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Gas leak behind mosque blast

Suspects fire service; death toll climbs to 20

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and SANAD SAHA, N'ganj

Death toll from Friday's explosion in the Narayanganj mosque reached 20 last night with fire officials suspecting that the incident took place due to leak in a gas pipeline that runs beneath the mosque.

The leaking pipeline might have caused gas to accumulate inside the Pashchim Talla Baitus Salam Mosque, and a spark then probably led to the explosion, leaving at least 40 people severely burnt, the officials said.

It happened around 8:45pm at the end of Esha prayers on Friday night. The ground floor of the three-story mosque in Narayanganj Sadar was badly damaged. All the victims had got trapped on that floor. Besides, six air conditioners there were found melted, they said.

The injured, admitted to Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in the capital, were not out of danger, said doctors, adding that the death toll could rise.

Worried relatives crowded the institution the entire day to see their loved ones.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed profound shock and sorrow at the loss of lives and directed the authorities concerned to ensure the best treatment to the injured.

The authorities have, meanwhile, opened

- Around 20 injured not out of danger
- Ground floor of mosque destroyed
- Six ACs found melted

an investigation into the incident.

As fire fighters began removing debris from the mosque yesterday, they found a scene of devastation with shards of sliding glass doors and window panes, spilled out wires, burnt clothes and human flesh scattered on the ground.

"The mosque room was filled with gas. The gas was seeping out from different points even after the fire," Lt Col Zillur Rahman, director (operation and maintenance) of Fire Service and Civil Defence, told The Daily Star.

Based on primary findings, he said since the all the doors and rooms were kept closed for the ACs, the room got filled with gas. Any kind of spark can cause explosion in such rooms.

Asked whether there was any short circuit, Zillur Rahman, also the chief of a four-member committee formed by the

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A boy is consoled by a family member while his mother breaks down in tears after his father Zainal died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital of burn injuries he sustained in Friday night's explosion at a mosque in Narayanganj. Residents of the area said leaky gas pipes left unfixed for weeks have caused the tragedy.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Will pray, be back soon to watch cartoon

Mother describes her six-year-old son's last words

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Ma, do not change the cartoon channel. I will go to the mosque with Baba, pray, and then come back and watch cartoons again."

Six-year-old Jubayed Farazi had told his mother Raima Begum this shortly before the explosion at the Narayanganj mosque on Friday night.

Raima did not change the channel and was waiting for her only son. But he did not return, and would never return to watch his favourite cartoons.

Jubayed was the youngest victim and among 20 people who have died so far of injuries sustained in the fire caused by Friday's explosion at Pashchim Talla Baitus Salam Mosque.

Raima said that when she learnt that there

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Finger pointed at Titas' neglect

SANAD SAHA and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

One or more leaky gas pipes left unfixed for over a month have caused Friday night's tragedy in a Narayanganj mosque, grieving residents said.

They blame Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company for not fixing the problem on time and demanding Tk 50,000 for the job.

The explosion at Pashchim Talla Baitus Salam Masjid left 20 people dead and at least 20 others praying in the mosque critically injured.

Mosque management committee members said it happened when cooking gas leaked from adjacent pipes got trapped in the mosque and ignited somehow.

"We have been noticing constant bubbling in the rain water right beside the building for the last one month," said Al-Amin, religious affairs secretary of the mosque management committee, "We could also smell the gas in the air."

There are three gas pipes around the three-storey building. One of them is partly underneath the mosque and the two others are along the sides, said the 45-year-old man, adding that there was an old riser underground on the left side of the main entrance.

People in the neighbourhood also said they first noticed the signs of a leaking gas connection nearly two months ago.

Besides, video clips of bubbles in the rainwater beside the mosque shot allegedly after the explosion went viral on Facebook.

Titas officials, however, shrugged off the responsibility,

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BHASHAN CHAR FACILITIES

Rohingya team on 'go-and-see visit'

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A team of 40 Rohingyas reached Bhashan Char in Noakhali's Hatiya upazila yesterday on a "go-and-see visit" to the island where the government has built an accommodation for one lakh Rohingyas.

Mahbub Alam Talukder, refugee rehabilitation and repatriation commissioner (RRRC), said, "Rohingya majhis [leaders] from Cox's Bazar camps went to Bhashan Char under the supervision of Bangladesh Army and Navy. They will stay there for three days before returning to Cox's Bazar on Tuesday."

Relocation of one lakh Rohingyas would begin after the monsoon season if everything went right, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Additional RRRC Mohammad Shamsuddoza

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PROBE INTO SINHA MURDER

Call recordings 'unavailable'

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The committee formed to probe the killing of retired army major Sinha Md Rashed Khan was unable to obtain the call recordings of around 30 people related to the incident and will mention it as a "limitation" of the investigation when submitting its findings to the home ministry tomorrow.

The probe body was able to get call lists of the people, including those of former Teknaf Police Station officer-in-charge Pradeep Kumar Das and sub-inspector Liakat Ali, who shot Sinha at Shamlapur check point on Marine Drive road on July 31.

However, despite having the call lists at hand, they were unable to obtain the call recordings of those people from the authorities concerned. Contacted, Mizanur Rahman, head of the probe committee formed by the home ministry, yesterday told The Daily Star that they would mention it as a "limitation" in the probe report.

"If we could get the recordings, the investigation would be better. We might have gotten something important. But we will submit the report mentioning it as a limitation," said Mizanur, who is the additional divisional commissioner (ADC) of Chattogram.

Asked, he said, "The OC has made a number of calls and also received some. An OC can talk to various people but the content of the conversations are important."

Contacted yesterday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "I am not aware of the issue. We did not interfere in the investigation. We provided support."

On Friday, ADC Mizanur told reporters in Cox's Bazar that they would submit their report on Sunday, adding that the committee members have spoken to 68 people related to the killing incident in various ways and recorded their statements. They have finalised the report unanimously

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Lt Col (retd) Abu Osman Chowdhury (1936-2020)

Another war hero leaves

RASHIDUL HASAN

Lt Col (retd) Abu Osman Chowdhury passed away yesterday morning while undergoing treatment at Combined Military Hospital in the capital. He was 85.

He was a veteran freedom fighter and the sector commander for Sector-8 that covered Kushtia, Jashore, Khulna, Barishal, Faridpur and Patuakhali region.

Lt Col (retd) Chowdhury had been suffering from old age ailments for the last few months.

He tested positive for Covid-19 and got admitted to Dhaka CMH on Sunday, said

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BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,950 New cases in 24hrs



3,23,565 Total cases



4,447 Deaths



2,17,852 Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



880,967 Deaths



26,919,806 Total cases

Tests drop, positivity rate rises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health directorate reported 1,950 new Covid-19 cases yesterday as the number of daily cases and the positivity rate increased slightly from the previous day.

The new cases were confirmed after 12,847 tests were conducted in 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday. The positivity rate stood at 15.18 percent, according to a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

In 24 hours till 8:30am on Friday, 1,929 new cases were found following 13,073 tests, putting the positivity rate at 14.76pc, shows DGHS data. It was the lowest for the last three months.

With the new cases, the total number reached 323,565, almost 20 percent of all tests conducted since January 21.

The authorities also reported 35 deaths yesterday, taking the official death toll to 4,447, which is 1.37 percent of all reported cases.

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The unsightly structure on the footpath on New Elephant Road in the capital was built in the hope of disinfecting people. Over the months, people have lost the zeal for such matters, but the structures like this still remain occupying walking spaces. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

ATTACK ON GHORAGHAT UNO Not theft gone wrong, it is pre-planned

Claims administrative cadre association; doctors say her condition improved

STAR REPORT

Condition of Dinajpur's Ghoraghat Upazila Nirbahi Officer Wahida Khanam has improved, doctors at the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospital (NINH) said yesterday.

"Her physical condition has improved. But she is not out of danger yet. We have to wait 72 hours [till Sunday night]. We will review her condition on Monday morning," Prof Zahed Hossain, member secretary of the eight-member medical board formed at the NINH for Wahida, told The Daily Star.

On Thursday night, doctors performed a surgery on Wahida's brain.

Wahida and her father Omar Ali Sheikh was critically injured in an attack by miscreants at her official residence in Ghoraghat upazila early Thursday.

Director General of Directorate General of Health Services Prof ABM Khurshid Alam and Vice Chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Prof Kanak Kanti Barua yesterday visited Wahida at the hospital.

"Wahida Khanam's level of consciousness is normal. She can recognise everyone; has talked to everyone, including her husband," Prof Zahed Hossain said during a briefing yesterday.

He informed that the right side of Wahida's body is still paralysed.

"It is difficult to say when it [paralysed side] would improve; otherwise, her condition is well," he added.

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They couldn't believe their eyes

Witnesses and family members describe the scene immediately after the explosion

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Abu Nayeem noticed an acrid smell of gas right after stepping inside Pashchim Talla Baitus Salam Mosque of Narayanganj on Friday night to say the Esha prayers. The smell became so overpowering that it made it difficult for him to stay inside for long.

"It was so suffocating that we could not breathe inside," he said.

Nayeem, a resident of Pashchim Talla, finished his prayers quickly. As he took a few steps out of the mosque around 8:35pm, he heard a loud bang.

A scene of devastation started unfolding before his eyes, such that he had never witnessed before, and the knowledge that he himself had narrowly escaped the blast.

"I couldn't believe my eyes. The worshippers were coming out screaming for water," he told The Daily Star at the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in the capital.

This newspaper talked to half a dozen witnesses who narrated the harrowing events of Friday night.

After the offered prayers, they said, a number of younger devotees had already left and the rest continued with their prayers with six air conditioning units in the mosque running.

Faisal Ahmed, son of the mosque's imam, said he left three minutes before he heard the blast.

"I initially thought that the transformer had gone off. But then I heard screams. As I ran back to the mosque, I saw the devastation.

"No one had their clothes on, they had all been burnt in the fire. There was some water in front of the mosque,

where everyone was rolling around on the ground to douse the flames. Black smoke spewed out and shrouded the entire area," he said.

"I was so shocked that I couldn't figure out what I should do," Faisal said. Fahim Hossain, a witness who also escaped the explosion, said, "It was a hellish situation. I don't know what good deeds I have done as I escaped it, despite standing just two feet outside the mosque."

Hearing the screams, local people came forward. Some splashed water on those lying on the ground groaning while others were standing around dumbfounded.

The injured devotees were sent to a nearby hospital by CNG auto-rickshaws and other vehicles.

Many of them were so badly burnt that locals could not initially recognise them.

Rubi Aktar had been looking for her husband in the clogged water in front of the mosque after the explosion.

She looked at all the victims lying there one by one but could not identify her husband.

"People were rolling around in the standing water. Bodies were burnt in such a way that I could not recognise my husband," she said, wailing in front of the operation theatre of the burn unit on Friday night.

"I am yet to see my husband and yet to know about his condition," she said, with a blank look on her face.

Rahela Khatun, wife of Imam Hossain, an RMG worker, said, "Suddenly, I saw my husband screaming. 'Save me!' he kept screaming. He came out of the mosque and ran to the house. Then we came here."

Call recordings

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after scrutinising the information given by those people.

"The report will be submitted to the home ministry on September 7 [tomorrow]. The report will show why the incident took place and who are responsible for it," he added.

He further said there would be recommendations in the report so that such incidents do not recur in the future.

A murder case was filed in this connection and it is currently under trial, he said, adding that the investigation officer of the case is also working on it.

The court will decide who is guilty of the murder, he said.

Only the court has the jurisdiction to convict the responsible persons and sentence them to jail, he added.

The court can use the probe report if it thinks it is necessary, the probe body chief said.

The home ministry's public security division formed the probe committee on August 2.

Three other members of the committee are Shahjahan Ali, additional district magistrate of Cox's Bazar, Lt Col SM Sazzad Hossain, representative of the armed forces division of Bangladesh Army, and Zakir Hossain Khan, additional deputy inspector general of Chattogram range.

Will pray, be back soon

FROM PAGE 1
was a fire at the mosque they had gone to, she immediately ran over there. What awaited her was the mosque in rubble, but her husband and son were nowhere to be seen.

After first going to a local hospital, she rushed over to Dhaka to the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

It was her son she spotted first -- charred beyond recognition.

"My son called out to me. He said 'Ma' over and over again. He wanted some water but I could only offer him a sip of water... my baby died in agony," she said, sitting on a chair at the hospital reception area.

Her husband Zulhas Farazi, a garment worker, is fighting for his life at the hospital. Zulhas does not yet know about his son's death.

"How can I tell him? Everything is over for us," Raima, also a garment worker, told The Daily Star.

Raima said Zubaid used to live in his grandparents' house in Patuakhali and they only brought him to live with them around a month ago to prepare him for school next year.

"All my dreams have been destroyed," she lamented.

Yards away, relatives were trying to console Anwar Hossain, a rickshaw puller, whose eldest son Rifat, an HSC student at a Narayanganj college, died of his injuries at the fire yesterday.

"I peddled a rickshaw day and night, toiled so that he could study... but I could not even talk to my son for the last time," said Anwar.

"Whom should I blame for my fate? My son wanted to take care of us as we grew old. But now he has left us all," he said.

Like Anwar, relatives of the fire victims were seen weeping at the reception and outside the hospital yesterday.



A woman grieves while her family members try in vain to calm her after her six-year-old son was pronounced dead at Dhaka Medical College Hospital of burn injuries he sustained in Friday night's explosion.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



The ground floor of the mosque in Narayanganj's Talla area is littered with warped blades of ceiling fans, charred remains of human flesh and prayer rugs, shards of glass and debris. At least 20 people have died in Friday's explosion there.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Gas leak behind mosque blast

FROM PAGE 1

fire service to probe the incident, said they found an electric switchboard burnt. "But it's not possible to say anything clearly now."

Replying to another query, he said, "Had any AC exploded, there would have been a black spot on the wall. But we didn't see any such black spots. It seems the plastic body of the ACs was burnt in fire," he said.

"We need a couple of days more to ascertain the actual reason for the fire," he added.

Echoing a similar view, Rahmatullah Chowdhury, in-charge of Bomb Disposal Unit of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC), said the entire ground floor turned into a "gas chamber" due to accumulation of gas leaked from the gas line.

The gas could not leave as the windows were closed for the ACs, he said after visiting the spot. He also said methane gas from nearby drains had gathered there.

Rahmatullah said a power outage had occurred before the incident and a spark on a switchboard after electricity was restored caused the explosion.

Md Al-Amin, religion affairs secretary of the mosque committee, said the second floor was under construction. The building had two electricity connections for uninterrupted power supply.

As power went out on Friday night, muezzin Delowar Hossain switched on the second line. As he switched on the first one after the previous

connection was restored suddenly, there was a spark on the switch board and then a loud bang, Al-Amin said.

Aminul Islam, a job-seeker who has been living in a room on the second floor for nearly a month, said he rushed down hearing a bang around 8:45pm.

"I saw people burning inside the room. They were trying to get out but many of them collapsed," he said.

He said he got injured while helping some victims come out. At that time, some jumped in water accumulated on the road outside the mosque.

Fire officials said a fire engine rushed to the spot on information and brought the fire under control within 10 minutes.

Contacted, Mofizul Islam, deputy manager of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited in Narayanganj, said, "All our connections are legal. If there is any line under the mosque, then it was put there before there was any mosque. If anyone builds anything on our supply lines, it is illegal. The mosque authorities never informed us anything about it."

PROBE BODIES
Apart from the fire service, the district administration and Titas formed separate committees to investigate the incident.

A five-member probe body was formed with district magistrate Khadiza Tahera Boby as chief. It has been asked to submit a report within five working days, said Narayanganj

Deputy Commissioner Jasim Uddin. Meanwhile, the DC office announced that it would give Tk 20,000 for burial of each victim and Tk 10,000 for each survivor's treatment.

Titas also formed a five-member probe body headed by Abdul Wahab Talukder, general manager (planning). It was asked to submit its report within five working days.

Dhaka Power Distribution Company was also investigating. CASE FILED FOR NEGLIGENCE
Police have already filed a case with Fatullah Police Station for negligence over the incident.

Mohammad Zaidul Alam, superintendent of police in Narayanganj, however, said the incident still seemed to be an accident.

Police are now working closely with the probe bodies and they will take action if any incident of negligence is found against anyone, he said.

THE DECEASED
Twenty people died of their injuries as of filing the report at 9:00pm last night.

Thirteen of the deceased have been identified as Rashed (30), Rifat (18), Mostafa Kamal (34), Zubair (18), Sabbir (21), Kuddus Bepari (72), Delwar Hossain (48), Zunayed (17), Humayun Kabir (70), Ibrahim (43), Jamal (40), Joynal (38) and Mainuddin (12).

The rest are not out of danger, said Dr Samanta Lal Sen, coordinator of the burn unit.

Finger pointed at Titas' neglect

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saying no one made an official complaint about the leakage.

Mosque management committee secretary Abdul Hamza Saud, now fighting for life at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, went to the Titas office about 20 days ago to inform them about the problem, said committee president Abdul Gafur.

Titas officials asked for Tk 50,000. "We have been collecting the money, but it happened before that," Gafur told The Daily Star.

Had the Titas given priority to the matter, the accident might not have happened, he said, "And our brothers wouldn't have to die."

Contacted, Sirajul Islam, manager of at Titas office in Fatulla area, said, "No one came to me, my subordinates or superiors to complain about the leakage."

Mofizul Islam, deputy general manager of Titas in Narayanganj, said a probe committee has been formed to look into the matter. "It is not appropriate to talk before the probe is done."

About the video clip, he said, "Yes, I've seen it too. But, without digging

we can't say for sure the reason behind the explosion. After the probe, we will know what had actually happened."

The mosque was established on four decimals of land donated by a charity in 1990.

The three-storey building was constructed in 2000. The top floor is being developed while the first two floors are used for saying prayers. There are narrow alleys around the building.

Inside, there were warped blades of ceiling fans, charred remains of human flesh and prayer rugs, shards of glass and debris all over the floor.

Prof Mohammad Tamim of the Department of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering at Buet said "What could I understand from the incident is that gas trapped inside the mosque led to the explosion."

"Gas is lighter than wind and its nature is to go up. When gas is leaked in an open space, an explosion does not happen. There might be fire, but not an explosion," he said.

Meanwhile, Titas Deputy General Manager Mofizul Islam added that his company does not take connection lines underneath any private property.

"People often take connections underneath their temporary structures. But before construction of the building, it is their duty to inform Titas and request us to move the lines," he said.

Asked about the riser underground, the official said, "It can happen only when people do earth-filling to elevate a property's ground level. But it is very rare," he said.

COMMITTEES FORMED
Three probe committees have formed.

Deputy Commissioner of Narayanganj formed a committee whereas Fire Service and Civil Defence and Titas formed the two others.

Deputy Commissioner of Narayanganj Jasim Uddin said they formed a five-member committee headed by additional deputy commissioner Khadiza Tahera Boby.

The committee was asked to submit a report in five working days.

Titas has formed a committee led by its general manager of Dhaka office Abdul Wahab.

Fire Service Director (Operations) Lt Col Zillur Rahman is convener of the other committee.

Not theft gone wrong, its pre-planned

FROM PAGE 1

Before them, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam also visited the UNO, according to NINH officials.

Wahida's father Omar Ali, who came under attack while trying to save his daughter, is undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital. Wahida's brother Sheikh Farid Uddin told this newspaper that his father Omar Ali Sheikh has lost control over his legs.

Three people have been arrested in connection with the attack so far. They are: Nabirul Islam, Shantu Kumar and Asadul Haque. Of them, Asadul was a member of Ghoraghat Pouru Jubo League.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Administrative Service Association (BASA) yesterday claimed that the hammer attack on Wahida was pre-planned.

In a press conference at BIAM Auditorium, BASA president Helal Uddin Ahmed, also the senior secretary of the Local Government Division, demanded further investigation into the attack.

He said an observation committee led by Rangpur range divisional commissioner has already been formed to maintain communication with the investigating team.

"Some people are spreading rumours that it was an attempted theft gone wrong. We think it is a propaganda. The

miscreants did not steal anything. Even, her [Wahida] mobile phone was found on the bed," he said.

"We think many others are involved in the incident," Helal said, adding that people who failed to secure undue benefits from Wahida might be involved in the attack.

In response to a question, BASA's General Secretary Shaikh Yusuf Harun said Wahida carried out eviction drives against illegal extraction of sands from a Balu Mohal (sand field). It might have upset someone involved in the attack.

Meanwhile, talking to The Daily Star, different government officials working in Dinajpur said they had been facing tremendous pressure while performing duties due to the reckless attitudes of the ruling AL men.

The party men are involved in multiple offences, including tender manipulation, taking control of the lease of local rural markets and ponds, land grabbing and illegal sand lifting.

Such an attack has spread a sense of fear among the UNOs and other government officials in Dinajpur.

A gang of miscreants has allegedly been operating in Ghoraghat under the aegis of a top AL leader.

Locals said Jahangir Alam, Jubo League convener of Ghoraghat Unit, Masud Rana, president of the Shingra Union Jubo League in Ghoraghat, and Moinul Master, president of Palsha Union AL, have been using their

influence to make a quick buck.

Rab detained six people, including Jahangir and Masud, after the incident.

The two have been released after interrogation.

Even AL lawmaker of Dinajpur-6 Shibli Sadik and the district unit Jubo League President Rashed Parvez expressed disappointment over their activities.

Locals said UNO Wahida was supposed to conduct a mobile court drive to demolish several illegal structures at Dugdugi Bazar in the upazila on Thursday morning. But she was attacked a few hours before.

The land of Dugdugi Bazar was leased out to Moinul Master. But he illegally built structures on it and sold them to several people, locals said.

Meanwhile, Rab handed over Nabirul Islam and Santu Das to police on Friday night.

Police placed the two before the court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Shishir Kumar Basu with a 10-day remand prayer.

The court granted seven days of remand for each of them.

Meanwhile, the case filed over the attack on UNO Wahida has been transferred to Detective Branch (DB) of Police in Dinajpur.

Imam Jafar, Inspector of DB in Dinajpur, has been made the new investigation officer of the case.

Sudan declares 3-month state of emergency after record floods

AFP, Khartoum

Sudan yesterday declared a three-month national state of emergency after record-breaking torrential floods that cost 99 lives.

"A nationwide three-month state of emergency has been announced as Sudan is considered a natural disaster zone," the interior ministry said on social media.

Floods caused by more than a month of heavy rains have killed 99 people, injured 46 and left 100,000 damaged properties in their wake, one of the worst natural disasters in decades, according to state news agency SUNA.

Rohingya team

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Noyon said the 40 Rohingyas from 34 Rohingya camps were mobilised at a transit camp at Kutupalong of Ukhiya on Friday night.

In the morning yesterday, they were taken to Chattogram from where they were moved to Bhashan Char on a Bangladesh Navy ship, reports our Cox's Bazar correspondent, quoting the additional RRRC as saying.

Shamsuddoza said the trip was part of a motivational programme.

The government has built 120 cluster villages on the 40 sq km island under a Tk 2,312 crore housing project for one lakh out of the nearly 1 million Rohingyas sheltered in cramped camps in Cox's Bazar.

Government officials said the houses have been built four feet above the ground with concrete blocks and are protected by a 13-km-long flood embankment. There are also 120 cyclone shelters, which are planned to be used as schools, medical centres and community centres.

The officials also said there are large swathes of land that could be used for rearing livestock and farming fish if the Rohingyas were relocated there. The refugees in Cox's Bazar camps have a very little work to do now.

The UN and aid agencies have been insisting that the island was isolated, flood-prone and would be hazardous for Rohingyas because of cyclones and tidal surges.

Against such a backdrop, a government delegation visited the housing project on February 13 and considered shelving the idea of relocation.

Speaking to The Daily Star, State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Md Enamur Rahman had said the government would face difficulties in arranging food, healthcare and other necessary services for one lakh people in Bhashan Char without cooperation from those organisations.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen had said if the Rohingyas were shifted to Bhashan Char, they might not agree to leave the place in future. Thus, the government was focusing on Rohingya repatriation, not relocation.

In a reverse of the plan, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen at a webinar on August 24 said the 306 Rohingyas rescued from the Bay of Bengal and sheltered in Bhashan Char were doing well. He also hinted at the "go-and-see visit" by the Rohingyas.

"If they find the place better than the cramped camps in Cox's bazar, we expect to start the initial transfer of Rohingyas there after the Monsoon season," he added.

Meanwhile, the UNHCR yesterday said it is aware of the "go-and-see visit" to Bhashan Char. It is an important part of ensuring refugees can make an informed choice about voluntary relocation to the island, the UN agency said.

"The safety and protection of refugees are the most important considerations," said Mostafa Mohammad Sazzad Hossain, assistant communication officer at the UNHCR Bangladesh.

He said the UN stresses on thorough protection and technical assessments before any relocation to Bhashan Char. He said they have informed the Bangladesh government that the UNHCR would be prepared to undertake a visit to Bhashan Char to assess the accommodation and protection mechanism of the refugees.

"We are awaiting feedback [from the government]. Several months have passed since a group of refugees were transferred to Bhashan Char, and it is now urgent for the UN to have access to them," Sazzad said.

Tests drop

FROM PAGE 1

Ten of the victims were female. One of them died at home, the others at hospitals, shows DGHS data.

Three of the deceased were aged between 31 and 40, two between 41 and 50, five between 51 and 60. The rest 25 were over 60.

A total of 3,839 patients were admitted to the hospitals' general section while 318 to ICUs in the Covid-19 dedicated hospitals across the country in the 24 hours, according to the DGHS press release.

As many as 1,661 Covid-19 patients recovered in the 24-hour period, taking the total number of recovery cases to 217,852, which is more than 67 percent of all reported cases.

CRP WEBINAR

Raise awareness on spinal cord injury: experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a discussion have stressed the need for raising awareness on Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) and supporting the persons with SCI.

Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) arranged the webinar on Friday, titled "Covid-19 and Spinal Cord Injury: Staying Well", marking fifth World Spinal Cord Injury Day.

Valerie Ann Taylor, founder and coordinator of CRP; Shafiq-ul Islam, executive director, CRP; Prof Dr Fazlul Haque, orthopedic and spine surgeon; Julian Francis, developmental consultant; Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star; and Asif Iqbal Chowdhury, a social worker and former patient of CRP spoke at the discussion.

In her speech, Valerie Taylor focused on the emerging necessity to raise awareness on SCI and supporting them physically and economically.

Shafiq-ul Islam described how CRP continued services in the Covid-19 pandemic and urged other hospitals and centres to continue rehabilitation services following CRP's model.

Dr Fazlul Haque termed CRP a

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Sporting activities ground to a halt and a sheer lack of maintenance during monsoon has resulted in the Chattogram outer stadium field in the city's Kazir Dewri area, just outside the MA Aziz Stadium, looking more like a paddy seedbed than a playground. Set aside the eyesore factor, this large "waterbody" appears to be a perfect breeding ground for mosquito as well. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

A mother's prayer, gone unanswered

Heartbreaking scenes at hospital on the night of N'ganj mosque blast

MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

The gate to the emergency unit of Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery was packed with relatives of Narayanganj mosque blast victims, journalists and curious onlookers on Friday night.

Normally the gate remains open round the clock, but due to influx of people following the blast, Ansar members on duty restricted entry for everyone except patients and healthcare professionals.

It was around 11:20pm when this reporter managed to enter the 18-storey health facility, purpose-built for burn patients, and the first thing that struck the eye was bloodstains all over the white-tiled floor.

Attending doctors and nurses were treating three burn victims in the emergency room -- bandaging the wound and giving other primary treatment before the patients were taken to the fifth floor.

The healthcare professionals' gait -- practically running across the room -- bore testament to the urgency of the situation.

A ward attendant was seen pushing a victim on a stretcher, mobbed by relatives of the patient. Hapless wails filled the air as they tried to help the attendant push the stretcher faster.

However, the pandemonium on the ground floor was only a small sign of what was happening on the fifth floor, where all 37 burn victims of the Narayanganj mosque blast were kept in a ward.

Anxious relatives were gathered in a room -- some of them weeping, others praying for their loved ones.

Some of them had blood on their shirts or panjabis. Most were barefoot, with mud on their feet telling of the mad rush to the hospital.

The moment this reporter entered the ward, it was like being hit by a wall -- with a bone-chilling collective scream of patients in intolerable agony.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PARTIALLY-HYDROGENATED OILS

Trans fat level in 'dalda' way too high: report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 92 percent of Partially-Hydrogenated Oils (PHO) sampled in Dhaka city contained trans-fatty acid (TFA) levels above the 2 percent limit set by the World Health Organization, said a new research report.

PHO is popularly known as dalda or banaspati ghee in Bangladesh.

The research found some samples even showed high concentration of TFA -- 20.9g per 100 grammes -- which is more than 10 times the WHO-set threshold.

Researchers from the National Heart Foundation Hospital and Research Institute (NHFHRI) have found such concerning results after analysing samples from leading PHO brands.

Consumption of excessive TFA is strongly associated with increased risk of severe coronary heart disease, death from

heart disease, dementia and cognitive impairment, said a press release.

Findings of the report "Assessment of Trans Fat in PHOs in Bangladesh" were shared at a press conference jointly organised by NHFHRI, Consumers Association of Bangladesh and Progress for Knowledge (Progga) at Jatiya Press Club yesterday, the release said.

Researchers urged the government for taking effective steps to limit TFA levels recommended by WHO.

They suggested that the government consider some measures like mandating TFA levels to be listed on prepackaged items' nutrition facts panels.

The research demonstrates there are products in Bangladesh that contain "dangerous levels" of TFA and poses increased risks of heart disease and deaths

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

INT'L ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Bangladeshi youths shine the brightest

Hold pole position among 174 countries for five weeks

RASHIDUL HASAN

Bangladesh has ranked number one among 174 participating countries over the last 5 weeks at FIRST Global Challenge (FGC), an international robotics competition, held annually for high school students.

Team Bangladesh has to hold on to the position for five more weeks to become the winner of FGC 2020.

FGC is the largest robotics competition for high schoolers. It aims to inspire the youth of the world to pursue STEM education and facilitate learning. Every year, youths from around the world come together to FGC to express their ignited passion for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Last year in Dubai, Bangladesh ranked number seven in the competition. This year however, due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, the competition is being held online.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Sushanta Kumal Paul's family members contribute to creating and painting these traditional pots. Theirs is one of the few families still working to keep this art alive.

PHOTO COURTESY: PASHE ACHHI INITIATIVE

Too much of a good thing?

With hilsa flooding Barishal markets, traders demand storage facilities, export opportunities as price too low

SUSHANTA GHOSH

This was supposed to be a good year for hilsa traders and anglers of Barishal. Ever since the beginning of the season, a record number of the fish are being netted. Now that it's time for the peak season, much to everyone's delight, large sized hilsas are also flooding the local markets.

There is, however, one downside -- the price is much lower compared to previous years. While this is good news for buyers, who have never had the opportunity to buy such large hilsas at such a low price, but it's slowly becoming a cause for concern for traders.

To get themselves out of this pickle, they're now demanding they be allowed to export the fish.

Nirab Hossain Tutul, president of Barishal Aratdar Samitee, said around 3,000 maunds of hilsa are coming to the market every day. This is greater than the demand



A trader sprinkles ice chips on a heap of hilsa to keep them fresh, at Barishal city's Port Road wholesale market.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

in the domestic market, which is causing prices to fall, resulting in traders not getting to sell at fair margins.

What adds to their woes is that there is no system or facilities, such

as cold storage, to preserve the fish. In such circumstances, Tutul thinks exporting, even if on a limited scale, could be the way to go.

Last year, around 350 tonnes of hilsa was exported from here, he

told this correspondent.

After visiting the Port Road hilsa wholesale market yesterday -- one of the biggest hilsa hubs in the division -- this correspondent found an average hilsa weighing around 900 to 1500 grammes.

This is a stark increase from previous years. Anglers said most of the bigger hilsa are being caught from the south side of the Bay of Bengal.

At the Port Road market, the fish are priced according to size. For a hilsa over one kilogramme, the price is set at Tk 1,000 per kg. For a 600-900 gramme fish, it's Tk 800 per kg, while the price is Tk 300 per kg for hilsa below 500 grammes.

"This is at least a 30 percent decline on previous years' prices," said Ujjal, a trader at the market.

Hilsa trader Ajit Kumar Das said the supply of fish has suddenly increased three to four times.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

'Matir Gaan' stands by folk artistes amid pandemic

TOGGLE DESK

The corona pandemic has taken a toll on the livelihoods of people from all spheres. Artists are no exception to this, especially those based in remote, rural areas of the country. Many folk artists and musicians were left with no income sources after the lockdown was imposed, as a major portion of their income would come from local gigs and programmes.

To address this issue and support the artists, Pashe Achhi Initiative, a relief and aid programme, launched Matir Gaan. This new fundraiser campaign aims to support folk artists in remote areas during the pandemic.

The works of the contemporary rural folk-artists are not quite known in the urban scene. This initiative can not only support rural artists in need but can also leave an impact on the bigger cause of spreading folk music among the urban audience.

"The idea was to connect these artists with folk music lovers in urban areas. We plan to raise funds for singers individually and upload one performance video of each artist that we work with. We want

to introduce people in city areas to folk music and encourage them to patron rural artistes' works through donations," said Rafiul Mahmud Chowdhury, co-founder of Pashe Achhi Initiative.

"Logistical and technical challenges in reaching out to artists and recording their performances remains a big challenge. It's difficult to access even average quality recording equipment sometimes, but we are trying our best to come up with solutions. For now, we are using our own resources to reach the artistes and record their performances," Rafiul explained.

"If people continue to donate, then we want to make a call for volunteers across the country to reach the artistes," he added.

The initiative has already released one performance video of folk artiste Humayun Kabir from Narsingdi on their Facebook page "Matir Gaan".

"The response has been great so far. If a donor wants to keep the music as a memento, we will send them the file via email. We don't want to term this as charity work -- the aim is to connect the artistes with folk music lovers," said Rafiul.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Ban veterinary drugs harmful to vultures

Urge speakers at webinar marking International Vulture Awareness Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should immediately ban veterinary drugs such as ketoprofen as they are killing these scavenging birds of prey, which play a critical role in maintaining the ecosystem, said speakers at a webinar yesterday.

The event was organised on the occasion of "International Vulture Awareness Day", observed worldwide yesterday.

The forest department and IUCN Bangladesh jointly organised the webinar, which was broadcast live from IUCN Asia Facebook page.

The speakers said vultures play a critical role in maintaining the ecosystem's health by controlling spread of diseases.

Vultures eat rapidly and feed in large groups which allows them to consume carrion (decaying flesh of dead animals) quickly. This reduces the risk of disease spread from flies or bacteria, they added.

Unfortunately, over 99.9 percent of vultures of South Asia have disappeared over the past couple of decades. Bangladesh's vulture population has been similarly affected with only 260 resident vultures left.

According to IUCN, recent surveys have showed that Ketoprofen, a veterinary painkiller, is present in significant amount in the market. Any vulture feeding on a cattle carcass containing it is bound to die. Veterinary painkilling drugs have been the sole reason for the unprecedented vulture tragedy of South Asia.

Speaking as the chief guest, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Shahab Uddin said vultures are vanishing due to the use of harmful drugs (diclofenac and ketoprofen).

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



With the sweltering heat and suffocating humidity that the Bangla month of Bhadra brings, it would be almost instinctive for anyone with access to a fairly clean waterbody to jump in and cool off. Thankfully, the Buriganga seems to have regained some of its past life, possibly due to the pandemic-induced industrial shutdown for a few months. The photo was taken yesterday from Kamrangir Char in the capital.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

FEMALE MIGRANT WORKERS
10,430 returnees to get assistance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 10,430 returnee female migrant workers -- many of whom came home after their jobs abroad amid the coronavirus pandemic -- are going to receive various supports to get their lives back on track, including emergency food, health and hygiene products, and skill training in 10 districts.

UN Women, Expatriates' Welfare Ministry, and Unilever jointly launched the project at the capital's Bangladesh-Korea Technical Training Centre conference room yesterday, said a press release. About 50,000 people are expected to benefit from the project.

Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra and Badabon Sangho will implement the project in Dhaka, Manikganj, Narsingdi, Rajbari, Jashore, Bagerhat, Sylhet, Habiganj, Patuakhali and Jamalpur, said the document.

The project will be funded by UN Women, the Government of Japan and Unilever Bangladesh.

Women migrant workers who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic are facing a variety of challenges while starting over in their home country. Lack of food and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Brac University continues to waive all non-tuition fees for Covid-hit students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac University would continue to waive all non-tuition fees for upcoming fall semester to students who have been particularly affected by the coronavirus crisis.

The university authorities in a statement yesterday said that Vice-Chancellor Professor Vincent Chang launched in May the Student Assistant Fund (SAF) for the summer semester 2020 to ease students' financial burdens.

Initially, Tk 15 crore was committed for the fund in the summer. That sum was adjusted to Tk 23 crore. Every student received full non-tuition fee waivers and 10 percent tuition scholarships. Some received more than 10 percent and up to 100 percent.

Now, as the fall semester is approaching, the pandemic remains a challenge. Super cyclone Amphan and the flooding in July added to the situation. Prof Chang, therefore, decided again to pool various funds to keep SAF running, although the university itself has faced very tight financial constraints, said the statement.

The components of the SAF for the upcoming fall semester will be similar to those for the summer semester: Every student will receive full non-tuition fee waivers and 10 percent tuition scholarships. Some may receive more than 10 percent in the form of additional help.

In June, Brac University introduced online learning platform buX, to provide the students with an in-house learning platform.

"Our students are our top priority. buX is the heart of 'Brac University X', our new virtual campus. It shall enrich remote learning and be assessable to all students. It is our intent that with SAF and buX, we leave no one behind," said Prof Chang.



A roadside bazar set up at Sreepur Bus Stand area in Savar's Nabinagar is becoming a cause for concern, as vehicles take to the street following the end of the lockdown. The makeshift market takes up half of a lane, constricting space for vehicular movement.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

'Char Ronger Basha' premiered

CITY DESK

HerStory Foundation and Cholpori recently premiered "Char Ronger Basha", a short stop-motion animation depicting Bangabandhu's visions for the founding principles of Bangladesh.

Created to celebrate Mujib Borsho for the EDTech Startup platform -- a collaboration of the ICT Division and Education Ministry -- the content was uploaded from HerStory's Facebook page last week. The video has already attracted over 3.5 million people, said a press release.

The animation was premiered on August 21, on a live-streamed webinar, inaugurated by Minister of

Education Dr Dipu Moni.

The programme was also attended by Barrister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury, MP, Deputy Minister of Education; Asaduzzaman Noor, MP; Dr Mashiur Rahman, Economic Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister; Professor Nasreen Ahmad, Former Pro-V, Dhaka University; NM Zeaul Alam PAA, Senior Secretary, ICT Division; and Tina F Jabeen, Managing Director, Startup Bangladesh Ltd.

Produced by Cholpori and HerStory Foundation, it was created by Opopogo Studios and Kazi House Productions, the animation was by Amit Ashraf and Saiq'a S Chowdhury.

'Was tortured into confessing husband's murder'

Woman accuses Barishal police; new details emerge in deed writer killing case

SUSHANTA GHOSH

A woman who has been accused in her husband's murder case has accused Barishal Metropolitan Police members of torture and molestation in custody, and forcing her to confess as an accomplice to the murder.

She submitted this accusation against BMP personnel to the district police commissioner, and demanded withdrawal of her confessional statement.

She also sought punishment for the police officers who tortured her.

On the morning of April 19, 2019, deed writer Rijaz Hawlader was killed using a sharp weapon at his home in Bukhainagar village. His wife Amina Akhtar Liza was arrested after the deceased's brother Ripon filed a case against unknown miscreants at Kotwali police station.

Liza confessed the next day at metropolitan court that she had an affair with Rijaz's assistant Masum and they had planned to loot her husband's money after murdering him.

Meanwhile, a man named Jalil

Shikder of Raghunathpur village in Bakerganj Upazila of Barishal was arrested in August 14 this year in Rijaz's murder case.

Following his confession, two others named Raihan Chowkidar (20) and Sakil Hawlader (20) were arrested in the same upazila on charges of theft and murder.

The duo gave confessional statement in the Barisal Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on August 28, said Sagir Hossain, investigative officer (IO) and inspector of the Kawnia Police Station.

Inspector Sagir mentioned that Liza had said that she had mixed sleeping pills in her husband's glass of milk, and later Masum killed Rijaz with a sharp weapon. However, a forensic report by the CID found no traces of sleeping pills in the milk.

Upon finding this discrepancy, senior police officers assigned Kotwali police station's sub-inspector Firoz Al Mamun to investigate the matter, but he could not find any clues.

"The case was finally handed over to me on February 23 [this year]," said

Sagir Hossain, "

Nayem Hossain Babu, another person who was arrested in the case soon after Liza, was also released on bail alongside Liza in February.

"I spoke with them and began tracking the case. I was eventually able to arrest Jalil and his accomplices. The deceased Rijaz's mobile phone was recovered from Jalil's sister. Other information also became available through these developments," said Inspector Sagir.

"A charge sheet will be submitted soon. This is a sensitive case. However, the motive of the murder was to grab Rijaz's money," he added.

Amina Akhtar Liza told The Daily Star, "I was in the next room when my husband was killed. But the police did not listen to any reason. I was arrested and beaten mercilessly by a police officer called Bashir and some other members of the force."

"They threw water in my face, squeezed and hurt my limbs, and at one point, Bashir molested me. I was forced to sign a confession after this torture as they threatened to also go

after my mother and brother. SI Bashir and Firoz took money from them. I was two weeks pregnant when I was tortured," said Liza.

"I was granted bail by High Court in February and I lodged a written complaint to the police commissioner. I will appeal to the court on September 8 to withdraw my confession. I want punishment for those who tortured me inhumanly," she said.

Md Bashiruddin, sub-inspector of Kotwali police station and first IO said to this newspaper, "This is a matter of court and the arrested woman confessed."

He, however, denied allegations on torturing her.

Meanwhile, plaintiff Ripon thinks this was all a blueprint to save the real murderers.

Police Commissioner of BMP Md Shahabuddin Khan said the case has been handed over to a competent officer for further investigation.

"It will be clear whether there was any torture after the report is filed and action will be taken if the accusation is found true," he said.

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 3

"Team Bangladesh has maintained a steady 1st ranking for the past 5 weeks as of the 2nd of September, 2020," Shams Jaber, mentor of Team Bangladesh, said in a release.

FIRST Global Challenge is often referred to as the high school equivalent to the robot Olympics, with participation from almost all the countries.

Bangladesh has been participating in the FIRST Global Challenge since its inception in 2017, reads the release.

Team Bangladesh has been on a journey to the top ranks of the challenge, from being in the first hundreds to ranking 7th among 190 countries in the 2019 FIRST Global Challenge, hosted in Dubai.

Every year, young people passionate about STEM are given a challenge that is intended to solve some of the greatest challenges the earth and its people face, including the 14 Grand Challenges for Engineering, the release added.

In 2019, the challenge was Ocean Opportunities, to highlight the threat that pollution brings to the earth's oceans. Team Bangladesh came out of the tournament as quarter-finalists.

This year, Team Bangladesh comprises of Sujoy Mahmud (17) from Mangrove School; Razeen Ali (18) from Sir John Wilson School; Mahi Zarif (16) from International Hope School; Shahrear Shemanto (16) from DPS STS; Abrar Jawad (15) from Bangladesh International School and College; Aymaan Rahman (15) from Bangladesh International School and College; Bianca Hassan (19) from Dhanmondi Tutorial; Zahraa Chowdhury (14) from Sunbeams; Areebah Anwar (14) from South Breeze; and Fairooz Hafiz Farin (18) from Mastermind -- with chief mentor Shams Jaber, technical mentor Shoaib Mirza and Fardin Ananta as assistant mentor.

The theme for 2020 is connecting communities. Therefore, the challenges aim to integrate social, cultural elements with the creativity and innovation behind STEM, making it more comprehensive.

Ban veterinary

FROM PAGE 3

"We have banned diclofenac but ketoprofen is still being produced," he added.

Ziaul Hasan, secretary to the ministry, said, "The government banned ketoprofen in two 'vulture zones'. As a result, its production decreased by 10 percent. We will take more steps to reduce its usage after discussing with all the stakeholders."

"The present government is providing all necessary helps to save our nature and environment," he mentioned.

Billal Hossain, additional secretary to the ministry, and chair of Bangladesh Vulture National Recovery Committee, said there are almost 10-15 pharmaceutical companies producing meloxicam as an alternative to diclofenac.

"If they can produce sufficient meloxicam and supply it throughout the country, it will be easier to ban ketoprofen," he said.

Enam-Ul-Haque, founder of Bangladesh Bird Club, said, "We should stop using ketoprofen right now... even before the government imposes a ban on it."

Chris Bowden, programme manager of SAVE RSPD and co-chair of IUCN Vulture Specialist Group, said, "Bangladesh is playing a leading role in conservation of vultures among six countries in Asia."

However, Nepal is ahead in reducing usage of diclofenac. Ketoprofen is a threat to vulture conservation efforts in Bangladesh, he said.

Among others, chair of the webinar, Amir Hossain Chowdhury, also chief conservator of forests, summarised the discussion. Habibun Nahar, deputy minister for environment, forest and climate change; Mihir Kumar Doe, conservator of forest; Sirajul Hoque, director of Animal Health Division at Renata Limited; Muqueeb Majumdar Babu, chairman of Prokriti O Jibon Foundation; and Raquibul Amin, country representative, IUCN Bangladesh, also spoke at the webinar.

Raquibul Amin Chowdhury, country representative of IUCN, moderated the session.

10,430

FROM PAGE 3

nutrition, health risks, exposure to gender-based violence at home and in public, as well as social stigma are but a few of the issues they are facing.

Under the project, about 300 women in Dhaka and Manikganj will receive a package that includes masks, hand washing bar, detergent powder, and basic food items, the release said.

Some 10,000 women in 10 districts will receive health-hygiene products that include masks, hand-washing bar, detergent powder, shampoo, and toothpaste.

Addressing as chief guest, Expatriates' Welfare Ministry Secretary Ahmed Munir Saleheen said, "We encourage safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration and we expect civil society and NGOs to help us ensure that."

Rashedul Quayum, secretary and legal director of Unilever Bangladesh, also spoke at the event.

Too much

FROM PAGE 3

Earlier at the beginning of the season, 800-1,000 maunds of hilsa were coming into the market, but now it's around the 2,500 to 3,000 maund-mark.

Officials and experts attribute this increase to favourable weather conditions and tight monitoring and supervision of hilsa catching.

Hilsha researcher Dr Md Anisur Rahman, principal scientific officer of Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute, said, "This year will see more hilsa than previous years. The programme to protect hilsa has been successfully going on since 2017, which focuses on protecting the mother fish."

"There has been a lot of rainfall at the beginning of the monsoon this year, which is favourable for hilsa breeding and growth."

Azizul Haque, divisional director of Directorate of Fisheries, said hilsa production is increasing every year due to implementation of government's hilsa protection programme. Last year, the Barishal division saw a total of 3.29 lakh tonnes of hilsa out of 5.17 lakh tonnes produced in the country, he added.

Bimol Chandra Das, district fisheries officer (hilsa), Barishal, said the average weight of hilsa increased from previous years by almost 10 to 20 percent.

However, the exuberant mood of the officials are not transmitting to anglers and traders as much.

Angler Hasem mia, of Nurabad village under Bhola's Charfassion upazila, told The Daily Star he started netting at the Bay of Bengal around 10 days ago and managed to catch 130 maunds of hilsa. Most of the fish are above one kg, with some even above the 1,500 to 2,000 gramme mark.

"But with the rate at which the fish is selling, we're unable to get fair returns," he lamented.

On hilsa exporting, the divisional director of Directorate of Fisheries said the decision lies with the commerce ministry.

He hoped a decision in this regard will be taken soon.

About cold storage facilities, the district fisheries officer said they will look into the matter and try to come up with a solution to help traders.

A mother's

FROM PAGE 3

"The situation is unbearable. Burn pain is incredible; we gave them morphine to relieve the pain. But when the whole floor is packed with so many patients, it is unbearable," Dr Hossain Imam, assistant director of the institute, told The Daily Star.

"Almost all the 37 patients suffered facial burn and all are in critical condition," his voice choked up.

Dead into the night, doctors, nurses and ward boys were trying everything they could to comfort the patients.

Some relatives of the victims were trying to convince an Ansar guard to go inside and have a look at their dear ones.

"Just wait. When the doctors leave, I will let you in. You should understand I can't help you now," the Ansar man pleaded, tears rolling down his face.

Amid the chaos, Rukshan Begum was pleading everyone around her to see her seven-year-old son and her husband.

"I just want to see my son. My boy and my husband were praying in the mosque. They are now in the hospital. I want to see my boy," she begged.

"Allah, please take my life and give my son life," she repeated, her hands pointed up to the heavens in prayer.

Around 1am, an attending doctor updated this reporter that among the patients a seven-year-old boy named Jewel died.

The doctor said they will make the announcement later, to avoid a situation that might go beyond control.

It was an extremely difficult night for anyone inside the hospital. And as this reporter left the hospital after what was occupational hazard, he did not get the courage or audacity to tell the wailing mother that her son was no more.

Mati'r Gaan

FROM PAGE 3

"My music is only to please my Creator. I never wanted to make a fortune with this. I'm a blind man, hence I don't have any other way to earn a living. That is the sole reason behind me trying to make a living out of it," artist Humayun Kabir told this correspondent.

"I enjoyed performing for this initiative. This is also helping me get through these hard times. I'm glad this initiative was taken, it's great for supporting folk music in the country," he added.

The initiative has also helped Sushanta Kumar Paul, a Rajshahi based potter to sell his products online to

urban customers.

"After we put up the post about Paul's works on our Facebook page, our inbox was flooded with orders. The demand was huge, and he had to make an entirely new batch to meet this demand. Just a few months ago, he was unable to sell anything, and now he's even making profit," said Raful.

Raise awareness

FROM PAGE 3

pioneering organisation in Spinal Cord Injury not just in Bangladesh but also in the global context. The centre's service is top-notch and there is room to improve government collaboration and acute care services, because CRP has world-class professionals, he mentioned.

Asif Iqbal Chowdhury, an SCI survivor, said the impact of CRP's service is reflected by patients' satisfaction and empowerment.

Mahfuz Anam lauded CRP for working devotedly for the people of Bangladesh regardless of economic status, ethnicity, or physical barriers.

There is very poor awareness of medical professionals and general people on CRP's services and glorious journey, he added.

Julian Francis mentioned the world is facing a unified crisis, but if an organisation like CRP is not supported by the local government, corporate society, or international quarters, its adverse impact will be on the vulnerable population in Bangladesh.

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Memo No. PUST/Engg Office/e-GP/Civil/2019-20/371 Date: 02/09/2020

e-Tender Notice (FY/2019-20)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of following works of under "Pabna University of Science & Technology", PUST, Pabna.

| Sl No. | Tender ID | APP ID | Package No & Invitation Ref. No | Name of works | Tender publication date & time | Tender closing date & time | Method |
|--------|-----------|--------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| 1 | 489261 | 156085 | PUST/Engg office/Civil/egp/04 | Supplying Fitting and Fixing of Sanitary and Plumbing fittings for different Office Dept. at PUST. FY 2019-2020 | 06-Sep-2020 15:00 | 28-Sep-2020 12:00 | OTM |
| 2 | 489113 | 156085 | PUST/Engg office/Civil/egp/03 | Sand/earth filling work under the Administrative Building Cafeteria Dormitory Padma Ichamoti Central Library Sheikh Hasina Hall etc. Building of Pabna University of Science & Technology, Pabna FY 2019-2020 | 06-Sep-2020 15:00 | 29-Sep-2020 12:00 | OTM |

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GD-1393

Only 11 percent flood-affected growers to get govt support

About 1,07,193 farmers in Tangail incurred Tk 141cr loss

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Only 12,000 out of 1,07,193 flood-affected farmers in the district are going to get government support for seeds and fertilisers. As a result, more than 95,000 affected growers will remain out of the coverage.

Of the 12,000 flood-affected farmers, each of 4,000 farmers will get a package of five kilograms of seeds of mashkalai, 10 kg of DAP and five kg of MOP fertilisers while 8,000 others will get more than 500 gram of seeds of 13 kinds of vegetables, agriculture officials said.

Distributions of the seeds and fertilisers kicked off at the upazila parishad auditorium in Tangail Sadar from yesterday, the officials added.

Aman paddy saplings are also being provided to some more farmers in the flood-hit areas, they said.

According to the office of the District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer, floods hit total 849 villages under 95 unions and six municipalities in 11 upazilas out of total 12 upazilas in the district.

Especially growers in the areas beside the Jamuna, Dhaleswari, Louhajang, Jhenai and Banshi rivers have been badly affected by the floods.

According to the office of the deputy director of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Tangail, different crops of 18,126 hectares of land were inundated with floodwater. Of them, crops of 13,292 hectares of land were fully damaged.

The flood damaged crops and vegetables like Aman paddy on



The farmer at Dhitpur village in Tangail Sadar upazila has incurred a loss of about Tk two lakh due to flood. His paddy field has been inundated with floodwater.

10,588 hectares, seedbeds of Ropa (transplanted) Aman on 1,359 hectares, Aus on 1,808 hectares, jute on 765 hectares, sugarcane on 65 hectares, banana on 45 hectares and lemon on 380 hectares of land.

As many as 1,07,193 farmers in the

areas have incurred Tk 141 crore loss due to the flood, said agriculture officers.

The prolonged flood has also crushed last strands of hope for many farmers in the district amid the Covid-19 pandemic, said several affected growers.

Agriculturist Ahsanul Bashar, deputy

director (DD) of DAE in Tangail, told The Daily Star that the prolonged flood caused huge damage to crops this year.

However, the government is sincere enough to help the flood-affected farmers as per the ability, he said.

He further added that all the flood

affected farmers are not getting the government support. Only the poor and worst-affected growers will get the support.

The seeds and fertilisers will be distributed among the worst-affected farmers as per lists prepared by the committees comprising the local union parishad (UP) chairmen and agriculture officials, he said.

Several farmers, however, alleged that the real poor and affected farmers hardly have got the little government support as the UP chairmen include the names of the farmers in the lists as per their choice.

Contacted, Mohammad Jinnah, chairman of worst-affected Kakua union parishad, said at least 2,000 farmers of the union incurred huge losses after flood caused damage to their crops.

"But we have got poor allocations for only 200 flood-hit farmers in the union," said the UP chairman.

On the other hand, several flood-affected sugarcane, banana and lemon growers in the areas said although they have incurred losses due to the recent prolonged floods, only the paddy farmers are getting the government support.

Asked about the matter, DD Ahsanul Bashar said they have plans to provide saplings to the flood affected lemon, banana and sugarcane farmers.

They have already sent a proposal to the higher authorities in this regard, said the DD.

Medical technologist dies falling off building

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A female medical technologist has died after falling off the corridor of Sheikh Sayera Khatun Medical College Hospital building in Gopalganj yesterday.

The deceased, Sushmita Majumdar Iva, 25, was wife of Rajib Majumdar of Bagerhat's Chitalmari upazila.


Sushmita, who had been working voluntarily at the pathology department of the hospital, used to live at her paternal house in Janata Road area of Gopalganj town.

Quoting a witness, Inspector (investigation) of Sadar Police Station Hazrat Ali said a workshop for the technologists of the PCR Lab was held at the sixth floor of the hospital's administrative building yesterday morning.


Six volunteer technologists, including Sushmita, took part at the workshop.

After the workshop, PCR Engineer of Biotech Service Mahibul Hasan was talking to the trainees at the corridor of the sixth floor.

As there was no railing on the corridor, Sushmita suddenly slipped and fell on the ground while taking turn on her left and died on the spot, police said.



Meghna Petroleum Limited
(A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)
58-59, Agrabad Commercial Area, Chattogram



On behalf of
Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation

Invitation for Tender

Land Development, Materials Procurement, Construction of Storage Tanks & Ancillaries Facilities of India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (IBFPL) at Parbotipur, Dinajpur

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------|---|---------|--|--|---|
| 1 | Ministry/Division | Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources, Energy & Mineral Resources Division. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Agency | Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Procuring entity name | Meghna Petroleum Limited (A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation), 58-59, Agrabad Commercial Area, Chattogram on behalf of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Procuring entity district | Chattogram | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Invitation for | Land Development, Materials Procurement, Construction of Storage Tanks & Ancillaries Facilities of India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (IBFPL) at Parbotipur, Dinajpur. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Invitation Ref. No. | 28.03.0000.055.04.002.17/IBFPL/TNK/MPL/20, Date: 01/09/2020 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Procurement method | One Stage Two Envelops Tendering Method (NCT) (Technical & Financial). | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Budget & source of fund | Own fund of BPC. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | Project/program name | Construction of Receipt Terminal of India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (IBFPL) at Parbotipur, Dinajpur. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | Tender Package No. | BPC/IBFPL/TNK/MPL/20/02(W-1 & W-2). | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | Tender publishing date | 06 September, 2020. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | Tender last selling date & time | 04 October, 2020 Time: 12:00 hrs. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | Tender closing date & time | 05 October, 2020 Time: 15:00 hrs. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | Tender opening date & time | 05 October, 2020 Time: 16:30 hrs. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | Name & address of the offices | <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Selling tender document (principal)</td> <td>1. Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram (Cash Section).</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Selling tender document (others)</td> <td>1. Meghna Petroleum Limited, Purchase Section, 59, Agrabad C/A, Chattogram. 2. BPC Liaison Office, 7-9, BTMC Bhaban (10th Floor), Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. 3. Meghna Petroleum Limited, Meghna Bhaban, 131, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Receiving tender documents</td> <td>Project Director 1. Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram. 2. Meghna Petroleum Limited, 58-59, Agrabad C/A, Chattogram.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Opening</td> <td>Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional)</td> <td>A pre-tender meeting shall be held on 20/09/2020 at 11.00am, BPC Head Office, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram. A virtual pre-tender meeting shall be arranged if physical meeting seems unsafe.</td> </tr> </table> | Selling tender document (principal) | 1. Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram (Cash Section). | Selling tender document (others) | 1. Meghna Petroleum Limited, Purchase Section, 59, Agrabad C/A, Chattogram. 2. BPC Liaison Office, 7-9, BTMC Bhaban (10th Floor), Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. 3. Meghna Petroleum Limited, Meghna Bhaban, 131, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka. | Receiving tender documents | Project Director 1. Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram. 2. Meghna Petroleum Limited, 58-59, Agrabad C/A, Chattogram. | Opening | Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram. | Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional) | A pre-tender meeting shall be held on 20/09/2020 at 11.00am, BPC Head Office, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram. A virtual pre-tender meeting shall be arranged if physical meeting seems unsafe. |
| Selling tender document (principal) | 1. Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram (Cash Section). | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Receiving tender documents | Project Director 1. Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram. 2. Meghna Petroleum Limited, 58-59, Agrabad C/A, Chattogram. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Opening | Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional) | A pre-tender meeting shall be held on 20/09/2020 at 11.00am, BPC Head Office, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram. A virtual pre-tender meeting shall be arranged if physical meeting seems unsafe. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | Eligibility of tenderer | Open to all eligible tenderers as per Tender Schedule. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | Briefs description of goods and works | Successful tenderer will undertake Landscaping/Earth filling and Supply, Construction, Erection & Commissioning of 06 Nos. (each 5690KL), Petroleum Oil Storage Tank with 02 Nos. (each 3000 KL) Fire Water Storage Tank, Fire Fighting System, Auto Gauging System at Parbotipur Depot, Parbotipur, Dinajpur. Tank such as Fixed Roof with including site development, construction of tank foundation, ancillary works such as road, drains, culverts, dyke, related, Pipelines, Product delivery meter, Pumps, Motor, Hose pipes, Auto Gauging System, fire-fighting system including water & foam purging system, Control Room, erection, testing, commissioning, calibration etc. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | Brief description of related services | N/A. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | Price of tender document | BDT 5,000.00 (Taka five thousand only). | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | Identification of lot | Single Lot. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | Lot No. | BPC/IBFPL/TNK/MPL/20/02(W-1 & W-2). | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | Location | Parbotipur, Dinajpur district. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | Tender security amount | BDT 80,00,000.00 (Taka eighty lac only). | | | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | Completion time | 14 (fourteen) months from the effective date of contract signing. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 25 | Association of foreign firm | N/A. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 26 | Name of official inviting tender | Md. Tipu Sultan. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 27 | Designation of official inviting tender | Project Director. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 28 | Address of official inviting tender | Meghna Petroleum Limited, 58-59, Agrabad C/A, Chattogram. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 29 | Contact details of official inviting tender: Mob: 0177774693, Tel: 031-710316, Fax: 880-31-720147, e-mail: bpcplanning@gmail.com/tsultanmpl@gmail.com | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 30 | (a) This tender notice will also be available at 1) Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) website: www.bpc.gov.bd 2) CPTU website: www.cptu.gov.bd 3) Meghna Petroleum Limited website: www.mpl.gov.bd (b) If it is not possible to receive/open the tender on the scheduled date for any unavoidable circumstances, the same will be received/opened on the next working day at the same time and same venue. (c) The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever. | | | | | | | | | | | |

GD-1391



A truck passes by a large pothole on Jhenidah-Kaliganj highway. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Highway needs urgent repair in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

The pothole-riddled 14-kilometre stretch, between Jhenidah and Kaliganj on Kushtia-Jashore highway, has become hazardous for thousands of vehicles that use it every day.

Around 20,000 thousand vehicles use the highway, mostly towards Mongla seaport, Khulna and Bagerhat, according to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority data.

Persistent rain this monsoon has caused extensive damage to about 14 kilometres of the road between Jhenidah and Kaliganj, said Roads and Highways (RHD) officials in Jhenidah.

Jamal Hossain, driver of a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, said it used to take

only 12 minutes to reach Bishoykhali Bazar from Kaliganj on the highway, a distance of six kilometres that he frequents every day.

But nowadays, after numerous potholes developed on it, it takes about 40 minutes to pass the same distance, he added.

Despite their best efforts in driving over the potholes with extreme care, the rocky ride on the road usually makes most passengers panicky, said bus driver Mohsin Ali.

He also said not a day goes by he worries about getting in a fatal accident on the road.

It is extremely difficult to drive safely over so many potholes, especially the ones hiding underneath

puddles of water, said Alam Hossain, another bus driver who drives between Jhenidah and Kaliganj.

The usually 17-minute-long trip between the destinations now takes about 40 minutes, he also said.

Ferozul Haque, organising secretary of Khulna motor and bus owners' association, said the authorities should take urgent steps in repairing the road as it is putting lives of both passengers and drivers at risk and causing damage to vehicles every day.

Contacted, Executive Engineer Ziaul Haidar of RHD in Jhenidah said a tender for repair work of the Jhenidah-Kaliganj highway will be floated soon.

Boy found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainavabganj

Police recovered the body of a boy from Gomostapur upazila on Wednesday, two days after he went missing on Monday.

The victim, Mohammad Shihab, 14, a rickshaw-van puller, was son of Sadikul Islam of Dalkhoil village.

The law enforcers also detained there people in connection with the incident.

The arrestees are Abdul Hakim, 32, Moazzem Hossain, 50, and Mohammad Sujon, 22.

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01714 039846

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Will not supply arms to Pakistan

Russia reassures India

THE STATESMAN/ANN

Russia has reassured India that it would not supply arms to Pakistan while promising to give priority to India's needs for advanced military systems, according to defence sources.

Russia would also engage actively with India to ensure the success of the 'Make in India' programme and participate in a big way in the Aero India Exhibition to be held in February next year, Russian defence minister Gen Sergei Shoigu told Indian defence minister Rajnath Singh during bilateral talks in Moscow on the margins of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) defence ministers' meeting.

The one-hour meeting was marked by the traditional warmth and friendship, characteristic of the special and privileged partnership between the two countries with the two sides focusing on intensifying military technical cooperation and military-to-military cooperation, the Defence Ministry said.

The two ministers covered a broad range of areas of cooperation between their two countries. It was noted that this meeting coincides with the Indra Naval Exercises to be conducted by the Indian and Russia navies off the Straits of Malacca over the next two days. Singh noted that these exercises demonstrated the common interests of both countries in maritime security in the Indian Ocean region.

The two ministers welcomed the advance stage of discussions for the establishment in India of an India-Russian Joint Venture for the production of AK203 assault rifles which are considered one of the most modern weapons available for infantry forces. This provides a very positive basis for further engagement of the Russian defence industry in the 'Make in India' programme.



Police officers react during clashes with protesters over the death of a Black man, Daniel Prude, after police put a spit hood over his head during an arrest on March 23, in Rochester, New York, US, on Friday. Portland police made multiple arrests overnight on Friday as the Oregon city nears 100 days of demonstrations against US racism and police brutality, which have at times turned violent.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump ends anti-racism training in federal govt

US President Donald Trump has ordered government agencies to end employee training sessions on fighting racism because they amount to "un-American propaganda," the White House said on Friday. The order comes as Trump works to appeal to his white, blue-collar base while fighting an uphill battle for re-election amid a divisive national reckoning over how non-whites are treated in America, especially by police but in other spheres as well. The White House Office of Management and Budget said it had been ordered to "ensure that Federal agencies cease and desist from using taxpayer dollars to fund these divisive, un-American propaganda training sessions."

Taliban say team in Qatar for Afghan peace talks

The Taliban's negotiating team has arrived in Qatar, a spokesman said yesterday, in a sign that long-delayed peace talks with the Afghan government are inching closer to starting. A date for the talks, to be hosted in Doha, has not been set but the warring sides have this week made signals that negotiations could launch soon, including efforts to wrap up a drawn out prisoner exchange. The Afghan government's negotiating team remained in Kabul yesterday, but a logistics team landed in Doha earlier this week. Faraidoun Khawzoon, a spokesman for the Afghan government's reconciliation council, said its negotiating team was ready for talks. "The release of the prisoners is completed and there is no excuse for delaying the talks," he tweeted. "But the Taliban don't seem to be ready for the talks. We expect the Taliban to get ready and start the negotiations."

Navalny poisoning: Trump refuses to criticise Russia



US President Donald Trump said the United States must look "very seriously" into the suspected poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, but that his administration had not yet seen any proof. "It's tragic. It's terrible, it shouldn't happen. We haven't had any proof yet, but I will take a look," Trump said at a news conference, before telling journalists they should be focusing on China, not Russia. Trump did not take as strong a stand as the State Department, which earlier on Friday expressed grave concern about the finding that Navalny was poisoned. Germany, where Navalny is in a hospital, has said the Russian opposition figure was poisoned with a Soviet-style Novichok nerve agent and wants the perpetrators held to account.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

TRUMP'S ALLEGED INSULTS TO US WAR DEAD

Uproar grows over reports

Biden declares Trump 'unfit' for presidency as allies defend president

AGENCIES

Donald Trump, the president of the United States, has come under fire over reports that he mocked the country's war dead as "suckers" and "losers", with Joe Biden, his main opponent in the upcoming presidential election, declaring him "unfit" for the commander-in-chief role.



Biden's comments on Friday came as Trump again sought to dismiss as "false" the alleged comments, first reported on by The Atlantic magazine and then by The Associated Press news agency.

Voice cracking, Biden told reporters in Delaware that "you know in your gut" Trump's comments, if true, are "deplorable".

Trump, in the Oval Office, said no apology was necessary, because it was a "fake story".

The allegations, sourced anonymously, describe multiple offensive comments by the president towards killed and captured US service

members during a trip to France in November 2018.

In the morning of a scheduled visit to the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery, Trump reportedly told senior staff, "Why should I go to that cemetery? It's filled with losers." The White House later said the visit was cancelled because foggy weather made the helicopter trip from Paris too risky and a 90-minute drive was deemed infeasible.

The Atlantic also said Trump, in a separate conversation on the same trip, referred to more than 1,800 US soldiers who died during the

consequential 1918 battle at Belleau Wood as "suckers" for getting killed.

Political leaders and veterans have condemned Trump for the comments which have been confirmed by multiple news outlets including Fox News, which has been the president's go-to television news network.

Fox said two former Trump administration officials had confirmed The Atlantic's reporting.

Trump's supporters, meanwhile, took to television networks and social media to defend the president, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo telling the programme, Fox and Friends, on Friday that he was with the president and he "never heard him use the words."

First Lady Melania Trump also defended her husband, issuing a rare public statement, calling Trump's alleged mockery of US war dead "not true" and blasting The Atlantic's reliance on anonymous sources.

US ELECTION 2020

China has taken 'most active role' to interfere

Claims US national security adviser

REUTERS, Washington

China has taken the most active role among countries seeking to interfere in the US election and has the biggest program to influence domestic politics, US national security adviser Robert O'Brien said on Friday, without providing any details.

"We know the Chinese have taken the most active role," O'Brien told reporters at a briefing.

He said China had "had the most massive program to influence the United States politically," followed by Iran and then Russia.

US intelligence found that Russia orchestrated a cyber campaign to sway the 2016 presidential election in Republican Donald Trump's favor and there have been reports hackers may try to influence the election on Nov. 3. Moscow has denied interfering in 2016.

Trump-appointed Attorney General William Barr said on Wednesday he believed China was more of a threat than Russia when it came to election interference, also without offering details.

In August, O'Brien said the United States had seen Chinese hackers targeting US election infrastructure. China has consistently denied US government charges that it hacks US companies, politicians or government agencies.

Trump, who long touted his friendly ties with Chinese President Xi Jinping as he sought to make good on trade deal promises, has made getting tough on China a key part of his campaign for re-election in November.



Anti-government protesters and students attend a demonstration demanding the government to resign, in front of the Ministry of Education in Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Hopes of miracle fade in Beirut

AFP, Beirut

Rescue teams kept up their search for survivors in Beirut yesterday even as hopes raised by sensor readings of a pulse beneath the rubble of last month's blast began to fade.

The cataclysmic August 4 explosion in the port of Beirut killed at least 191 people, making it Lebanon's deadliest peacetime disaster. One month on, seven people are still listed as missing.

On Wednesday night, a sniffer dog deployed by Chilean rescuers detected a scent beneath a collapsed building in the heavily damaged Gemmayzeh neighbourhood adjacent to the port.

High-tech sensors confirmed an apparent heartbeat and, a full month after the August 4 blast, rescue teams took up the search.

But despite removing piles of masonry, they have yet to find the source of the sensor reading.

"Search operations have been going on since the day before yesterday but the chances are very low," the civil defence agency's operations director, George Abou Moussa, told AFP.

"So far, we have found nothing." Lebanese officials had played down the chances of anyone surviving so long beneath the rubble.

FB blocks terminally ill Frenchman from streaming his death

AFP, Dijon

Facebook yesterday said it would block the livestream of a Frenchman suffering from an incurable condition who wanted to broadcast his death on the social media platform.

Earlier, Alain Cocq announced that he was now refusing all food, drink and medicine after President Emmanuel Macron turned down his request for euthanasia.

Cocq, 57, who suffers from a rare condition which causes the walls of his arteries to stick together, said he believed he had less than a week to live and would broadcast his death from Saturday morning.

"The road to deliverance begins and believe me, I am happy," he wrote on Facebook shortly after midnight in a post announcing he had "finished his last meal".

"I know the days ahead are going to be difficult but I have made my decision and I am calm," he added.

Facebook, which has been increasingly criticised over the way it polices the content it carries, yesterday said its rules did not allow it to portray suicide.

"Although we respect (Cocq's) decision to want to draw attention to this complex question, following expert advice we have taken measures to prevent the live broadcast on Alain's account," a Facebook spokesman told AFP.

"Our rules do not allow us to show suicide attempts."

Cocq had written to Macron asking to be given a substance that would allow him to die in peace but the president wrote back to him explaining this was not allowed under French law.

Cocq said he hoped his struggle would be remembered and "go down in the long term" as a step towards changing the law.

Earth is making the moon rust

CNN ONLINE

The moon is getting rusty.

Scientists had the same reaction you probably did when they reached this conclusion. It shouldn't be possible -- after all, there's no oxygen on the moon, one of the two essential elements to create rust, the other being water.

But the evidence was there.

India's lunar probe, Chandrayaan-1, orbited the moon in 2008, gathering data that has led to numerous discoveries over the years -- including the revelation that there are water molecules on its surface. The probe also carried an instrument built by Nasa that could analyze the moon's mineral composition.

When researchers at Nasa analyzed the data recently, they were stunned to find hints of hematite, a form of iron oxide known as rust. There are plenty of iron-rich rocks on the moon -- but rust is only produced when iron is exposed to oxygen and water.

Not only is there no air on the moon, but it is flooded with hydrogen that flows from the sun, carried by solar wind. Rust is produced when oxygen removes electrons from iron; hydrogen does the opposite by adding electrons, which means it's all the harder for rust to form on the hydrogen-rich moon.

"It's very puzzling," said Shuai Li of the

University of Hawaii, the lead author of the study, which was published on Wednesday in the journal Science Advances.

After months of research, Li and the Nasa scientists think they've cracked it -- and the answer to the mystery lies in our very own planet.

One major clue was the rust was more concentrated on the side of the moon that faces Earth -- suggesting it was somehow linked to our planet.

Earth is encompassed in a magnetic field, and solar wind stretches this bubble to create a long magnetic tail in the downwind direction. The moon enters this tail three days before it's full, and it takes six days to cross the tail and exit on the other side. During these six days, Earth's magnetic tail covers the moon's surface with electrons, and all sorts of strange things can happen. Dust particles on the moon's surface might float off the ground, and moon dust might fly into a dust storm, according to Nasa.

And, Li speculated, oxygen from the Earth travels on this magnetic tail to land on the moon, where it interacts with lunar water molecules to create rust.

The magnetic tail also blocks nearly all solar wind during the full moon -- meaning the moon is temporarily shielded from the blast of hydrogen, opening a window for rust to form.



LP Gas Limited

(A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)
North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh

Invitation for Tenders

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|----------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | Ministry/Division | Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources/Energy & Mineral Resources Division. | | | |
| 2 | Agency | Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC). | | | |
| 3 | Purchaser name | LP Gas Limited (LPGL), A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation. | | | |
| 4 | Purchase code | N/A. | | | |
| 5 | Purchaser district | Chattogram. | | | |
| 6 | Invitation for | Supply of 25,000 LPG Cylinders for domestic users. | | | |
| 7 | Invitation Ref. No. | 28.27.0000.001.07.001.20-132 | | | |
| 8 | Date | 02/09/2020 | | | |
| KEY INFORMATION | | | | | |
| 9 | Procurement method | Open Tendering Method. | | | |
| FUNDING INFORMATION | | | | | |
| 10 | Budget & source of fund | LP Gas Limited (own fund). | | | |
| 11 | Development partners | None. | | | |
| PARTICULARS INFORMATION | | | | | |
| 12 | Project/programme code (if applicable) | N/A. | | | |
| 13 | Project/programme name (if applicable) | N/A. | | | |
| 14 | Tender Package No. | Cyl-20 | | | |
| 15 | Tender package name | Supply of LPG cylinders. | | | |
| 16 | Tender publication date | 06/09/2020 | | | |
| 17 | Tender last selling date | 11/10/2020 | | | |
| 18 | Tender closing date & time | 12/10/2020, Time: 14:30 Hrs (BST). | | | |
| 19 | Tender opening date & time | 12/10/2020, Time: 14:35 Hrs (BST). | | | |
| 20 | Name & address of the office(s) | Address | | | |
| | - Selling tender document (principal) | LP Gas Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh. | | | |
| | -Selling tender document (others) | Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BSC Bhaban, Saltgola Road, Chattogram-4100. | | | |
| No conditions apply for sale, purchase or distribution of tender documents | | | | | |
| | -Receiving tender documents | LP Gas Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh. | | | |
| | -Opening tender documents | -Do- | | | |
| 21 | Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional) | Place: LP Gas Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh. Date 22/09/2020 Time 14:30 Hrs (BST) | | | |
| INFORMATION FOR TENDERER | | | | | |
| 22 | Eligibility of tenderer | As per tender schedule. | | | |
| 23 | Brief description of goods & works | Supply of 25,000 LPG cylinders of 26.6 Litre water capacity fitted with valve (22mm version) and protection cap. | | | |
| 24 | Brief description of related service | Related service are as per tender schedule. | | | |
| 25 | Price of tender documents | BDT 10,000 or US\$ 130 (non-refundable). | | | |
| 26 | Lot No. | Identification of lot | Location | Tender security amount | Completion time in weeks |
| | 1 | N/A (Single Lot) | LP Gas Limited | BDT 12 (twelve) lac or US\$ 15 (fifteen) thousand | 24 (twenty-four) weeks |
| PURCHASER DETAILS | | | | | |
| 27 | Name of official inviting tender | Engr. Md. Siddique Hossain. | | | |
| 28 | Designation of official inviting tender | Assistant General Manager. | | | |
| 29 | Address of official inviting tender | LP Gas Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh. | | | |
| 30 | Contact details of official inviting tender | Tel: +88-031-2501220, Mobile: +88-01715-694093 E-mail: sidd_hossain@yahoo.com | | | |
| 31 | This Tender Notice will be available at LPG website: www.lpgl.gov.bd and CPTU website: www.cptu.gov.bd | | | | |
| 32 | The purchaser reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders or annul the tender proceedings. | | | | |

GD-1392

Facing the COVID-19 crisis: where do we stand after six months?

DR SHAHRIAR ROZEN, MUHAMMAD RIZWANUR RAHMAN AND DR SABRINA SABA

Six months have now been passed since the first COVID-19 patient was detected in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has been fortunate to see a low percentage of symptomatic patients with a low death rate as compared to many other nations. This offered an opportunity to control the pandemic, but only if appropriate steps are taken in a timely fashion. If not, underestimating the infection might result in grim consequences.

Although a glimpse at the recent daily case counts may present a semblance of a controlled infection situation, a deeper look shall reveal otherwise. The percentage of daily tests that come out positive (test positivity rate) is high enough to clearly indicate that a large number of infections do remain unidentified and these undetected cases are spreading the disease throughout the community.

Therefore, the steady decline of daily cases as reflected from the official records is merely deceptive and can be credited to the decreasing number of daily tests. The anticipation that nine percent of Dhaka city dwellers have already been infected with coronavirus, according to a recent investigation by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control And Research (IEDCR) and International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr), also endorse the same.

As of September 5th, Bangladesh has the tenth most active COVID-19 cases among the world countries while being



159th as regards to the number of tests per one million population. This inadequate testing not only lets to lose control but also limits the government's ability to plan, monitor and take necessary actions to keep track of the pandemic.

In contrast to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) strong recommendation of achieving a positivity rate lower than 5% for at least 14 consecutive days before reopening, Bangladesh's infection scenario and testing measures are nowhere close to that.

Moreover, imposing fees for testing and delayed reporting have discouraged people to test and isolate. Many have now arrived at pandemic fatigues to show reluctance in following the safety measures which is alarming.

Downplaying the severity of the pandemic at the policy level or in public messaging should be avoided, as an underestimation would discourage people to follow the safety guidelines, which may contribute to an upsurge of infection.

Surely, the pandemic will not go away on its own without an effective vaccine and proper interventions to control the transmission. Therefore, there is no escape from taking actions appropriate to the situation, which may include:

1. Deploy rapid antigen-testing and eliminate any barrier to test (testing fees, long reporting time, stigma related to COVID-19) to effectively identify and isolate infected persons.
2. Closely monitor three health measures to track the course of the disease:

i. test positivity rate, ii. hospitalisation rate, and iii. daily new cases both at national and at local levels.

3. Engage and mobilise local resources and deploy the field-level administrations to conduct massive awareness campaigns.

4. Monitor whether the safety guidelines are followed by institutions and individuals and ensure penalisation for violations.

5. Protect the healthcare professionals to ensure resources/workforce are available to treat patients and utilise telehealth to decrease pressure on the health system.

6. Employ vaccine diplomacy and development of an implementation plan (e.g., from pre-ordering syringe to identifying priority groups) to vaccinate before vaccines become available.

Although the infection slowed slightly as the country is passing through the first wave, it may witness a surge in the coming winter. It is essential to take a precautionary approach and make evidence-based decisions to ensure that we do not let the pandemic go unleashed. Visit <https://www.cridaction.org/> to learn more about the recommendations.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Evening eating is associated with higher total calorie intake and lower diet quality

A study of nearly 1,200 UK adults, being presented at this year's European and International Conference on Obesity (ECOICO 2020) suggests that there is a link between eating a larger proportion of one's daily energy intake during the evening and having a higher total energy intake and lower quality of diet.

In recent decades there has been a growing interest in how the timing of our food consumption can influence metabolism and other physiological processes. Sensations of hunger follow a strong daily rhythmic pattern and are often most intense later in the day. This phenomenon could influence both the type and amount of food we eat.

Across the whole sample group, eating during the evening provided an average of almost 40% (39.8%) of daily energy intake (EI). The authors found a significant variation in total EI across the different quartiles, with individuals in the lowest quartile of evening EI consuming fewer calories in total over the day than those in the other three quartiles.

The results suggest that consuming a lower proportion of EI in the evening may be associated with a lower daily energy intake, while consuming a greater proportion of energy intake in the evening may be associated with a lower diet quality score. Timing of energy intake may be an important modifiable behaviour to consider in future nutritional interventions. Further analysis is now needed to examine whether the distribution of energy intake and/or the types of food consumed in the evening are associated with measures of body composition and cardiometabolic health.

HEALTH bulletin



Heavy electronic media use in late childhood linked to lower academic performance

A new study of 8- to 11-year olds reveals an association between heavy television use and poorer reading performance, as well as between heavy computer use and poorer numeracy — the ability to work with numbers. Lisa Mundy of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Melbourne, Australia, and colleagues present these findings in the open-access journal PLOS ONE recently.

The researchers found that watching two or more hours of television per day at the age of 8 or 9 was associated with lower reading performance compared to peers two years later; the difference was equivalent to losing four months of learning. Using a computer for more than one hour per day was linked to a similar degree of lost numeracy. The analysis showed no links between the use of videogames and academic performance.

These findings could help parents, teachers, and clinicians refine plans and recommendations for electronic media use in late childhood. Future research could build on these results by examining continued associations in later secondary school.

Protect your child from germs at home

AMIT SARKER

When you have an infant, it is very much important to keep him or her away from germ hazards. Primarily, people are one of the most potent sources of germs. When large numbers of people are together or share items, disease causing germs can spread at any time. Particularly in colder months, people spend a lot of time indoors and frequent contact with each other makes the germs spread easily. Not only the family members but also friends and complete strangers seem to surround the babies and are sometimes desperate to touch, hold and cuddle the baby. It can make it tough to keep your baby healthy. Although it is impossible to protect your child from all contagious illnesses, you can develop some healthy habits to reduce your child's risk of infections.

Here are some suggestions to keep your baby healthy and protected against germs and common infectious illnesses:

- Washing hands is the first and most effective weapon to fight against infections. You should tell the people to wash their hands before touching or holding your baby. Do not feel any hesitation about asking people to do this.
- Do not share hats, combs, toothbrushes, or other personal items with others, even with your other baby. Use disposable tissues to wipe your baby's nose or eyes and throwing them away to make sure that your baby cannot catch their own coughs and sneezes in

disposable tissues. Moreover, the practice of throwing tissues are also reducing the risk of infections on surfaces.

- Clean toys, surface area and other instruments by antibacterial cleaners. These antibacterial cleaners should also be kept far out of reach of the children.
- You should be careful and try to avoid people with cold-like symptoms such as sneezing, a runny nose, feeling generally unwell, or people with an upset stomach. Sometimes it feels uneasy to say, but you should always think about your baby's health.
- Smoking is not only injurious to the health of the smoker but also those around them. Babies and children can be seriously affected by cigarette smoke. Even smoke

from other sources will still have a negative impact on their health. So you should politely tell people to stop smoking around your baby and keep your baby away from second-hand smoke or any kind of smoking environment.

• If your baby is in daycare, make sure they are strictly following good hygiene practices such as sanitary food preparation, sanitation of toys, proper bathroom procedures and cleaning.

Finally, only you and your family can decide which environment is healthy for your baby. Do not be hesitant to take any decision to protect your baby.

The writer is a lecturer of Department of Pharmacy, Primeasia University. E-mail: amit.pharmacy30@gmail.com



Data clearly show the more serious trajectory of COVID-19 disease in people with obesity

An analysis conducted by François Pattou, Professor of Surgery at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Lille, and head of the Department of General and Endocrine Surgery at Lille University Hospital, France and colleagues included 124 intensive care unit (ICU) admissions with COVID-19, and compared them with 306 patients who had been in ICU for other reasons, without COVID-19.

The data showed that among ICU patients with COVID-19, around half had obesity (BMI above 30), with a quarter having severe obesity (BMI of 35 or above). Most of the remaining patients (around 40%) were overweight, with only around 10% of patients in the healthy weight range (BMI 25 or under). Among the non-COVID-19 ICU patients, the story was very different: a quarter had obesity or severe obesity; a further quarter were overweight, and around half fell into the healthy weight range.

A similar trend emerged regarding which ICU patients with COVID-19 had to be put on ventilators. Of the 89 requiring mechanical ventilation, more than half had obesity or severe obesity, while most of the other patients were overweight. Patients with a BMI in the healthy range of 25 and under made up less than 10% of patients needing a ventilator. Among the 35 patients in ICU who did not deteriorate to the point of needing mechanical ventilation, a much lower proportion had obesity or serious obesity (less than 25%), while around half fell into the overweight category, and the other quarter the normal weight range.

The data show that the chances of increasing to more severe disease increase with BMI, to the point where almost all intensive care COVID-19 patients with severe obesity will end up on a ventilator. Analysis by Pattou and colleagues showed that, among the patients analysed at Lille University Hospital, ICU patients with COVID-19 were almost 3 times more likely to have obesity than ICU patients without COVID-19.

[f](#) [t](#) /StarHealthBD



Rumors and Misconceptions Unveiled

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

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

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

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

Can cold weather kill the new corona virus?

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

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

Public awareness by:



In Search of Excellence

#Coronavirus #COVID19



The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 6, 2020, BHADRA 22, 1427 BS

Dastardly attack on UNO

Even state employees are not safe!

ALTHOUGH it would not be fair to conclude the motive of the beastly attack on UNO Ghoraghat and her father inside their official residence, in Dinajpur, in the absence of detailed information, it is difficult to accept the initial explanation of Rab regarding the motive of the attack. The account that the purpose was burglary does not stand up to even a perfunctory scrutiny of the circumstances and the crime scene. Nothing, as far as we know, is missing from the house of the UNO. Even the local member of parliament has suggested that the motive was to kill the UNO.

While we strongly condemn the attack and wish the UNO Wahida Khanam a quick and full recovery, we cannot but be alarmed at the incident that exposes the deep crevice in the security system in the country. A UNO is the chief executive of an upazila. So what should we make of a situation where the state cannot provide an official in employment of the state and one who represents the state authority in the area under her or his responsibility with proper security, not to speak of providing security to ordinary citizens?

The incident also reveals the criminalisation of politics that has driven the state of governance to an abysmal state. It also demonstrates what impunity amongst some ruling party cadres can do to the legal system and the state of law and order. Among the arrested, although one has been released later, are local Jubo League leaders. It is not quite clear why they were arrested and why one was released soon after. We hope that the authorities would clarify the matter.

The incident also betrays the bureaucratic red-tapism that hamper proper functioning of the system. We understand that the PM had ordered provision of Ansar security to Upazila level officials two years ago. We demand an answer as to why that has not been carried out yet.

Wahida Khanam is known to be a no-nonsense functionary who was addressing several law and order issues in right earnest. We believe there is more to the reason for the attempt on the life of the UNO, than what appears now, and hope that the investigation would be able to reveal both the motive and the perpetrators.

Helping hospitals install centralised oxygen supply systems

Buet alumni group sets a great example

WE sincerely appreciate the hard work of a group of 14 Buet alumni who have been helping hospitals install central oxygen supply systems for the last three months. Ideally, all public and private hospitals should have centralised oxygen supply systems. However, in reality, only a few of them have it and the rest use oxygen cylinders to support the critically ill patients. Although most hospitals across the country have been facing this issue, it was only exposed when they were struggling to ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply for critically ill coronavirus patients who were suffering from respiratory distress. During the last few months, many patients with breathing difficulties died without getting the much-needed oxygen support at hospitals.

Amid such a situation, this group of engineers, architects and planners, from Buet's graduating class of 2012, formed the group Projotne Canvas and started their work to improve our healthcare system. They used their technical skills to develop small centralised oxygen supply systems and installed them in nine public and private hospitals at district and upazila levels. And they plan to continue their work. The hospitals where the systems were installed now have the capacity to support around 34 critical Covid-19 patients with oxygen at a time.

It is amazing what our young professionals can do if they get only a little support from society. While for their first project at Chattogram Field Hospital the team had to collect funds from their batchmates, after the successful completion of the project, some donors came forward to finance them. While each of the projects would cost around Tk 25 lakh if commercially installed, they did it at a cost of Tk 5-10 lakh, without technical cost.

We urge the government as well as other donor agencies to come forward and support the team financially as they have been working for a noble cause. With central oxygen support systems, the hospitals will not only be able to ensure oxygen support for the Covid-19 patients, but other patients needing oxygen support will also benefit from this arrangement.

We also hope that our young professionals will be encouraged by this team's work and come forward with their own expertise to improve the country's overall healthcare system.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

We must focus on integrity

The definition of values has changed dramatically in recent times, as people prioritise money more than relationships and other human beings. Corruption has become a regular phenomenon, and the people involved in such activities appear to have no guilt or shame.

The plague of dishonesty has spread everywhere. However, such exploitations can be minimised if people learn to value relationships more than the temporary wealth of this world. We must learn to set greed aside. It is our responsibility to improve our moral values in every way, which will eventually benefit us and the nation as a whole.

Md Yeasin Hasan Abir, by email



From remittance-warriors to criminals

THE SOUND & THE FURY



SUSHMITA S. PREETHA

If life were a film with a wholesome ending, traffickers of the 106 Bangladeshis stuck in Vietnam would have been swiftly arrested. Officials who assisted registered agencies to exploit these aspiring and desperate migrants would also have been convicted. In an inevitable tear-jerking climax, a state representative might even have apologised to the migrants and their families for their sufferings, and for the failure of multiple state mechanisms to protect them from their terrible fate.

But life in Bangladesh only really mirrors a horror or a dystopian film. Eighty-one of the trafficked migrants, most of whom were starved, beaten or tortured while in Vietnam, have been thrown in jail following the end of their 14-day quarantine. Just as they were rejoicing at the thought of seeing their families again, after months of worrying about whether they would even make it out of Vietnam alive, they were arrested under the highly controversial Section 54 of The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898. Their crime? The unforgivable: "Tarnishing the image of the state and putting a negative impact on the labour industry."

The FIR states that the police received information that they were involved in various criminal activities abroad but that their sentences were pardoned in view of Covid-19. It also says that, if released, they could engage in various crimes including robbery, family violence, killing, and militancy, and that while in institutional quarantine, they plotted in groups against the state, according to information received by the police through anonymous sources.

The charges would have been convincing had it not been for the fact that the FIR is identical to the one submitted for the 219 other returnees from Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain on July 3. Unlike these 219 migrants who were pardoned for their petty crimes in their host countries (many were detained in violation of their rights and oftentimes for as simple a reason as stepping out to buy some food), the Vietnam returnees were not actually convicted of any crime or jailed during their stay there, as far as we know. In fact, for the last seven months, the migrants have tried all possible means of communicating with the authorities in Vietnam and Bangladesh, including the Bangladesh Embassy in Vietnam. They have consistently maintained that

they were trafficked into Vietnam by licensed agencies who provided them with clearances from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) for Tk 3.5-5 lakh. They have named the agents who preyed upon them in their villages and hometowns, and they have provided convincing accounts of the whole process of being duped in Bangladesh and being exploited once in Vietnam.

They have even admitted that they were made to carry USD 5,000 by their agents,

ambassador, will realise the true meaning of the term 'illegal'."

And this, really, is their true crime—that they did not suffer in silence, that they dared to ask, nay, demand that the government give them some dignity and ensure justice for the inhumane crimes committed against them.

On July 6, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in a press release admitted that these Bangladeshis were lured by human traffickers in Vietnam. However,



Some of the trafficking victims travelled to the Bangladesh Embassy in Ho Chi Minh City seeking justice and assistance to return home.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

which was subsequently taken from them by the Bangladeshi traffickers in Vietnam. They have uploaded photos and videos depicting the miserable conditions they were in, and of the callousness of the Bangladeshi embassy when they reached out to them begging for help. They have gone "live" on Facebook to entreat the prime minister to rescue them and to plead with embassy officials to provide them with some food so that they didn't starve to death. They have broken down into tears talking about how helpless they felt, how scared and hungry, and they have highlighted, again and again, how desperately they craved intervention from the state!

"We don't have any money to feed ourselves, how are we going to fund our flights?" one returnee exclaimed passionately during a Facebook live session of Noakhali TV on June 26. "That's why we said we will take to the streets, if necessary. We will break the rules and regulations of Vietnam and stage a hunger strike—that's when Bangladesh, i.e. the Bangladesh

it went on to add that 27 "illegal Bangladeshi migrants"—not victims of human trafficking, mind you—"tried to forcibly occupy the Hanoi embassy of Bangladesh," and that they went live on social media "making derogatory comments against Bangladesh". It also said that "a certain quarter is trying to tarnish Bangladesh's recent success in controlling human trafficking by threatening to attack Bangladesh missions abroad involving illegal Bangladeshi migrants." The Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen even blamed a new organisation called "Prabashi Odhikar Parishad", led by Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) VP Nurul Haque Nur, for patronising the migrants (a proposition so ridiculous it does not even merit a response), and suggested that those who go abroad illegally should be sent behind bars alongside traffickers.

The government's tendency to criminalise migrants, especially victims of trafficking, is, unfortunately, nothing new. We frequently hear how it is really

Covid-19 and the challenges of trade for Bangladesh



SELIM RAIHAN

THE Covid-19 induced economic crisis has affected the export and import of Bangladesh by large margins. The economic crisis has been exacerbated by the closure or limited operation of businesses

during the lockdown at home and abroad. In the financial year 2019-20, there was a very high negative growth in exports (17 percent)—which was unprecedented in the recent history of Bangladesh. Although the situation has improved somewhat since the beginning of the current financial year 2020-21, it is uncertain whether exports will return to normal. There are fears that the economic recessions in the United States and Europe, two main export destinations of Bangladesh, are likely to be prolonged, which will slow down the recovery of the export sector in Bangladesh. In the last financial year, there was high negative growth in the import trade (8.6 percent) too. The plight of the import trade is by no means conducive to investment and business expansion in the days to come.

Despite several rounds of downward revisions, the IMF still hopes for a global recovery in 2021. According to the World Economic Outlook Update in June 2020 by the IMF, global growth will be a negative 4.9 percent in 2020, which is 1.9 percentage points lower than the April 2020 World Economic Outlook forecast. Though the IMF projects for a positive 5.4 percent global growth in 2021, it admits that the recovery will be more gradual than previously forecasted. Even with a 5.4 percent growth in 2021, the global GDP in 2020 will be 6.5 percentage points lower than the pre-Covid-19 projections made by the IMF in January 2020. Europe, on average, will experience a negative growth of 10 percent in 2020 and a positive growth of 6 percent in 2021. In the USA the GDP growth will be negative 8 percent in 2020 and 4.5 percent in 2021.

However, the positive economic growth in 2021 remains to be dependent on some factors, the primary factor being the availability of reliable vaccines for Covid-19. Nonetheless, only the

availability of vaccines in some countries would not help recover business confidence worldwide. There is a need for a fair distribution of vaccines across countries. The fact that world trade is heavily dependent on global value chains, unless business confidence rebounds in all segments of the value chains, world trade will continue to remain depressed. According to the WTO's June 2020 estimates, based on a year-on-year basis, in 2020 the volume of merchandise trade shrank by 3 percent in the first quarter and further dropped by around 18.5 percent in the second quarter. No doubt, these declines are historically large.

As far as the major export item of Bangladesh, the readymade garments (RMG), is concerned, in the financial year 2019-2020, the earnings from RMG

developing country Bangladesh has little to influence the recovery of global trade, Bangladesh needs to get its domestic business fronts right to cope up during the crisis time and to register a substantial recovery in the post-crisis period. In this context, there is a need for developments in five major areas:

First, while the government announced stimulus packages for all affected industries, so far, the access and benefit of the stimulus packages have remained unequal. There are complaints that, apart from the RMG, most of the other export-oriented sectors have been facing numerous challenges in availing the stimulus packages. The firm-level survey conducted by SANEM on Business Confidence Index in July also confirms this situation. These challenges include



Although the situation has improved somewhat since the beginning of the current financial year 2020-21, it is uncertain whether exports will return to normal.

exports declined by 18.12 percent from the previous year. With a much smaller fall in RMG exports, by around 3 percent, Vietnam outperformed Bangladesh to become the second-largest RMG exporter in the world. Therefore, the negative impacts of depressed global trade are not uniform across countries. While Bangladesh has been struggling to cope up with the disastrous situation, its major competitors, like Vietnam, are in a better position to combat the crisis. The differences in impacts are primarily due to domestic business enabling factors in which Bangladesh seriously lags behind its major competitors.

Given the fact that being a small

lack of stimulus package for the industry, lengthy procedure, difficulty in bank-related services, difficulty in understanding application procedures, and corruption. There is a need for quick and effective measures to address these challenges.

Second, the lack of export diversification remains a daunting challenge in Bangladesh. While there are pro-RMG biases in the policies and programmes, inadequate and ineffective policies and strategies for the non-RMG sectors are also hurting them. Furthermore, the high cost of doing business disproportionately affects the non-RMG sectors. Low public spending on health and education also leads to low productivity and skill

"greedy" migrants who are to blame for their ill-fates when they get duped by trafficking agents. "You cannot teach *these people* any better," say our policymakers and bureaucrats disdainfully, as if talking about the scum of the earth, "they will go abroad through illegal means no matter how much you try to help them, get caught and give us a bad name." Our learned bureaucrats refuse to acknowledge the socio-political realities of aspiring migrants' lives which compel them to seek fortunes abroad, selling their homestead land or borrowing huge sums of money they don't even know how they would pay back if things don't go as planned.

A recent study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) found that 99 percent of potential migrants would choose to remain in the country if they had better job opportunities in Bangladesh. But for our bureaucrats, acknowledging this would entail actually admitting that despite the glitzy promises of growth and development, large masses of the population are still deprived of basic necessities, including a living wage, financial security, and a social protection system. These bureaucrats will not address the corrupt officials in their own ranks who sell off people into modern slavery to make a quick buck. And they will skillfully skirt around the fact that state negligence and complicity enable both registered and unregistered errand agencies to prey on vulnerable populations with complete impunity. They see no hypocrisy in the reality that the state has no reservations about receiving billions of dollars in remittances to keep its economy going, but when it comes to protecting the migrants to whom we owe this GDP growth, it is happy to label them as criminals and miscreants and, in this case, throw them in jail and leave them there to rot.

Government officials are keen on using the term "illegal" to dismiss the legitimate claims of these workers, but as the latter have pointed out on multiple occasions, "How are we illegal if we have clearances from BMET? How are we illegal if we trusted the government agency in charge of protecting us and our futures?" It is outrageous that rather than put BMET and the concerned ministries on the dock, we are having to defend the victims of trafficking for speaking out about their plight and for demanding justice. From the government's end, they have said they will cut the concerned agencies some slack because they have "already suffered enough" due to the pandemic. Our workers, on the other hand, apparently need to suffer a lot more.

Sushmita S Preetha is a journalist and researcher.

development which are not conducive for export diversification. Therefore, this Covid-19 crisis time can give policymakers a much-warranted opportunity to undertake reform in critical economic domains. No doubt, these reforms should aim to reduce the cost of doing business and establish a favourable environment for the flourishing of non-RMG export sectors.

Third, the low FDI orientation also acts as a large barrier for further export expansion and diversification in Bangladesh. The challenges in attracting FDI in Bangladesh include high cost of doing business, unfavourable regulatory environment, bureaucratic red-tape, uncertainty in the reform of policy regime, weak enforcement of intellectual property rights, and slow implementation of infrastructural projects including the SEZs. Therefore, reforms should focus on simplifying regulations, enforcing the IPR, and faster and cost-effective implementation of mega-projects and SEZs.

Fourth, as in a few years from now, Bangladesh will graduate from the LDC status and will thus lose trade preferences in its major export markets, it needs to start FTA negotiations with its major trading partners. In particular, Bangladesh should start FTA negotiations with the EU, the UK, India and China for the continuation of the zero-duty trade preference for its export in the post-LDC graduation era. It is noteworthy that such FTA negotiations take a long time, and a lot of effort and homework will be needed to secure special provisions to safeguard Bangladesh's interests in these FTAs.

Finally, Bangladesh's graduation from the LDC status by 2024 will lead to the loss of trade preference in major export destinations and loss of other preferences (i.e. TRIPs waiver for pharmaceuticals). Bangladesh will also face more stringent trade rules as a non-LDC. As the Covid-19 crisis has put Bangladesh into the back foot, there is a need for rethinking the LDC graduation decision. Considering the ongoing crisis time and uncertain future, Bangladesh may reconsider pushing back the transition from the LDC status by three more years.

Dr Selim Raihan is Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Executive Director, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). Email: selim.raihan@gmail.com

We must address the issue of plastic waste to avoid another pandemic

Personal protective equipment (PPE) which comprise of gloves, masks, cover-all, etc. are all essential items in our fight against the coronavirus. However, they may also become contaminated after use and their disposal is a matter of grave concern. Dr Mubarak Ahmad Khan's latest innovation, now at the conceptual stage—a biodegradable, non-toxic material to make PPE (cover-all) which can easily be discarded without causing any harm to the environment—is a game-changer. Not only will his innovation address the urgent need for more eco-friendly PPEs, but it will also help in disposing them in a safe and environmentally friendly manner, thereby reducing the risk of further infections. In this interview, Dr Khan talks to Minam Haque of The Daily Star to discuss his latest innovation.

What inspired you to create biodegradable, non-toxic personal protective equipment (PPE)? Can you discuss the process of how it is made?

The concept of creating a biodegradable cover-all was well in play even before the pandemic struck. In October 2019, a hospital in Japan asked me about the viability of producing biodegradable gowns for their ICU usage, which I made using polymer from jute fibre and they accepted it enthusiastically. They even requested for more gowns and other similar products in bulk, but being a scientist, I was not able to meet their commercial demands.

Plastic waste is usually incinerated (for disposal), but that results in harmful carbon emission which is a threat to climate change. Much of the plastic waste also tends to end up in the water bodies, affecting the aquatic ecosystem as well as clogging the drainage systems. The environmental degradation that results from plastic pollution has always been a matter of great concern globally, and for me as well, even more so during the ongoing pandemic, and hence, I decided to work on techniques that could help address such issues, based on my earlier invention—the Sonali Bag.

The guidelines set by The World Health Organization (WHO) to dispose PPEs is a lengthy and costly process, whereas with my innovation, the cover-all dissolves in soapy water within three minutes and it also disintegrates in plain water within seven days. I also noticed that corpses of Covid-19

positive patients were wrapped in sheets of plastic prior to their burial. It occurred to me that the bodies will decompose within a few months, but the plastic sheets won't. Therefore, my biodegradable material can also be used to make shrouds for dead bodies.

Coming to the non-toxic aspect of my invention, I had already extracted chitosan—derived from the exoskeleton of shellfish which are collected as by-product from shrimps and lobsters that are exported or consumed in restaurants—which has antimicrobial and antiviral properties. I have conducted extensive research on it too. Chitosan can also be used as a harmless preservative in fruits, vegetables, and fish keeping the taste and quality intact. I just combined my two innovations together—using jute cellulose and adding chitosan—and was able to come up with the concept of a biodegradable and non-toxic PPE.

In what ways does your PPE differ from those that are available in the market today? How do their usage and prices vary?

First and foremost, both the cellulose and chitosan used in my PPE are 100 percent natural. It has been reported by many that wearing the PPEs (cover-all) available in the market today is no easy task as they are non-porous, meaning it cannot be worn over lengthy periods. However, my cover-all is much more comfortable to wear. I am yet to standardise the porous factor of it because there aren't any appropriate labs to conduct



Dr Mubarak Ahmad Khan

the necessary testing to make sure that it is safe from the tiniest forms of coronavirus. What sets my cover-all apart from those available in the market is the fact that it has antimicrobial and antiviral properties, making it the safest choice.

As for the pricing factor, an authentic (there are plenty of replicas in the market) disposable WHO approved PPE (cover-all) costs approximately Tk 1,400, whereas the one I produce would cost around Tk 320-340. As I have said earlier, it is also much easier and efficient to dispose the biodegradable PPE and is free from any risk of infection.

Being a fairly new discovery, where does it stand now in terms of mass production? As

there is a high demand for PPEs globally, do you see any opportunity to export it to international markets?

I have produced the material in my lab on a small-scale using machineries that I built. My production capacity might be appropriate for providing to the local market. But as for meeting the global demand, that is far beyond my capacity. I can only do so much as a scientist. Mass production is only possible if I get assistance from the state or if other entrepreneurs decide to step in and expand the production process. I can provide all the know-how and the technology, but the rest is up to them.

Moreover, jute is a tremendously promising plant in terms of its harvesting time, the amount of cellulose it can provide, the durability of the materials made from it, etc. Not only will the export of the PPEs be beneficial for the overall economy of our country, but if mass produced, it will elevate the jute cultivation in our nation which will also have a remarkable positive impact on our carbon footprint.

You gained international acclaim after inventing the ground-breaking Sonali Bag. What is its status today?

Well, it's a slow and steady process. Sonali Bag is being produced on a limited scale at the moment. We are also sending samples to various countries around the world, and there seems to be a demand for it. However, like I mentioned, there is a lack of force to make it commercially successful. The fact is,

it will require a few hundred crore taka to get the project running on an industrial scale. If the capital can be arranged or is provided for, then it is very possible to mass produce and export it globally.

Your inventions seem to address the concern over plastic pollution in a promising manner. What steps need to be taken in order to fully facilitate the mass production and usage of such products?

I have already manufactured the product, but it now needs to be certified by a recognised body like the WHO in order for everyone to consider my PPE as a standardised product. In order for that to happen, more extensive tests need to be conducted by those who will certify it. And that can be achieved either through government intervention or if I receive enough funds to carry on with the necessary procedures. Once that is done, many might be interested to take on the production on a commercial level.

Despite having my product in hand, I did not make any announcement publicly until recently, following the acceptance of my concept by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the US. With their approval, I can conduct more research at icddr,b to start the clinical trial of the product and so on. We are also going to test the new concept at Shishu Hospital soon. We already lag in our fight against plastic pollution. If we do not immediately address the issue of plastic waste from PPEs, we may soon face an epidemic as a consequence.

Pandemic Pedagogy

Teaching compromised or redefined?

MOHAMMAD SHAMSUZZAMAN

THE Covid-19 pandemic has altered all of our professional beliefs and behaviours. I used to believe, for example, that teaching is a flesh-and-blood experience and that human interaction is essential to education. When I shifted to online teaching in March this year, my teaching was reduced to speaking to a screen. I assume that my students exist. My students assume that I exist. We assume all together that the university exists. Beyond assumption nothing seems to exist besides disruptions and depression. Every time I get down to teaching online under such circumstances, an existential threat overcomes me.

The pandemic confirmed what I already believed—teachers are professional pariahs. We claim smugly that teaching creates all other professions. That's a delusion! As governments worldwide ease or lift lockdown, they resume "essential services". Teaching is not deemed an essential service, so educational institutions operate virtually while everything else has started operating physically. This implies that education operates under a political, economic, and somatic cushion. Education is not considered critical to retaining and sustaining stability when politics, economy, and safety falter or fail. Education is at once a burden and a luxury without any redeeming potential. No one seems to need an education for ethical, empirical and enlightened engagement with reality. Investment in education is optional these days to maintain the status quo. Education solves no problem, because education is a problem. Teachers have created and compounded that problem, sceptics speculate. So, what do we need teaching for?

That question becomes serious when we fail to show the connection between the courses we teach and the future our students want to forge as an outcome of education. The coronavirus has already devoured our future. We're in an unprecedented chaos. The whole world has become a theatre, where almost everyone is a potential virus bomb

waiting to explode. As such, no one commits to enlightenment for himself and others—everyone waits for a vaccine. We're hurled into an uncomfortable, eternal present. With every passing moment, reality shifts. Education prepares us for reflection and research, for informed engagement as reality unfolds as we expect it to. But ours is a surreal world, where reality is transgressive and transient. However we teach—whether technically synchronous or asynchronous—is anachronous. And whatever we teach falls between the cracks without connecting the present with the future. Such a situation impeaches teachers.

It is irrational to place teachers in a position where they are expected to dispense altruism wholesale. Teaching is not a charity. Teaching certainly embodies love, but that's *tough love*. When, however, the time is



already tough, it doesn't behove a teacher to become tougher. The pandemic has displaced students along with making them financially vulnerable. For example, a recent survey by the Healthy Minds Network for Research on Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health and the American College Health Association of 18,764 students from 14 campuses in the US reported that 60 percent of the students claim that the pandemic has caused them financial stress.

This finding in the US resonates with Bangladesh, too. A survey by the Bangladesh Economic Association reports that 66 million

Teaching is not about providing specific content knowledge only. Teaching is also about coming together to share ideas, to forge long-lasting connections, and to think critically through debates and discussions as to what it means and takes to be human.

people have lost their jobs in the first 66 days since the closure was imposed nationwide in March. That may have depleted—even diminished—the sources of funding some students used to depend on to facilitate their studies. Additionally, some students have been flung so far away that they have limited and intermittent access to the Internet. Some students have neither a desktop nor a laptop computer. They only have a smartphone, which is not enough to participate actively in an online class. None of these problems are the students' fault. They are just the victims, whose performance and creativity are adversely affected. When these inconveniences of students factor into teaching—grading, in particular—teachers might prefer kindness over intellectual rigour. But there's an element of compromise in such an equation, however humane it is.

Financial crisis, displacement, and adjustment to the new format of teaching are psychologically consequential for students. Teachers can't help students deal with the psychological problems caused by the pandemic. Teachers are not counsellors. Teachers are meant to ensure students' intellectual well-being. Effective teaching presupposes mental stability, but the

pandemic has severely disrupted students' mental health. For example, a survey co-led by the University of California, Berkeley, Center for the Study of Higher Education and the University of Minnesota, in which 46,071 students from nine different institutions from the US participated to answer questions on their mental health from May to July, reveals that 39 percent of students screened positive for anxiety disorder.

In Bangladesh, the situation is worse even under normal circumstances. A study by Md Saiful Islam and others conducted on 400 first year students from a public university published in March 2020, in the "International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction," found that about 70 percent of students suffer from severe to extreme levels of depression. Had they conducted the study during the pandemic, how much more would most of the students have been depressed? Depression management critically defines teaching during the pandemic. That worries and limits many teachers.

Given all these forces and factors that permeate the landscape of teaching during the pandemic, some teachers might suffer from what Steven Pinker dubs in *The Sense of Style* the "illusion of good old days". What people euphemistically call "online teaching", they would like to call "emergency distance teaching". They're not convinced that this is teaching at all, because coming together in real time and space is fundamental to teaching. Teaching is not about providing specific content knowledge only. Teaching is also about coming together to share ideas, to forge long-lasting connections, and to think critically through debates and discussions as to what it means and takes to be human. Thinking presupposes engagement and interaction. A university is the biggest and best site for real-time engagement and interaction. That's the university we had! Distance and disconnection invert the very definition of that university. In such an inverted university only zombies and cyborgs fit. And it's the only university that exists now. Some teachers are not comfortable in teaching at

such a university, because it fundamentally compromises the content, rigour, and principles of teaching. I hate to break it to you but I also fit into that mould.

The pandemic has drained me as a teacher. I've scrambled to do things that I hardly had preparation and expertise for. I've also realised that the pandemic has stretched me as a teacher. The last several months have been pedagogically invigorating—as I have been pushed out of my comfort zone to search for and experiment with new approaches to teaching. As the pandemic still seems relentless, debates and discussions have been shifting away from on-site versus online teaching into how we can best serve our students under such circumstances. It seems that we need more of everything—resilience, compassion, and technological literacy—on top of our intellectual capital to teach during the pandemic. Most importantly, we need to refuse to be ceaselessly borne back into the past to mourn the loss of perfect teaching in a perfect world.

The world has always been messy, with or without the pandemic—teaching has been even messier, on-site or online. Let's admit that! Some teachers do consider the pandemic a blessing, to redefine teaching so as to make it more encompassing, pragmatic, and effective. I again have to break it to you that I'm one of those teachers.

If I sound paradoxical, well, aren't we indeed in a paradox? Our actions and reactions are at once rational and radical as we weather the pandemic. We've seen how an absurd phenomenon—that is, online teaching—has become at least temporarily inevitable. The pandemic has spawned a complex teaching scenario that simultaneously compromises and redefines teaching. Therefore, the question that I posed at the beginning of this pitch is a rhetorical one, that asks us all for more reflection than for resolution.

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QUOTABLE Quote

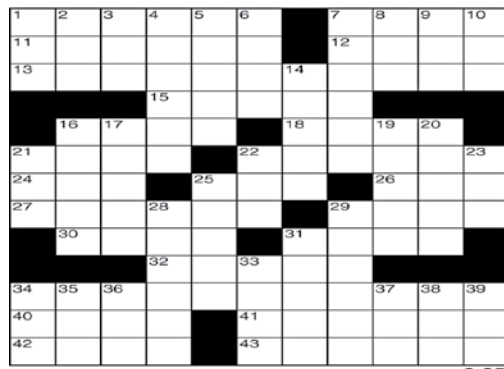


JANE ADDAMS (1860-1935) American social reformer.

Of all the aspects of social misery nothing is so heartbreaking as unemployment.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Circle and square, e.g.
 - 7 Job for a gumshoe
 - 11 Writer Welty
 - 12 Like some radios
 - 13 Four Seasons hit
 - 15 Skilled
 - 16 Volcano shape
 - 18 Spheres
 - 21 Dictionary entry
 - 22 Reporting coups
 - 24 In the style of
 - 25 Derisive cry
 - 26 Humor
 - 27 Cheering call
 - 29 Feel sorry for
 - 30 Bird abode
 - 31 Merriment
 - 32 Beach setting
 - 34 Response to unwelcome advice
 - 40 Overly suave
 - 41 Wild parties
 - 42 Betting info
 - 43 Relaxed
- DOWN**
- 1 Put in stitches
 - 2 "What'd you say?"
 - 3 Fuss
 - 4 Warsaw's nation
 - 5 Eat away
 - 6 Rescue
 - 7 Big name in Havana
 - 8 Writer Tan
 - 9 Bay Area airport code
 - 10 Outback bird
 - 14 Historic period
 - 16 Two-dot character
 - 17 Make a speech
 - 19 Rocker David
 - 20 Ill will
 - 21 Funny fellow
 - 22 Drod's friend
 - 23 Pig's place
 - 25 Spa features
 - 28 Emerson works
 - 29 Take an oath
 - 31 Terrific
 - 33 Gumbo veggie
 - 34 Court
 - 35 Stashed
 - 36 Outdated
 - 37 Backer's vote
 - 38 Hosp. parts
 - 39 Try out



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

BETLE BAILEY



BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES



BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

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

Parents put kids

FROM PAGE 12

During the animated speech, Kamal Hossain also said, "We want to enforce the law and wipe out the drugs menace."

This newspaper has a video clip of the speech.

Pradeep was suspended after he was accused in a case for killing Major (ret'd) Sinha Rashed Md Khan. The fallen officer is now behind the bars.

Contacted, Cox's Bazar DC Kamal Hossain on Wednesday said, "Yes, I said that. ... We want to enforce the law and wipe out the drugs menace. We want to enforce the law while staying within the law."

Sinha, who served in the Special Security Force (SSF) and took voluntary retirement from the army two years ago, was killed in police shooting at Shamlapur Police Checkpost on July 31.

The general people of Teknaf, who lived in fear when Pradeep was the OC, recently came forward with allegations that he took hefty sums from locals by threatening to kill them in so-called shootouts with police.

Parliament

FROM PAGE 12

According to the constitution, the gap between the end of a session of Jatiya Sangsad and the first sitting of the next session shall not exceed a period of 60 days.

Bus runs over

FROM PAGE 12

Police Station, said the woman got down from the bus near Banani Army Club intersection around 12:00pm.

The same bus ran over her right leg after she was hit by the vehicle and fell on the road, said the OC.

Police seized the bus but its driver managed to flee the scene, added the OC.

Afroza's son Al Amin further said her mother was first taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in critical condition and later shifted to the Nitor for better treatment.

She has been kept under observation there.

Flying-V

FROM PAGE 12

take the highly anticipated aircraft along its next developmental steps.

A team of researchers and engineers tested the aircraft at a guarded airbase in Germany, where they worked with an Airbus team to test takeoffs, maneuvers and approaches, and landing.

"One of our worries was that the aircraft might have some difficulty lifting-off, since previous calculations had shown that 'rotation' could be an issue," Roelof Vos, assistant professor at the aerospace engineering faculty of Delft's University of Technology, who led the project, explained in a statement.

"The team optimized the scaled flight model to prevent the issue but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. You need to fly to know for sure," he said.

Remotely controlling the aircraft, researchers managed take off at a speed of 80 kmh, while the aircraft's flight speeds, angles and thrust were as planned, they noted.

Experts worked hard to optimize the plane: in order to improve telemetry, the team was forced to change the aircraft's center of gravity and adjust its antenna.

There is still work to be done to refine the aircraft before it could take to the skies with passengers aboard: researchers said that the test flight showed that the aircraft's current design allows for too much "Dutch roll," which causes a rough landing.

Experts plan to use the data collected from the test flight for an aerodynamic model of the aircraft, allowing them to program it in a flight simulator for future tests, and to improve flights. The team will conduct more tests on the model, and hope to provide the Flying-V with sustainable propulsion, given that the design lends itself to carrying liquid hydrogen instead of kerosene.

Years gone

FROM PAGE 12

He added that they had written to several authorities, including the prime minister, education minister and the directorate of secondary and higher education in August 2019. "But there has been no progress in regards to the permanence of our jobs," said Md Sadek Hossen, a lecturer of political science who joined at the college in 2014.

Edriss Ali, a fourth class employee who joined at the college in 2009, said, "I did not get permanent recruitment even after working here for 10 long years."

All teachers and staffers of the college demanded the prime minister's intervention to resolve this issue to ensure permanent recruitment of all temporary recruits.

The Daily Star could not contact the then principle of the college Md Elias Khan over phone for comments.

Asked, Dil Afroza Shamim, acting vice-principle of the college, said that the future of all the temporary recruits are uncertain. "I know all the 24 teachers are brilliant and have been providing good service. We can't do anything for them since the college was nationalised."



Protesters take part in a 'no mask' rally against the government's coronavirus disease (COVID-19) measures, in Rome, Italy, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Violent typhoon heads for Japan packing 'record' winds and rain

AFP, Kagoshima

An extremely powerful typhoon was barreling towards southwestern Japan yesterday as authorities issued evacuation advisories to thousands of residents, warning of unprecedented violent winds, heavy rain and high waves.

Haishen churned near Okinawa in southern Japan on Saturday afternoon and was expected to approach Kyushu late Sunday or early Monday, the meteorological agency said.

The storm is expected to affect Japan from late Saturday, with winds of up to 290 kilometres per hour (180 miles per hour), making it a "violent" storm -- the top level on the country's classification scale.

"There is a danger of record winds, heavy rain, high waves and storm surge," Yoshihisa Nakamoto, an agency officer, told a news conference, calling for an early evacuation and "maximum caution."

Yuhei Takamura, a government official, told the conference: "A disaster will occur. There is almost no doubt about it."

About 4,600 people in Tarumizu, Kagoshima, were urged to evacuate swiftly, while authorities in other areas of Kyushu were warning their residents to prepare.

Satoshi Sugimoto, another agency official, said the latest typhoon could generate high waves as powerful as a tsunami.

"It's going to be the last chance to flee" when the agency formally issues the nation's highest storm warning, Sugimoto told reporters.

Authorities on Minamidaitojima instructed about 1,300 residents to evacuate as the storm was expected to hit the remote island, east of Okinawa.

"We urge all of our islanders to be on full alert as winds are getting stronger and expected to be violent," Hidehito Iha, a local government

official, told AFP.

Footage showed troops escorting dozens of people at a heliport in Kagoshima, southern Kyushu, after they evacuated from another remote island by a military helicopter.

Toyota said it would suspend operations at three plants in Kyushu until Monday evening, while other companies, including Canon and Mitsubishi Electric, reportedly planned to take similar measures.

The storm grounded nearly 100 flights, public broadcaster NHK said, while some services of Shinkansen bullet trains were set to be suspended in western Japan on Monday.

Meanwhile, Haishen forced the Japan coast guard to suspend its search for dozens of missing sailors from a cargo ship that sank in a separate storm, after two crew members were rescued.

"We resumed our search operation this morning by dispatching an airplane, but it returned without any

clues," a local coastguard official said.

"Now we plan to suspend our entire operation" until Haishen passes over the country, the official told AFP.

The Japan coastguard found a second survivor on Friday after the Gulf Livestock 1, which was carrying 6,000 cows and had 43 crew on board, issued a distress call Wednesday near Amami Oshima island as Typhoon Maysak passed through the area.

A first survivor was found on Wednesday evening, with a second crew member recovered at sea Friday.

The Philippine foreign ministry said the two survivors -- both Filipino -- had been in contact with their respective families.

The crew was made up of 39 Filipinos, two New Zealanders and two Australians.

The boat, which had experienced engine problems before, had been travelling from Napier in New Zealand to the Chinese port of Tangshan.

India, China trade blame

FROM PAGE 12

poorly demarcated Line of Actual Control (LAC) that marks the India-China border is running high with regular face-off among forces.

Singh "emphasised that the actions of the Chinese troops, including amassing of large number of troops, their aggressive behaviour and attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo were in violation" of agreements between the neighbours, said an Indian statement.

India wanted to settle the dispute through talks "but at the same time there should also be no doubt about our determination to protect India's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said there will be no compromise on India's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and asserted it cannot be "business as usual" in bilateral ties unless there is peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

At the same time, he said India is open to resolving outstanding issues through dialogue.

The Chinese minister took a similarly tough line.

"The cause and truth of the current tension on the border between China and India are very clear, and the responsibility lies entirely with India," said General Wei.

"China's territory cannot be lost," he added, calling on India to "strengthen control of frontline forces" and "refrain from any actions that may cause the situation to heat up."

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump again offered help to resolve the border dispute between India and China.

Trump told reporters the situation was "very nasty," adding that the two countries were "going at it much more strongly than a lot of people even understand."

A US government source told Reuters in Washington the US assessment is that neither China nor

India are interested in pushing the dispute to the point that they would engage in war.

Trump, asked about the dispute at a news briefing in the White House, said Washington was talking with both countries about what it could do to help defuse the situation.

"We stand ready to help with respect to China and India. If we can do anything, we would love to get involved and help," he said.

Trump has offered to mediate between the two nuclear-armed nations in the past. China has said that there is no need for a third party to mediate and India has also appeared cool to the idea.

'Worst is yet to come'

FROM PAGE 12

time for the underfunded healthcare system to prepare for the worst.

But with the economic cost of the restrictions rising, authorities saw no choice but to reopen activities.

Most of India's cases are in western Maharashtra state and the four southern states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka.

"Worst is yet to come"

In rural Maharashtra, the worst-affected state with 863,062 cases and 25,964 deaths, doctors said measures like wearing masks and washing hands had now largely been abandoned.

"There is a behavioural fatigue now

setting in," said Dr SP Kalantri, the director of a hospital in the village of Sevagram.

He said the past few weeks had driven home the point that the virus had moved from India's cities to its villages.

"The worst is yet to come," said Kalantri. "There is no light at the end of the tunnel."

Even as testing in India has increased to more than a million a day, a growing reliance on screening for antigens or viral proteins is creating more problems.

These tests are cheaper and yield faster results but are not as accurate. The danger is that the tests may falsely

clear many who are infected with COVID-19.

In Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state with a limited healthcare system, the situation is already grim. With a total 253,175 cases and 3,762 deaths, the heartland state is staring at an inevitable surge and with a shortage of hospital beds and other health infrastructure.

Sujata Prakash, a nurse in the state's capital, Lucknow, has recently tested positive for the coronavirus. But the hospital ward where she worked diligently refused her admission because there were no empty beds. She waited for more than 24 hours outside the surgical ward, sitting on patients'

chairs, before she was allotted one.

"The government can shower flower petals on the hospitals in the name of corona warriors, but can't the administration provide a bed when the same warrior needs one?" said Prakash's husband, Vivek Kumar.

Others have not been so lucky.

When journalist Amrit Mohan Dubey fell sick this week, his friends called the local administration for an ambulance. It arrived two hours late and by the time Dubey was taken to hospital, he died.

"Had the ambulance reached in time, we could have saved Amrit," said Zafar Irshad, a colleague of the journalist.

Vote-by-mail begins as race turns ugly

FROM PAGE 12

president loses on November 3, they would not be ready to accept a Trump victory as "fairly won." About one in five Trump voters said a similar thing.

As he seeks a second four-year term, Trump has for months sowed doubt among his base about the legitimacy of an election with a significant number of mail-in votes.

Trump -- who himself votes by mail in his adopted home state of Florida -- has repeatedly, and without evidence, said mail-in voting could lead to widespread fraud.

He even has suggested to his supporters that they try to vote twice to test the system -- earning him scorn on social media and from Democrats.

The tense campaign battle heated Thursday when The Atlantic magazine reported -- citing four anonymous sources who said they had firsthand

knowledge of the discussions -- that Trump had referred to US Marines buried in a World War I cemetery in France as "losers" and "suckers" for getting killed in action.

When visiting France in November 2018 for the centenary of the end of the Great War, Trump did not visit the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery near Paris -- officially because bad weather grounded his helicopter.

The backlash was swift, and Trump sent a barrage of tweets to defend himself.

"The Atlantic magazine is dying, like most magazines, so they make up a fake story in order to gain some relevance," wrote the president, who went on to assail the report as "a disgrace" in a briefing to White House reporters.

Trump's allies launched a swift

counteroffensive, flooding social media with images of the president in company of US soldiers -- but others were quick to dig up campaign comments from 2016 when he mocked late senator John McCain, a prisoner of war for years in Vietnam.

The report left Biden as angry as he has appeared on the campaign trail.

"I just think it is sick, it is deplorable, it is so un-American, it is so unpatriotic," Biden said of Trump's quoted remarks, which the Democrat said he believed were accurately reported.

"Who the heck does he think he is?"

Biden turned personal in mentioning his son Beau, a US military veteran and former Delaware attorney general who died of cancer in 2015.

Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 12

based on was misquoted by a section of the press.

PAK FILM BANNED

Bangladesh government has stopped exhibition of the films of erstwhile West Pakistan origin with effect from August 6, 1972, says a PID handout.

TCB IMPORTED GOODS BEING SOLD AT HIGH PRICE

The TCB imported consumer goods are selling in the market at prices two or three times higher than the TCB's selling rates. For example, one pound tin of Bebelac, a popular brand of milk food imported from Holland, is being sold in Dhaka retail shops at Tk 15 whereas the same was released by the TCB to the allottees at a price of Tk 5.

SOURCES: September 7, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Another war hero

FROM PAGE 1

Abul Bashar, personal assistant to Lt Col (ret'd) Chowdhury.

He tested negative for coronavirus and was receiving treatment at the hospital for other complications.

Abu Osman Chowdhury left behind his two daughters, grandchildren, other relatives and a host of well-wishers.

He was also the vice-chairman of Sector Commanders' Forum (SCF), a platform of sector commanders in the country's Liberation War.

Abu Osman Chowdhury's daughter Nasima Tarique said her father was scheduled to go abroad for better treatment but his physical condition deteriorated from Friday night.

Abu Osman Chowdhury was buried at the Army graveyard at the city's Banani with state honour. He was shown due honour on behalf of the Army, said Haroon Habib, secretary general of SCF.

Abu Osman Chowdhury was born on January 1, 1936 at Madnagaon village in Faridganj upazila of Chandpur.

After passing BA from Comilla Victoria College, he joined the Pakistan Army in 1958 and got commissioned. In April 1968, he was promoted to Major.

In 1971, Abu Osman Chowdhury was posted in Chuadanga, under Kushtia district as a Major of the Pakistan army and the Commander of 4th Wing East Pakistan Rifles (EPR).

He left for Kushtia with his family on March 23, 1971 to attend an official meeting. He was staying at Kushtia Circuit House on the night of March 25-26 when the news of Operation Searchlight reached him.

Sensing imminent danger, he left Kushtia on early morning of March 26, 1971 and headed to Chuadanga via Jhenaidah while local political workers had already revolted.

Later Bengali soldiers raised the flag of Bangladesh at EPR 4 Wing Headquarter in Chuadanga.

Later the 4th wing of EPR, led by Major Abu Osman Chowdhury and reinforced with Police and Ansar personnel and local youth, attacked 27 Baluch of Pakistan Army stationed at Kushtia and eliminated almost 2 companies.

On 10 April 1971, the Bangladesh government appointed him as the Regional Commander for the South-West.

In late May, Chief of Army Staff MAG Osmani divided the south-west battlefield into two and formed Sectors 8 and 9.

Abu Osman Chowdhury was appointed in charge of Sector 8. Initially, the area of operation of that sector was Kushtia, Jessore, Khulna, Barisal, Faridpur and Patuakhali districts.

On November 7, during the 1975 coup, a group of renegade soldiers went to Abu Osman Chowdhury's residence at Gulshan to kill him. Unable to find him, they murdered his wife. He retired from the Bangladesh Army in 1976.

TRIBUTES POUR IN

Tributes and condolences continue to pour in for Abu Osman Chowdhury.

Immediately after the death of Liberation War hero, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as well as top leaders of different political parties and other organisations expressed profound shock and sorrow.

In a message of condolence, the president said the nation with profound respect will recall the contribution of Abu Osman Chowdhury to the 1971 Liberation War forever.

The head of the state prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of the valiant freedom fighter.

In a condolence message, the prime minister with profound respect recalled the outstanding contributions of Abu Osman Chowdhury to the country's great Liberation War.

"The country and nation have lost a valiant freedom fighter at the death of Abu Osman Chowdhury, and his contributions to the Liberation War will be remembered forever," she said.

Besides, in separate condolence messages, Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Deputy Leader of Parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, Posts and Telecommunications Minister Mustafa Jabbar, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mahbub Ali, Sector Commanders Forum, Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971, mourned the death of Osman.

'Will give myself 7.5 out of 10'

Kazi Salahuddin, the long-serving president of Bangladesh Football Federation, is all set to run for a fourth term in the upcoming election on October 3. The football icon has his detractors, but also the charisma and support which has pulled him through on last three occasions. With the election coming up, The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman spoke in detail with Salahuddin about his achievements as the BFF boss over the past 12 years, the obstacles that he has faced during this journey and his plans for the next term, if elected.



The Daily Star (DS): You are contesting for the president's post of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for a fourth successive term. What has prompted you to run again?

Kazi Salahuddin (KS): When I became BFF president for the first time in 2008, you journalists had asked me why I had come as there was no league and no competition. I had said that I had come from an obligation towards football. But I found there was no structure of football. Since then I have completed 12 leagues in 12 years and all the footballers of the national team are my product. So, a foundation has been set. With this foundation, now is the time to build a 30-storey building. That's why I want to continue (as president) and complete that building.

TDS: If elected again, what will be your projects?
KS: People have lots of dreams, but there is difference between dream and reality. We will try our best so that we can reach a certain stage. It's unfortunate that it will take at least 12 to 18 months to recover from the seven-to-eight month gap due to the coronavirus pandemic. It is another challenge.

TDS: How do you evaluate your work of the last 12 years?

KS: There has been continuation of some competitions like Bangladesh Premier League, Federation Cup and Independence Cup. Many people say many things but the fact is no one gave any money to districts for the district league, but I gave them money every year. They might have more demand but I have to have the money in my box. No one supports me, neither government nor FIFA. AFC provides

us fund for their purpose. I have to manage money personally for districts. I don't give them (bribe). I give them money officially. League is being held in 40 to 50 districts even though there may be lack of quality. Districts also have responsibility (to bring quality). If you want to expand the love for football, the government, people, media and players have to come forward. If I make mistakes, tell me. I will make amends. Apart from money, the biggest thing I gave to the federation is time which has a lot of value.

TDS: After being elected for the



third term in 2016 you set priority on three things - district football, strong national team and an academy. How much improvement have you made in these three areas?

KS: Whatever the reasons, I saw districts were very weak. That's why I brought money from the government last year and distributed to the districts. If the districts show a bit of interest in holding league and manage some money, then we won't have any problem.

The second is the national team. Our responsibility is to provide quality coach, trainer, physiotherapist, goalkeeping coach which I didn't get during my playing career. I sent the national team for training in Qatar, Malaysia. Academy is a very difficult subject. We have already set up an academy which produced has a result (trophy) in UEFA Assist Tournament in Bangladesh. The problem is that I spent 2.16 lakh dollars for coaches and Tk 1.25 crore for players in one year and I had to collect this fund alone. An academy needs money to be run.



The bottom line is I need Tk 5 to 6 crore per year to run an academy which I can't manage.

TDS: Football at lower divisions and districts have been ignored due to focus only on top-flight. What will you say to this allegation?

KS: Yes and no. The biggest problem is funding. You have to set the priority first. If you give me a bucketful of money, I can implement all the programmes easily. I'm contesting the polls, but

I'm also thinking of how to manage money and hold the first, second and third division leagues.

TDS: BFF spent record amount of money per year, between 35 and 40 crore taka, and one-third of it in administration while there is no reflection of football development.

KS: FIFA won't give us money to hold leagues with a few exceptions. 80 percent money from FIFA and AFC is spent for administration including for the coaches and that's the law of FIFA and AFC.

TDS: There is allegation that you could not emphasise on men's football at age-level compared to women's football at age level.

KS: It is not correct. Whenever I wanted to hold U-18 (boys) tournaments, the clubs did not support me. Big teams refused to play. Some 70 teams are playing in Pioneer League, which covers youth level. Of course, men's football is my first priority, but both men's and women's football are my priority.

TDS: As per the condition of professional league, clubs must have youth teams but they don't have in reality. Why the federation could bring those clubs into the professionalism?

KS: 'Could not bring' is not the correct word. I don't have power to force them to do it even though I'm telling them time and again. If you don't do your work, your employer will terminate you. But I don't have the authority to terminate anyone (the clubs). I can only request them to come into professionalism.

TDS: Out of 10, how many marks will you give yourself and your committee?

KS: I will give 7.5 because I have been successful in holding leagues and tournaments, in finding success in women's football, etc. If I get official funding, I will obtain 10 out of 10.



Edin Dzeko opened the scoring against Italy in their Nations League encounter at the Stadio Artemio Franchi in Florence on Friday night. Although his goal was cancelled out in a 1-1 draw, the striker said Bosnia-Herzegovina 'got some pride back after the two defeats' to Italy last year.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bosnia halt Italy's winning run at 11

AGENCIES



Bosnia ended Italy's run of 11 successive wins when they held Roberto Mancini's side to a 1-1 draw in their Nations League match on Friday while the Netherlands began the post-Ronald Koeman era by keeping up their former coach's approach to the game and beating Poland 1-0 in their Nations League opener.

"The winning streak had to end sooner or later. We're glad it was with a draw and not a defeat. We'll keep this basic structure going forward, a few players will change because obviously they can't play every three days," Italy coach Roberto Mancini said after a game that saw both teams strike the woodwork in the first half. The Azzurri were playing their first match since beating Armenia 9-1 last November, a gap of 291 days -- Italy's longest since 1945-46.

"I always love scoring goals, not just today," Bosnia goalscorer Edin Dzeko told RAI Sport. "I was right yesterday when I said neither team were 100 per cent fit. We could see the lack of sharpness, but it was a balanced game. I think both sides had chances."

Meanwhile, the Netherlands had all



STEVEN BERGWIJN

the hallmarks of confident showings of the last two years under Koeman, who sparked a revival after they missed out on the 2016 Euros and the 2018 World Cup.

After Koeman quit to take up his "dream job" with Barcelona last month, his assistant Dwight Lodeweges took over as interim coach and the Dutch team hardly missed a beat. Steven Bergwijn scored his first international goal, finishing from close range after Hans Hateboer volleyed a pass from Frenkie de Jong back across the face of the goal in the 61st minute.

"Ronald Koeman congratulated me by text. He thought we had a really good second half. So, thank you Ronald," Lodeweges told Dutch television after the game.

'It was a brutal drama'

Lionel Messi will stay at Barcelona. After a whirlwind week of what is surely among the foremost transfer sagas of all time, the Argentine broke his silence and said that he would remain at the club. However, he does so with a heavy heart, with accusations of the president 'not keeping his word'. In a wide-ranging interview with Goal, he discussed what had led to him making the decision to leave the club, how he was denied what he thought was his "right" and the impact it would have going forward. The excerpts are below:

REACTIONS AS MESSI REVERSES HIS DECISION

No smile, no handshake and no reconciliation. Lionel Messi is staying at Barcelona but this was no happy ending. It is over, for now, yet there is no real closure and no one truly got what they wanted, maybe not even Josep Maria Bartomeu. A survivor clinging to power, he will no longer preside over the departure of the best player in the club's history but nor will he evade responsibility for it. His victory, if that is what this was, is hollow one. Messi made sure of that.

--- Sid Lowe, The Guardian's La Liga correspondent.

There is only one thing worse than Messi leaving, and that is Messi staying under these conditions. After the first draw all the seams of a forced agreement will burst.

--- Jorge Valdano, former Argentina international and ex-Real Madrid player.

Lionel Messi changes direction more gracefully than any footballer who ever lived but it was a clunking U-turn that led him to stay at Barcelona, at least for one more season.

--- Matt Dickinson, The Times.

If he can stay for one more year and we can make the most of him and go see him play at the stadium, for me it's very positive.

--- 31-year-old Barcelona fan Oriol Wives.

I think it's good he isn't leaving but with all the mess he has created, to be honest, it is not good for Barcelona because he doesn't give the impression he wants to play for the team.

--- 24-year-old Barca fan Sergi Roca.

Messi cannot be captain now!

--- Tweetered the Spanish TV channel El Chiringuito



WHY IT TOOK SO LONG TO BREAK HIS SILENCE:

First, because the defeat in Lisbon [8-2 loss in the Champions League to Bayern Munich] was very hard. We knew they were a very difficult opponent, but we didn't know that we were going to end that way, giving such a poor image for Barcelona. We gave a very bad image. It was wrong, I did not feel like anything. I wanted time to pass and then go out to clarify everything.

WHY HE WANTED TO LEAVE BARCELONA:

It was not because of the Bayern result, it comes from many things. I always said I wanted to end here. I wanted a winning project and to win titles with the club and continue expanding the legend of Barcelona. The truth is that there has been no project or anything for a long time, they juggle and cover holes as things go by.

It has hurt me a lot that things were published against me and above all, that false things are published. That they thought I could go to trial against Barca in order to benefit. I would never do such a thing. I repeat, I wanted to go and it was my right, because the contract said that I could be released. And it's not 'I'm leaving and that's it'. I was leaving and it cost me a lot. I wanted to go because I was thinking of living my last years of football happily.

I looked further and I want to compete at the highest level, win titles, compete in the Champions League. You can win or lose it, because it is very difficult, but you have to compete. At least compete and let things like Rome [3-0 loss at home that saw them exit the Champions League in the quarterfinal in 2017/18 due to an aggregate tie of 4-4], Liverpool [4-0 loss at Anfield in the Champions League semifinal in 2018/19 that undid all their hard work for a 3-0 win in the reverse leg] not happen to us... things like Lisbon.

THE BUILD-UP TO THE BUROFAX:

I told the club, especially the president [Josep Maria Bartomeu], that I wanted to go. I've been telling him all year. He believed it was time to step aside. I believed that the club needed more young people and I thought my time in Barcelona was over, feeling very sorry



because I always said that I wanted to finish my career here.

It was a very difficult year, I suffered a lot in training, in games and in the dressing room. Everything became very difficult for me and there came a time when I considered looking for new goals, new places. It was not because of the Champions League result against Bayern. I had been pondering the decision for a long time. I told the president and the president always said that at the end of the season I could decide if I wanted to go or if I wanted to stay and in the end he did not end up keeping his word.

The burofax was to make it official in some way. Throughout the year I had been telling the president that I wanted to go, that the time had come to seek new directions in my career. He told me all the time: 'We'll talk, no, this and that', but nothing. Sending the burofax was making it official that I wanted to go and that I was free and I was not going to use the optional year. It was not to make a mess, or to go against the club.

HIS LOVE FOR BARCELONA AND HOW IT FELT WHEN IT WAS DOUBTED:

I did feel hurt by things that I heard from people questioning my love for Barcelona and saying things that I think I didn't deserve. It also helped me to see who is who. This world of football that is very difficult and there are many

very false people. This has happened has helped me to recognize many false people. It hurt me when my love for this club was questioned. No matter how much I go or stay, my love for Barca will never change.

I love Barcelona and I'm not going to be better than here anywhere else. Still I have the right to decide. I was going to look for new goals and new challenges. And tomorrow I could have come back, because here in Barcelona I have everything. My son, my family, grew up here and are from here. There is nothing wrong with leaving. I needed it, the club needed it and it was good for everyone.

HIS REPLY TO PEOPLE SAYING HE ONLY WANTED MORE MONEY:

I always put the club before anything else. I had the possibility of leaving Barça many times. The money? Every year I was able to leave and earn more money than at Barcelona. I always said that this was my home and it was what I felt and feel. Better than here it is difficult. I felt that I needed a change and new goals, new things.

HOW HIS FAMILY REACTED

When I communicated this to my wife and children, it was a brutal drama. The whole family crying, my children did not want to leave Barcelona, nor did they want to change schools.

All this time it has been hard for everyone. He [his father Jorge] was clear

about what he wanted and said. My wife with all the pain of her soul supported and accompanied me.

Mateo is still young and he doesn't realize what it means to go somewhere else and make your life for a few years elsewhere. Thiago yes, he is bigger. He heard something on TV and found out something and asked. I didn't want to know anything about being able to leave, having to live in a new school or make new friends. He cried to me and said "let's not go", I repeat that it was hard, really. It was understandable. It happened to me. It is very difficult to make a decision.

ON THE JUNE 10 DEADLINE

We go back to the beginning. I thought and we were sure that I was free. The president always said that at the end of the season I could decide if I stayed or not. Now, they cling to the fact that I did not say it before June 10 even though on June 10 June we were competing for the league in the middle of this coronavirus pandemic which altered all the dates.

What they say is that I did not send it before June 10, but I repeat, we were in the middle of all the competitions and it was not the moment. But apart from that, the president always told me 'when the season is over, you decide if you stay or leave', he never set a date.

WHY HE HAS DECIDED TO CONTINUE AND WHAT THAT MEANS:

I am going to continue at the club because the president told me that the only way to leave was to pay the 700 million clause; that is impossible. And then another was to go to trial. I would never go to court against Barca because it is the club that I love, that gave me everything since I arrived, it is the club of my life, I have made my life here.

I am going to continue at Barça and my attitude is not going to change no matter how much I have wanted to go. I will do my best. I always want to win, I'm competitive and I don't like to lose anything. I always want the best for the club, for the dressing room and for myself. I said at the time that it was not allowing us to win the Champions League. Actually, now I don't know what will happen. There is a new coach and

THE BOMBSHELL IN BARCELONA

August 14: Messi and Barcelona are humiliated in the Champions League, crashing out after an 8-2 thrashing by eventual winners Bayern Munich

August 17: Setien sacked; Messi on vacation

August 19: Former Barca midfielder Ronald Koeman takes over from Setien, with reports claiming he told Messi he would no longer have the "privileges" he had become accustomed to.

August 25: Burofax arrives at Barca offices.

August 26: All roads lead to Manchester City

August 27: Bartomeu seeks to put responsibility on Messi

August 29: Neither training nor PCR.

August 30: La Liga supports Barcelona.

September 2: Jorge Messi arrives in Barcelona and meets with Josep Maria Bartomeu.

September 4: Jorge issues statement against La Liga before Messi says he will stay.

a new idea. That's good, but then we have to see how the team responds and whether or not it will give us to compete. What I can say is that I'm staying and I'm going to give my best.



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

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GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES

World's Largest VRM

SHAH CEMENT

CLASHES ALONG LAC India, China trade blame

New Delhi pushes for dialogue; Beijing says it can't lose 'an inch of territory'; Trump offers help

AGENCIES

India and China traded blame for rising tensions over their disputed Himalayan border yesterday following their highest level meeting since a deadly clash in June.

India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Chinese counterpart General Wei Fenghe released rival statements accusing each other of inflaming the showdown after talks late Friday on the sidelines of an international meeting in Moscow.

Singh said they had "frank" discussions on the dispute and the strained relations between the world's two most populous countries.

The meeting between the two leaders lasted for 2 hours 20 minutes. It was also the highest level face-to-face political contact since tensions flared along the disputed mountain border in May.

On June 15, the nuclear armed neighbours came close to a major conflict after forces clashed at Galwan valley in the Ladakh region in which 20 Indian troops died. China has also acknowledged suffering casualties but not given figures.

Both sides have since sent tens of thousands of troops to the remote, inhospitable region which sits at an altitude of more than 4,000 metres (13,500 feet).

A series of talks held since, but the tensions along the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



The port city market in Barishal has been overflowing with hilsa fish as fishermen of the area struck silver in the surrounding rivers and estuaries with an abundance this monsoon. The photo was taken yesterday. Story on page 3

PHOTO: TITU DAS

US ELECTION 2020 Vote-by-mail begins as race turns ugly

AFP, Washington

The US election is officially open: North Carolina on Friday launched vote-by-mail operations for the November 3 contest between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden, which is getting uglier by the hour.

With two months until Election Day, Trump is seizing on fears over violent protests in US cities and questioning the integrity of voting by mail, while challenger Biden intensified his criticism of a "deplorable" leader who he said is not fit for office.

Worries about the unabated spread of coronavirus are expected to prompt a surge in the number of ballots cast by mail, as millions seek to avoid polling stations.

In a country on edge over the health crisis and a national reckoning about race, the next 60 days will test the ability of the world's largest economy to organize its election while

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Years gone by but they're still temps

24 teachers, 12 staffers of Savar Govt College left in limbo

AKLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH, Savar

A total of 36 employees of Savar Govt College, who were recruited temporarily 12 years ago, are facing uncertainty regarding the permanence of their jobs after the institution declared itself to be nationalised in 2018.

Twenty-four teachers and 12 staffers were recruited temporarily at the college.

Due to negligence of the then college authorities, mainly its principal, such uncertainty was created, the teachers and staffers said.

They told The Daily Star that after they saw the job circular on a newspaper and applied. They were given temporary jobs after passing the recruitment tests.

"We are all public university students with good academic results, who are now teachers. Now, we are facing uncertainty about our future life," said Md Mashud Rana, who joined the college as a temporary lecturer of the marketing department in 2013.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Bangabandhu phones Nazrul, asks about price hike

September 6, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU INFORMED OF STEPS TO CHECK PRICE HIKE Acting prime minister Syed Nazrul Islam has talked over telephone today with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who is now in Geneva for convalescing after his gall stone operation. Bangabandhu wanted to know steps taken to face the food problem and to check the price hike. He is very much eager to return home immediately. Syed Nazrul Islam apprised him of the whole situation of the country.

BANGLADESH FIRM IN HER ATTITUDE TOWARDS PAKISTAN There is no change in the Bangladesh Government's stand that Pakistan must recognise Bangladesh before any talks can be held at the top or official level, sources close to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has said.

The sources were commenting on reports from Pakistan that a statement by Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad in New Delhi on Sunday was believed to have indicated a shift in Bangladesh Government's attitude towards the relations with Pakistan.

It may also be mentioned that the Bangladesh foreign minister's statement made in New Delhi on which the Pakistani reports are

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Parliament goes into 9th session today

UNB, Dhaka

Parliament is set to go into its ninth session today after a 59-day recess as the last (budget) session was prorogued on July 9.

"The session will begin at 11:00am tomorrow [today] maintaining the health codes amid the Covid-19 pandemic like it was done during the last session," Chief Whip Noor-e-Alam Chowdhury told UNB yesterday.

President Abdul Hamid on August 19 summoned the 9th session (4th session of this year) of the 11th parliament exercising the power bestowed upon him as per clause (1) of article 72 of the constitution.

The last session was prorogued after only nine sittings due to the Covid-19 outbreak in the country. It was the shortest budget session in Bangladesh's history.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

'Flying-V' makes successful maiden flight



CNN ONLINE

Researchers have conducted a successful maiden flight of the Flying-V, a futuristic and fuel efficient airplane that could one day carry passengers in its wings.

The Flying-V's unique design places the passenger cabin, the cargo hold and the fuel tanks in the wings, and experts hope that the plane's aerodynamic shape will cut fuel consumption by 20% compared to today's aircrafts.

Experts tested a 22.5 kg and 3-meter scale model of the futuristic airplane, developed by researchers at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands and partner Dutch airline KLM, on February 16.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Parents put kids to sleep with stories of Pradeep

Cox's Bazar DC told a programme last year

MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

When he was the officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, Pradeep Kumar Das earned such a name that parents put small children to sleep by telling them scary stories about the OC.

Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner Kamal Hossain said this last year at a public event while praising Pradeep.

"The war on drugs has started and we cannot backtrack from it. I would like to thank the OC [Pradeep] of Teknaf Police Station after whose arrival I heard that locals put their children to sleep saying Pradeep would visit. We want it to continue like this," the DC told the event, marking the surrender of 102 yaba dealers and smugglers, on February 16.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Bus runs over BAEC official in Banani

STAR REPORT

A female official of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) was seriously injured after the wheels of a bus ran over her right leg in Banani area of Dhaka yesterday noon.

Afroza Begum, 58, was receiving treatment at National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopedic Rehabilitation (Nitor) in the capital, her son Al Amin told The Daily Star.

The incident happened when his mother was returning home in Cantonment's Kochukhet area from Palash upazila of Narsingdi by a bus.

Noor-e-Alam Miah, officer-in-charge of Banani

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Ferdousi Begum had gone to Mugda General Hospital yesterday morning to test for Covid-19 after she noticed symptoms of the viral disease developing in her body over the last three days. However, even before she could get examined, she fell sick due to waiting under the sun for long hours.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

'Worst is yet to come'

India becomes third country to pass four million coronavirus cases, after US and Brazil

AGENCIES

India became the third country to cross four million coronavirus cases yesterday, also setting a new global record for a daily surge in infections and closing in on Brazil's total as the second-highest in the world.

The 86,432 cases added in the past 24 hours pushed India's total to 4,023,179. India's health ministry also reported 1,089 deaths for a total of 69,561.

Brazil has confirmed 4,091,801 infections while the United States has 6,200,186 people infected, according to Johns Hopkins University.

The pandemic has killed at least 875,703 people worldwide since surfacing in China late last year, according to an AFP count at 1100 GMT yesterday based on official sources. More than 26.6 million cases have been registered worldwide.

The United States has recorded the highest number of deaths with 187,777, followed by Brazil with 125,502, Mexico 66,851 and Britain 41,537 fatalities.

Initially, the virus ravaged India's sprawling and often densely populated cities. It has since stretched to almost every state in India, spreading through villages and smaller cities where access to healthcare is crippled.

With a population of nearly 1.4 billion people, India's massive caseload does not surprise experts. The country's delayed response to the virus forced the government to implement a harsh lockdown in late March. For more than two months, the economy remained shuttered, buying

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



PRAYER TIMING SEPTEMBER 6

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:35 12:45 4:30 6:20 7:45
JAMAT 5:10 1:15 4:45 6:25 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION