঞ্চি X ১৫ ইঞ্চি। ক্যালেন্ডারের কাগজ ১২০ গ্রাম ডাবল ক্রাউন অফসেট (পেপার ওয়ান), খামের কাগজ ১০০ গ্রাম ডাবল ডিমায়ে অফসেট (পেপার ওয়ান)।
২.	দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের উপযুক্ততা বা যোগ্যতা	ক) দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণকারী মুদ্রণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে উন্নতমানের দেয়াল ক্যালেন্ডার মুদ্রণ ও বাঁধাই এবং তৎসংশ্লিষ্ট খাম মুদ্রণ ও প্রস্তুতের ৫ বছরের পূর্ব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে এবং ব্যক্তিমান প্রতিষ্ঠানের এরূপ মুদ্রণ কাজে অভিজ্ঞতার প্রমাণাদি উপস্থাপন করতে হবে। খ) মুদ্রণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানে উন্নতমানের মুদ্রণে সক্ষম ডাবল ক্রাউন ও ডাবল ডিমায়ে সাইজের অফসেট প্রিন্টিং মেশিনসহ কাটিং মেশিন, যথেষ্ট সংখ্যক দক্ষ জনবল, নিজস্ব বাঁধাইখানা ও নিজস্ব অটো গ্রেট মেকিং প্রেসেস মেশিন থাকতে হবে। গ) বিগত ৫ (পাঁচ) বছরের বার্ষিক গড়ে ন্যূনতম ৮৮০,০০,০০০.০০ (আশি লক্ষ) টাকা হিসেবে মোট ৪ কোটি টাকার মুদ্রণ কাজে টার্নওভার (ক্যাপিটালসের প্রমাণপত্র দিতে হবে; কার্যাদেশপত্র গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়) থাকতে হবে। ঘ) টিআইএন নম্বরসহ হালনাগাদ আয়কর সনদ, ভাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন, বৈধ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স ইত্যাদি কাগজপত্র এবং বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংক কর্তৃক ন্যূনতম ৮৪০,০০,০০০.০০ (চল্লিশ লক্ষ) টাকার আর্থিক সচ্ছলতার সার্টিফিকেট প্রদান করতে হবে। আর্থিক সচ্ছলতার সনদ দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের পরের যে কোনো তারিখের হতে হবে। ঙ) দরপত্র দলিলের টেন্ডার ডাটাশীটের অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী প্রযোজ্য হবে।
৩.	টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি	৮৮০,০০০.০০ (টাকা আশি হাজার) মাত্র (ফেরতযোগ্য)।
৪.	টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি জমা দেয়ার বিবরণ	টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি মহাব্যবস্থাপক, ঢাকাপেট্রিয়ার ম্যানেজমেন্ট ডিপার্টমেন্ট-২, বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক, প্রধান কার্যালয়, ঢাকা-১০০০ এর অনুষ্ঠলে বাংলাদেশে অবস্থিত যে কোন তফসিলি ব্যাংকের ৮৮০,০০০.০০ (আশি হাজার) টাকার ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার (ফেরতযোগ্য) স্থান করে pdf ফরমেটে online-এ প্রেরণ করতে হবে এবং মূলকপি দরপত্র খোলার (ডাউনলোড) নির্ধারিত সময়ের পূর্বে ডিপার্টমেন্ট অব কমিউনিকেশন্স এন্ড পাবলিকেশন্স (৩০ তলা উচ্চ ভবনের ২৭ তলায় পশ্চিম পার্শ্বে) এর মহাব্যবস্থাপক মহোদয়ের অফিস কক্ষে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার বাস্তব জমা প্রদান করতে হবে।
৫.	ক্যালেন্ডারের নমুনা	দেয়াল ক্যালেন্ডারের কাগজ, বাঁধাই এর রঙ (সাদা রং) ও ওয়াইয়ের তার (সাদা), খামের কাগজ ইত্যাদির নমুনা (নমুনা ক্যালেন্ডার তৈরি করে) দরপত্র খোলার নির্ধারিত সময়ের পূর্বে ডিপার্টমেন্ট অব কমিউনিকেশন্স এন্ড পাবলিকেশন্স-এ দাখিল করতে হবে।
৬.	সিডিউল প্রাপ্তি, দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলার ঠিকানা এবং সময়	বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের ওয়েবসাইট (www.bb.org.bd) এ আগামী ২৮-০৯-২০২০ তারিখ সকাল ১১.০০টা পর্যন্ত e-Tendering পদ্ধতিতে উন্মোচিত আর্থিক প্রস্তাব সংবলিত Form পূরণের মাধ্যমে online-এ দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে এবং একই তারিখ সকাল ১১.১৫টার দরদাটা অথবা তাদের প্রতিনিধির উপস্থিতিতে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) ডিপার্টমেন্ট অব কমিউনিকেশন্স এন্ড পাবলিকেশন্স (৩০ তলা উচ্চ ভবনের ২৭ তলায় পশ্চিম পার্শ্বে) এর মহাব্যবস্থাপক মহোদয়ের অফিস কক্ষে online এ প্রাপ্ত দরপত্রসমূহ উন্মুক্ত করা হবে।

প্রয়োজনে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের দরপত্র মূল্যায়ন কমিটি মুদ্রণ প্রতিষ্ঠান পরিদর্শন সাপেক্ষে মুদ্রণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের উপযুক্ততা যাচাই করবে। এক্ষেত্রে অসত্য তথ্য প্রদান করলে তাদের দরপত্র বিবেচিত হবে না। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক যে কোনো বা সকল দরপত্র কোনো প্রকার কারণ দর্শনা ব্যতিরেকে বিবেচনা কিংবা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে।

ডিসিপিঃ ৪৮/২০২০-২১৮১
তারিখঃ ০৩-০৯-২০২০

জী. এম. আবুল কালাম আজাদ
মহাব্যবস্থাপক
টেলিফোনঃ ৯৫৩০১৪১
ই-মেইলঃ abul.kalam@bb.org.bd

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

জিডি-১৩৮২

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 12
Chairman of Narayanpur union parishad, Mozibor Rahman, said BSF troops of Battalion-41 opened fire when Chhobil Uddin and his fellows went to Mantrichar in India’s Assam state during the early hours yesterday to bring cattle.

Chhobil Uddin was shot in his abdomen and died on the way to his village, he said.

He used to work as a herder for cattle traders, the chairman said.

Mamun-ur-Rashed, officer-in-charge of Kochakata Police Station, confirmed the death of Chhobil Uddin.

Contacted, Lt Col Mohammad Jamnal Hossain, commander of Border Guard Bangladesh-22, said they heard gunshot. But BGB team found no body on the border.

Covid death

FROM PAGE 12
It is followed by Indonesia with 7,616 deaths from 180,646 cases and Pakistan (6,328 deaths, 297,014 cases).

In terms of deaths, Asia is the fourth most affected region in the world, behind Latin America and the Caribbean (282,979 deaths, 7,514,473 cases), Europe (216,596 deaths, 4,049,902 cases), the United States and Canada (194,915 deaths, 6,244,459 cases).

As the race intensifies for a vaccine against the coronavirus, rich countries are rushing to place advance orders for the inevitably limited supply to guarantee their citizens get immunized first.

The US has urged states to get ready for a potential Covid-19 vaccine rollout two days before the presidential election as the pandemic has killed more than 863,000 people worldwide.

Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
PWD City Division, Dhaka
www.pwd.gov.bd

Open Sculpture Model Design Competition

Memo No. 25.36.2600.130.00.000.00/347 Date: 03.09.2020

Ministry of Liberation War Affairs in association with Public Works Department has undertaken the project “Construction of Swadhinata Stambha at Suhrawardy Udyan, Dhaka (3rd Phase)” to celebrate Silver Jubilee of the independence of Bangladesh. The 7th March Speech of Bangabandhu (Founder and Father of the Nation) and Surrender of Pakistani Army on 16th December will be represented in the form of sculpture to mark the emergence of Bangladesh as a free and prosperous nation within this monumental project. Both the sculptures competition will be national anonymous architectural design competition that will be organized by Ministry of Liberation War Affairs with the able support of Department of Sculpture, University of Dhaka.

Brief	Double-base whole body sculpture of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to represent his 7th March Speech of 1971
	& Sculpture replicating Surrender ceremony of Pakistan Army at the Ramna Race Course Ground in Dhaka (the capital of Bangladesh) on 16th December 1971
Site	Allocated plot at Suhrawardy Udyan, Dhaka
Prizes	First Prize Tk 5,00,000.00 (Taka five lac) and Certificate Second Prize Tk 3,00,000.00 (Taka three lac) and Certificate Third Prize Tk 2,00,000.00 (Taka two lac) and Certificate
Jurors	1. Tapan Kanti Ghosh, Secretary, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Chairperson 2. Md. Ashraful Alam, Chief Engineer, Public Works Department, Member 3. A.S.M. Aminur Rahman, Chief Architect, Department of Architecture, Member 4. Hamiduzzaman Khan, Professor, Department of Sculpture, University of Dhaka, Member 5. Nisar Hossain, Dean (Acting), Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka, Member 6. Mojibur Rahman, President, Sculpture Alumni Association, University of Dhaka, Member 7. Mukul Kumar Barai, Chairman, Department of Sculpture, University of Dhaka, Member
Eligibility	The Sculptor (Team Leader) must be a citizen of Bangladesh
Registration	1. Eligible Sculptor/Group of Sculptor will have to pay an amount of BDT 5000/- in cash at PWD City Division Office from 06.09.2020 – 10.09.2020 between 10:00am to 5:00pm. 2. Upon receiving the amount PWD will issue a unique registration code against the participants. 3. The Design Brief will be available both in the websites of MOLWA and PWD.
Queries	Queries will only be addressed in writing form and to the following email: ee_city@pwd.gov.bd , with ‘Q-unique registration code’ as subject.
Timeline	Registration 06.09.2020 – 10.09.2020 Receiving queries 13.09.2020 – 14.09.2020 Reply to queries 16.09.2020 Submission 04.10.2020, Sunday, 09:00am to 12:00pm at PWD Suhrawardy Udyan site office, Dhaka.
Venue	Suhrawardy Udyan, Dhaka
Contact	Mohammad Showkat Ullah Executive Engineer PWD City Division, Public Works Department, Segunbagicha, Dhaka Mobile: +8801882-115074 ee_city@pwd.gov.bd
	This advertisement also available at www.molwa.gov.bd and www.pwd.gov.bd
GD-1384	Mohammad Showkat Ullah Executive Engineer PWD City Division, Dhaka



TAEKWONDO RETURNS FIRST AFTER LONG HIATUS

Following a five-month halt to the country's sports due to the coronavirus pandemic, Taekwondo became the first discipline to make an official comeback with its poomse competition, a kind of physical demonstration, at the National Sports Council auditorium yesterday. Some 200 participants from 20 clubs and districts are competing for 36 gold medals. The youth and sports ministry last month allowed sports federations to start their activities on a limited scale while maintaining health guidelines. Other disciplines like cricket, hockey, archery and football have gradually resumed activities through training programmes.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Djokovic disagrees with Federer and Nadal

REUTERS, New York

Novak Djokovic is finding it tough to deal with issues related to his breakaway players' body in the middle of the US Open but says he is moving forward with it as more professionals join the cause daily. Djokovic resigned as head of the ATP player council last week, along with some members to form the Professional Tennis Players Association. Despite his off-court distractions, the top seed defeated Briton Kyle Edmund on Wednesday to improve his 2020 match record to 25-0.

The Serbian has described the PTPA as a platform for players to be better heard on decisions that affect their livelihoods, but the move has faced resistance from player council members Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal. Djokovic said he spoke to the duo before launching the PTPA on Saturday and disagrees that the timing was wrong.

"For a players association, it's always the right time, and it has been the right time for the last 20 years. Somehow it was never really accomplished, never really realized," he said. "Right now it is. We are moving forward."



Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam was ecstatic after dismissing Tamim Iqbal during practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday ahead of next month's Sri Lanka tour.

PHOTO: STAR

TIGERS' TEST TRIALS

The intangible importance of fielding

The Bangladesh national team is gearing up to return to international cricket with their three-Test tour of Sri Lanka in October, which will end around six months of down time in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Before the Tigers return to cricket in their weakest format, followed by the batting and bowling, The Daily Star attempts to analyse the third and arguably the most important aspect of their Test cricket -- fielding.

MAZHAR UDDIN



There is a saying about Test cricket -- when nothing's going your way while bowling, tighten up the field and put pressure on the batters and something will happen. That, however, is an area where the Tigers have been generally lacking in their 20 years of Test cricket.

With the inevitable rust that sets in because of the long gap from the game, the challenge of correcting previous mistakes on the upcoming Sri Lanka tour will be steeper than usual.

The Tigers fielding department will play a vital role that is often overlooked, but it has been an almost silent cause for worry in many occasions. Considering fitness, almost all Bangladesh cricketers can be termed fit and agile, but there have been many instances when dropped catches exacted a heavy price, changing the course of games that could have been won.

In Tests, the slip cordon arguably plays the most important role, but Bangladesh are yet to find a true specialist in those positions.

Whether it's with the new ball or with an old cherry, bowlers have to peg away at batsman for long stretches and it is imperative that slip fielders gobble up any chances that suddenly come their way due to batsman error or a great ball.

After those periods when nothing seems to happen for hours, the thick edge against the run of play is gleefully accepted by top teams like Australia, England, India or South Africa. That shifts the momentum and more importantly, lifts the morale of the bowlers.



The picture is quite the opposite for Bangladesh, who have endured more than their fair share of wicket-less periods in Test cricket. Invariably, the edge that promises to end the hardship is dropped at slip, further deflating bowlers. The likes of Soumya Sarkar, Mohammad Mithun, Nazmul Hossain Shanto and Imrul Kayes were seen in the slip cordon in recent times, but unfortunately none have gained the reputation of a solid slip fielder yet.

In New Zealand last year, dropped chances in both the ODI and Test series cost the visitors heavily on a tour where an inexperienced fast bowling department were made to look more helpless.

Apart from the lack of specialist slip

fielders, the poor approach and attitude from the fast bowlers towards fielding -- both catching and ground fielding -- has also been a big concern.

Although the Bangladesh team do have a couple of specialist close-in fielders in short leg and silly mid-off with Test skipper Mominul Haque and, more recently, rookie opener Shadman Islam doing a decent job.

Following a rather disappointing end to the 2019 ICC World Cup, Bangladesh fielding coach Ryan Cook gave a report where he focused on the areas of strength for each individual.

"One of the things we focused a lot on was the positions of the players in the areas

of strength. We did that quite well in Sri Lanka. So those were the things in those reports," Cook told reporters last year.

However, he did mention that the Tigers' catching has remained inconsistent and required a lot of work. "I think it [catching] has been inconsistent. We had some really good catches in the World Cup and during the Sri Lanka series. But catching has to be consistent. And that's where we will be focusing on in the next couple of days. From the slip fielding perspective, we want to transform players in the squad, then we decide who needs to go. The guys who are best suited to the position, will go to that position," he added.

Fielding and wicketkeeping -- another indispensable aspect in Tests -- at times have disappointed in crunch moments.

The experienced Mushfiqur Rahim, in his last Test against Zimbabwe where he scored his second double-ton, played mainly as a batsman as the team management decided to hand over the gloves to Liton Das.

Many had opined that Mushfiqur should focus on his batting more in the longest format and sacrifice his wicketkeeping for the betterment of the team, and that to some extent worked well for the Tigers.

Liton has already showed some promise behind the stumps with his swift technique and his presence in the Test side. However, keeping the long Sri Lanka tour in mind, the selectors are likely to pick three wicketkeepers. Anamul Haque, Mithun and Nurul Hasan are among the frontrunners for the third spot.



MESSI AND BARCA DEADLOCKED

A meeting between Barcelona Club president Josep Maria Bartomeu and Jorge Messi, Lionel's agent and father, ended in stalemate on Wednesday. According to reports, Jorge reiterated to Barcelona that his son would not stay at the Nou Camp. Negotiations are expected to continue so that the conflict can be resolved and Barcelona icon Lionel Messi can leave in a way that is agreeable to both parties. Another reports however suggested that Messi could now stay at Barcelona until 2021 and fulfill his current contract.

REACTIONS FROM TWO PLAYERS OF BARCA'S BITTER RIVALS

It does not concern us. He has earned the respect to decide his own future. I don't know if he is doing it in the best way. For Spanish football, for Barca and for those of us who like to beat the best... we would like him to remain. Leo makes La Liga and his team better, he makes Clasicos more beautiful because you like to win while being the best and he is one of the best in the world.

REAL MADRID CAPTAIN SERGIO RAMOS

It would be a huge loss. Like when Cristiano left. But you can't think about the past. It's football and that's it. If it happens it will be a huge loss for the prestige of the league. But we need to go forward. Other players will become stars. When Ronaldo left, the same thing happened, the life of Real Madrid went on without him and it will be the same for Barcelona and La Liga without Messi.

REAL MADRID MIDFIELDER LUKA MODRIC

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QATAR LABOUR LAW REFORM

4 lakh Bangladeshis to reap benefit

Minimum wage likely to rise by 25pc

JAMIL MAHMUD

The situations of about four lakh Bangladeshi expatriates, mainly migrant workers, in Qatar are set to improve as the Gulf country recently made some major changes to its labour laws for workers' protection.

As per the changes, there will be a rise in the minimum wage by 25 percent to 1,000 riyals (\$275) a month and workers would not be required to have the employer's permission to change jobs, according to media reports.

They are the latest in a series of labour reforms by the 2022 FIFA World Cup host, which in the lead up to the tournament has faced accusations that migrant workers are exploited, reports Reuters.

The new minimum wage, which comes into effect in six months and is 250 riyals more a month than the old one, is non-discriminatory and applies to all workers, the report added.

Amnesty International has lauded the changes and said those are "a significant step towards protecting migrant workers" and that the amendments could strike at the heart of the abusive kafala (sponsorship) system.

The global rights group, however, said full implementation of the laws remains key if the country aims to truly end labour exploitation.

"For too long, laws that ban workers from changing jobs without their employer's permission, along with widespread low pay, have left migrant



Risking lives, people crossing the Padma by launch, trawler and speedboat as ferry services were suspended on the Shimulia-Kathalbari route due to navigation problems yesterday. The photo was taken from Shimulia ghat in Munshiganj.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

COVID CASES

Positivity rate falls to 14.96pc

32 more die, 2,158 infected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The positivity rate for Covid-19 testing in the country has come down to lowest 14.96 percent in more than three months as the health directorate reported 2,158 new cases in 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday.

A total of 14,422 samples were tested across the country during the 24-hour period.

Positivity rate or detection rate is the percentage of positive cases against the total number of tests carried out in a day.

A positivity rate less than five percent means the transmission of the virus is under control.

Earlier on May 19, the positivity rate was 14.81 percent against 8,449 tests. Since then, the rate kept on rising and it reached highest 25.33 percent on July 17, according to data of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The positivity rate was hovering over 20 percent till the last quarter of August when it started to go down.

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Star staffer dies from Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shyamal Biswas, assistant officer, store of The Daily Star, died from Covid-19 yesterday. He was 53.

He passed away at the Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College Hospital around 1:30pm.

Shyamal, from Madaripur's Kalkini upazila, had developed lung infection. On August 20, he tested positive for Covid-19 and was admitted to hospital on August 23, said his son Meghnad Biswas.

He was cremated at the Postagola Cremation Grounds later in the day.

Shyamal left behind his wife, a son and a host of well-wishers to mourn his death.

In a condolence message, The Daily Star said, "Let us all pray to the



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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

War criminals' trial justified

September 4, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGLADESH ISSUE TO BE RAISED AT ARAB FM'S CONFERENCE

Three Arab countries -- Egypt, Iraq and Syria -- will place Bangladesh's point of view before the ensuing Foreign Ministers' Conference of the Arab countries commencing in Cairo from September 9, 1972. This is disclosed to Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad in Dhaka today.

The foreign minister has been able to dispel the misgivings about Bangladesh in the three Arab countries he visited. All the three countries, of which only Iraq has accorded recognition to Bangladesh, have shown their eagerness to establish relationship with Bangladesh. They have also assured their support to Bangladesh for its membership of the United Nations.

WORLD JURISTS' VIEW ON WAR CRIME TRIAL

Eminent international jurists on criminal law are of the view that since genocide had been committed in Bangladesh by the Pakistani army, the offenders are liable to be tried and punished under the international law. This consensus is found among the jurists of international repute who are now



SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Online media policy another 'black law'

Says BNP

UNB, Dhaka

The BNP yesterday described the National Online Media Policy 2017 (Amendment 2020) recently approved by the cabinet as another black law to "gag the media".

"This anti-people government has constantly been making such laws so that the opposition's voice is not heard in any way. The National Online Media Policy was endorsed for making it a law. This means TV channels and newspapers need separate registration to run their online news portals," said party senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

He said, "The main motive behind such a black law is just to suppress people's voice and regulate the media. We strongly condemn and protest this move."

Rizvi made the remarks while speaking at a doa mahfil at the BNP's

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ROHINGYA GENOCIDE CASE AT ICJ

Canada, Netherlands join Gambia in legal battle

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Canada and the Netherlands have decided to intervene in the matter of the Rohingya genocide case filed by the Gambia at International Court of Justice (ICJ) in November last year.

"Canada and the Netherlands consider it our obligation to support these efforts

which are of concern to all of humanity," said a joint statement posted on the Netherlands government website late on Wednesday.

As part of this intervention, Canada and the Netherlands will assist with the complex legal issues that are expected to arise and will pay special attention to

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PRAYER TIMING SEPTEMBER 4

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

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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Nests of babui (baya weaver) birds are spotted on a palm tree in Mahmudkathi village of Khulna's Paikgachha. The birds, which had been common in the rural area, have now become almost rare.

PHOTO: PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Covid death toll in Asia tops 100,000

India reports record 83,833 new cases

AGENCIES

Asia has registered more than 100,000 deaths linked to the coronavirus since it first emerged in December, according to an AFP tally based on official sources yesterday.

A total of 100,667 deaths have been attributed to the coronavirus in the region out of 5,420,803 officially declared cases, with 4,255,760 people considered to have recovered.

In terms of fatalities, India is the most affected country with nearly three-quarters of total deaths in the region -- 67,376 deaths from 3,853,406 cases. The country reported another record daily jump of 83,883 infections yesterday.

India has also recorded the biggest surge in the world in a week, with more than half a million new cases (up 15 percent in seven days) and more than 6,800 new deaths (up five percent).

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

Bangladeshi man shot dead by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi citizen was shot dead allegedly by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Pakhiura border in Nageshwariupazila of Kurigram early yesterday.

The deceased is Chhobil Uddin, 36, of Airmarichar village in Narayanpur union in the upazila.

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