

## NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

## Bangladeshi-American Dr Ruhul Abid, his org HAEFA get nomination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Ruhul Abid, a Bangladeshi-American professor at Brown University Alpert Medical School in USA, and his nonprofit organisation Health and Education for All (HAEFA) were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, by University of Massachusetts Boston.

Prof Jean-Philippe Belleau from the department of anthropology at UMASS Boston confirmed the news.

Abid is one of 211 individuals nominated for the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize.

Dr Abid graduated from Dhaka Medical College, and received his PhD in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry from Nagoya University in Japan. He later did a fellowship from Harvard Medical School in 2001. He is also an executive faculty member of Brown Global Health Initiative.

HAEFA has been engaged in providing free healthcare to the underprivileged in Bangladesh.



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After a lengthy off-period, vendors have started coming down to the streets after restrictions on movement have been relaxed. However, business is yet to pick-up, making it hard for them to earn what they need and recover losses from the last six months. This photo was taken recently from Dhaka University area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Vendors are back, but their luck yet to arrive

MATHEWS CHIRAN

After six months of staying indoors due to the coronavirus fallout, 56-year-old Aleya Akter is back with her weighing machine on the pavement right across a Badda supermarket.

It has been a week since she restarted her old vocation. Pre-pandemic, she would start at 10am and work all the way till 8pm, weighing pedestrians in exchange of five taka per turn. She's been doing this for four years.

She is now selling surgical masks to earn a few more bucks, as business is yet to pick up after movement restrictions were relaxed across the capital.

"Before the shutdown, I would earn Tk 400-500 everyday with the weighing machine alone. Now, I can't pocket the same amount even after selling masks," Aleya told this correspondent recently.

"For the last six months, I have survived on relief. I've only decided to come out after everyone has started to do so," she said.

Aleya's misfortunes go much further back than the pandemic though. She first came to Dhaka after losing everything to river erosion in Barishal. She now lives with her daughter in Badda.

Asked if she's afraid of the virus, she said, "We need to eat first. If we get to do that, we may then have the option to think of fearing the virus." Like Aleya, many street vendors have come back out on the streets. Those who had gone back to their villages are back to try their luck in the city anew, hoping to rejuvenate their financial capacity from the monetary loss of the last six months.

Ruhul Amin (45) has come back to Dhaka after a six-month stay at his native Noakhali. Just like the old days, he has started selling boiled eggs on his customised van at Karwan bazaar. Each of his eggs go for Tk 15.

"The last six months have been incredibly difficult for me and my family (of four). We survived on the little savings we had and by planting vegetable and rearing a few poultry" he said.

"I have to look after my family first, I can't just worry about the virus and do nothing," said Ruhul.

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## PIROJPUR GRAFT CASES

## ACC moves to cancel bail of ex-AL MP Awal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed three separate revision petitions with the High Court seeking cancellation of a Pirojpur court order that granted bail to former Awami League lawmaker AKMA Awal and his wife Laila Parvin in three corruption cases in March this year.

ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that the court of the then Pirojpur district and sessions judge Abdul Mannan on March 3 had ordered the authorities concerned to send AKMA Awal and his wife Laila Parvin to jail, rejecting their bail prayers in three corruption cases.

The same day, district Joint District and Sessions Judge Nahid Nasrin, who has been given the responsibility of acting district and sessions judge of Pirojpur,

granted them bail after they moved a review petition.

"We submitted the revision petitions to the High Court today seeking cancellation of the bail of Abdul Awal and his wife. We said in the revision petitions that the judge court order that had rejected their bail petitions was correct," said ACC counsel Khurshid Alam Khan.

He said the HC may hold hearing on the revision petitions today.

Hours after sending Awal and his wife to jail, judge Abdul Mannan was stand-released over corruption allegations and attached to the law ministry on approval from the Supreme Court on March 3.

Awal, an ex-MP of the Pirojpur-1 constituency, also president of the district AL, is accused in three cases filed for leasing khas (government) land using fake

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## DIGITAL SECURITY ACT

## Three including editor of online portal sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Three people including editor of an online news portal were sent to jail in a case filed under Digital Security Act on Sunday in Barishal.

Mamunur Rashid Nomani, editor of online news portal Barishal Khabor, and his two associates -- Kamrul Mridha and Labu Gazi -- were arrested from 30 Godown area in Barishal, police said.

Barishal City Mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah along with his family members went for a walk in the area near Kirtankhola river around 1am on Sunday, said Md Nurul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station. At that time, Nomani, Mridha and Gazi recorded a video of them without permission, the police official said.

When the mayor and his family sensed their presence, policemen who were present there chased the three and caught them.

According to locals, the three were allegedly beaten

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Jamal Akand waits for customers at his photocopy and print shop in Nilkhet's City Corporation Market.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

## No clicks and clatter at photocopy centres

FAISAL BIN IQBAL, SHOUT

Print shops and photocopy centres provide crucial services for all, especially students and professionals. In fact, most of the photocopy business centres around educational institutions and offices. But in the crunch of the pandemic, when academic institutions and many physical workplaces are closed, these small businesses are gradually sliding into a state of deep crisis.

The City Corporation Market in Nilkhet, Dhaka is a hot spot for all kinds of print and publishing works. It attracts teachers, students, and professionals from everywhere. While some wait to make copies and print reports, others stand busy inquiring about banners and business cards, or check out office supplies. At least, that's what it used to be like, until the coronavirus struck. Its alleyways now stand empty, with barely a single customer in front of the shops.

"Our business is deeply intertwined with academic activities," says Mohammad Jamal Akand, a shop owner at the market. "Since the institutions are closed, our business isn't doing well. I can't even pay the rent properly. Some of my regular customers did stay in touch, but many do not respond, which is understandable. It's the same situation for us all," he lamented.

"We've exhausted almost all of our savings," adds Jamal. "At this stage, we're

basically surviving by taking out small loans."

Md Abdul Razzak runs a similar business at the market. He too felt the full blow of the pandemic. When the restrictions were first imposed in March, he and his family left the city for their village. However, he returned soon after.

"I had to come back," says Razzak. "Business hasn't come back to normalcy. Right now, our only customers are from nearby offices, along with a few doctoral candidates. Once things improve, I'll bring my family back."

Although restrictions on movement have been eased, the government has so far insisted on keeping education institutes shut, with their reopening completely dependent on the pandemic situation. In case they remain shut for a long while, one can only imagine how bad the situation can get for these businesses.

"At first, I thought the situation would go back to normal within a week or two," said Shahidul Islam, another trader at the market. "When that didn't happen, I assumed it would be over within a month or so. But it's been over six months."

But Shahidul isn't giving up yet. "I still have hope that things will improve soon."

Like Akand and Razzak, Shahidul too is having difficulties paying rent. However, he says, what's more responsible for his

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## Covid-19 led to food insecurity in Cox's Bazar: WFP

UNB, Dhaka

Almost half of the urban population in Cox's Bazar Sadar are struggling to get food during the pandemic due to significant downturns in livelihoods, according to World Food Programme's (WFP) assessment.

The "Cox's Bazar Urban Vulnerability Assessment" found that 40 percent of those surveyed have had no income since March, and 48 percent struggled to buy enough food.

As a result, they have been heavily relying on external assistance, including those from the government and donors, said WFP yesterday.

"Covid-19 is more than a health crisis...it's also a socio-economic crisis for millions of people around the world. Here in Bangladesh, urban populations and those who rely on tourism or the informal wage sector to make a living are the hardest hit," said Sheila Crudem, senior emergency coordinator for WFP in Cox's Bazar.

Daily wage workers have experienced

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## IRRI WORKSHOP ON HAOR REGIONS

## Growing climate-resilient crops imperative: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For a number of years, rice cultivation in haor areas, which account for one-fifth of the total rice production in Bangladesh, has been bearing the brunt of climate change.

To tackle this, rice growers in the haor regions need short-duration, cold-tolerant and high yielding varieties, said Additional Agriculture Secretary Kamalaranjan Das.

He made the remark at an online workshop, organised by International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) yesterday.

A new five-year research project -- "Development of Short-duration Cold-tolerant Rice Varieties for haor Areas of Bangladesh", funded by Krishi Gobeshona Foundation (KGF), was launched at the workshop.

Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) is a partner of this project.

The additional secretary said this new project would help bring a positive change in the lives of the haor people and also contribute to food and nutrition security.

Boro paddy is the main crop in haor areas. But

almost every year, flash flood in April caused by heavy rainfall in the upstream submerge almost the entire Boro yield in this region. The Boro season usually begins in mid-November, but many farmers start sowing in late October to avoid flash flood.

BRRI Director General Md Shahjahan Kabir said population of Bangladesh is increasing at the rate of 1.37 percent per year, but arable land is decreasing at 0.4 percent.

He said the global climate change has been continuously challenging the country's food security.

Saying that there is about 1.26 million hectares of cultivable land in the northeastern haor areas where farmers can grow only one crop every year, the scientist said flash flood often damages that only crop, putting Bangladesh's food security in jeopardy.

"That is why BRRI and IRRI have been trying to develop cold and submergence tolerant varieties. With this aim, BRRI has already collected germplasms from South Korea, Nepal and Japan and have finished their characterisation," he added.

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## 4 held for rape in Jashore, Rangpur

STAR REPORT

Police have arrested four people on charge of gang raping a teenage girl in Jashore and a woman in Rangpur in separate incidents.

In Abhaynagar upazila of Jashore, police arrested three youths early yesterday for allegedly raping a teenage girl at Guakhola village district, reports our Benapole correspondent.

The arrestees were identified as Hasan Ali (28), Habib (28) and Farid (22). A Jashore court sent them to jail yesterday after a case was filed and they were produced before the court.

The incident took place on Sunday evening, when the victim was on her way to her father's house with her two-year-old nephew, said Tajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Abhaynagar Police Station. The perpetrator fled when the girl screamed, he added.

After the girl informed her family about the incident, they lodged a complaint with police.

Police conducted a raid and arrested the three from different areas of Nawapara municipality, Tajul said, adding that the arrestees confessed to the rape during preliminary interrogation.

Meanwhile, a housewife was admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital on Sunday, a day after she was allegedly gang raped in the city, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

The rapists apparently threatened the woman of dire consequences if the incident was disclosed, which scared the family to admit her to hospital.

The incident took place on Saturday, in which eight people were involved, said police.

The 34-year old was being treated at the one-stop-crisis centre at the hospital, said police.

The victim filed a case with Hajirhat Police Station in the city on Sunday afternoon, following which police arrested a man in connection with the incident.

Mostafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Hajirhat Police Station confirmed the incident. Police are looking for other accused, he said.



A heap of garbage is being burnt near the banks of the Buriganga river. Whereas waste shouldn't be dumped beside such an important water body in the first place, burning it so indiscriminately adds another layer of pollution to the environment. This photo was taken yesterday from Kamrangirchar's Koyla Ghat area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## DIRECTIVE TO LOWER COURT

## Provide Sabrina's lawyers relevant documents: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the lower court concerned to provide JKG Healthcare Chairman Dr Sabrina Arif Chowdhury's lawyers with the relevant documents relating to fake Covid-19 certificates allegedly issued by her.

The HC ordered the metropolitan magistrate court-19 of Dhaka to give the documents so that the lawyers for accused Dr Sabrina can examine them and defend her before the court, Sabrina's lawyer Saifuzzaman Tuhin told The Daily Star yesterday.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman came up with the order following a petition filed by Sabrina seeking necessary orders.

Deputy Attorney General Sarwar Hossain Bappi represented the state.

Lawyer Saifuzzaman Tuhin said Dr Sabrina had submitted an application to the magistrate court concerned requesting it to provide her lawyers with the documents.

