

Publish then perish?

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limited. A baseline study conducted in 2011–2012 revealed that at least two species of sawfish were still present in Bangladeshi waters and highlighted several important steps that could be taken to prevent populations from further decline,” the paper said.

Five years after the first research on these prehistoric species in the waters of Bangladesh, Alifa started work on this issue in 2016. She first uncovered whether any sawfishes remained in our waters and conducted research around this throughout the coast collecting data for future work. On the sidelines, the authors also tried to understand why none of the recommendations made by previous author Md Anwar Hossain and others saw the light of day.

In his 2011 study Hossain had highlighted “opportunities for immediate conservation action”, including effective implementation of national fishing and wildlife trade laws, education efforts amongst fishing communities and development of an initiative to release caught sawfishes.

However, there was barely any communication of the recommendations these authors made, to the relevant authorities in Bangladesh or to any conservation organisations or communities in key areas. Scientific research of this sort, with conservation implications, is not for the enjoyment of other scientists, but for paving the way for tangible, real-world actions -- something that is largely missing from the Bangladeshi landscape.

Failing to communicate Hossain's findings to relevant authorities -- law enforcement agencies, Bangladesh Forest Department and other authorities responsible for conservation -- meant the loss of crucial years. As a result, none of the recommended actions were taken and, as of February 2020, no targeted conservation activities aimed at reducing mortality rates and improving the conservation status of sawfishes had been started, said Jahidul Kabir, director, Sheikh Kamal Wildlife Centre, Bangladesh Forest Department, in a personal communication this February.

This demonstrates a serious research-implementation gap for a highly threatened species.

This gap is a failure to translate the recommendations into actions that will conserve the species and habitats, despite growing scientific literature that documents species and habitats in need of targeted action.

“If staff in protected areas or in relevant government institutions are not developing and implementing programmes to protect species of concern, it may be because they lack

resources, expertise, or personnel, but it may also be simply because they are not aware of the need for such programmes,” the research paper adds.

The problem is even more specific in Bangladesh. Much like the paper in question, most scientific articles are written in English and is thus inaccessible to a largely Bangla-speaking population.

A WAY TO BRIDGE THE GAP

No one is asking for scientific articles to be eradicated but the jargon-heavy document can be made more accessible through popular newspaper articles, posters, one-on-one conversations with relevant parties (in this case fisherfolk and sawfish traders) and other forms of communication -- for example songs, plays, socially appropriated campaigns that can help the knowledge trickle down. That is what the authors tried to accomplish through this paper, written in more accessible language.

The authors identified actions immediately needed for sawfish conservation and also identified possible stakeholders and collaborations required to achieve these results in Bangladesh.

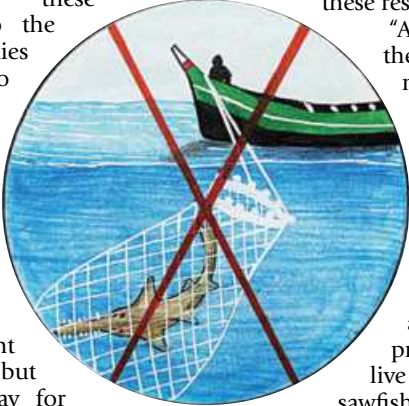
“A campaign to dispel the belief that sawfish meat can cure cancer and raise awareness of the protected status of sawfishes, understanding why fisherfolk are unable to engage in conservation actions and a programme initiating live release of all sawfish caught are some of the ways in which we can reach the masses,” opines Alifa Bintha Haque.

The scientists’ job does not end with the publishing of the document. They also plan on involving traders and local regulatory bodies, which includes the Bangladesh Forest Department, Department of Fisheries, Bangladesh Coast Guard and District Commissioner’s office. They will be provided with posters highlighting the legally protected status of sawfishes and also given easy guides to implement the conservation actions.

The authors also focus on the need to simplify scientific articles for the benefit of those working on the field.

Research is necessary, or else we risk entering this post-apocalyptic world armed without much baseline information, but information alone is not enough. All of the work being done by scientists can make a meaningful contribution to conservation, but only if it is effectively communicated to those who can implement on-the-ground actions that will tangibly affect the trajectory of a species or habitat.

If you are interested to read the full paper please find it here: <https://doi.org/10.1002/aqc.3403>, or contact Alifa Haque: alifa.haque@du.ac.bd for more information.



‘Scorpion-like venom’

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among hikers.

A team of Australian scientists say they now better understand why the gympie-gympie’s sting haunts those unlucky enough to brush up against its leaves.

Victims report an initial sting that “feels like fire at first, then subsides over hours to a pain reminiscent of having the affected body part caught in a slammed car door”, the University of Queensland researchers said yesterday.

In the final, drawn-out stages, simply taking a shower can reignite the pain.

Though the gympie-gympie is covered in fine needle-like hairs similar to other nettles, previous testing for common irritants such as histamines came up empty.

Irina Vetter, an associate professor at the University of Queensland’s Institute for Molecular Bioscience, said the research team discovered a new class of neurotoxin miniproteins,

which they christened ‘gympietides’.

“Although they come from a plant, the gympietides are similar to spider and cone snail toxins in the way they fold into their 3D molecular structures and target the same pain receptors -- this arguably makes the gympie-gympie tree a truly ‘venomous’ plant,” she said.

Australia is already infamous for its venomous fauna including snakes, box jellyfish, blue-ringed octopus and funnel-web spiders, although deaths in humans from bites or stings are rare.

Vetter said the long-lasting pain inflicted by the tree may be explained by the gympietides permanently altering the chemical makeup of the affected sensory neurons -- not due to the fine hairs getting stuck in the skin.

The scientists hope their research, published in peer-reviewed journal Science Advances, will eventually help lead to better pain relief treatment for people who have been stung.

EU pandemic survey shows Italy disdain for Brussels

AFP, Brussels

Opinions on how governments handled the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic varies hugely in Europe, a survey showed yesterday, with hard-hit Italians especially disillusioned with the EU.

The poll was carried out on behalf of activist group “More in Common” in late June and July, but the data was made public yesterday after being seen by top officials in Berlin, Paris, Brussels and London.

The survey hints at what helped bring about the landmark and unexpected decision by divided EU member states to jointly finance a massive recovery plan for Europe.

The results clearly indicate disenchantment with the EU among Italians, who felt a stinging lack of solidarity from their EU partners as the crisis unfolded, especially from the Netherlands which only reluctantly accepted the plan after a fierce summit

debate.

With far-right and anti-establishment parties already strong in the country, the Italian data would have raised alarm bells in EU capitals that euro scepticism was worryingly on the rise in one of the bloc’s founding members.

In the poll, only 33 percent of respondents in Italy said EU membership was a good thing, with 44 percent of respondents saying their trust in Brussels had worsened with the crisis.

The poll also revealed that the emotional response to the crisis differed in the European countries surveyed: Germany, France, Italy, Poland and the Netherlands, as well as non-EU Britain.

A majority of respondents in Britain (62 percent), the Netherlands and Germany (both 57 percent) said the “pandemic has shown me that most people in our country care about each other.”



A man, standing outside of his home, watches a street flooded by Hurricane Sally in Pensacola, Florida, US on Wednesday. Hurricane Sally barreled into the US Gulf Coast Wednesday, with forecasts of drenching rains that could provoke historic and potentially deadly flash floods.

PHOTO: AFP

Govt closes

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did not receive any clear instruction in this regard and that they would discuss the issue with the madrasa authorities.

“We are talking to the madrasa authorities to shut their activities as per the order. If anyone tries to breach the order, steps will be taken legally,” he said.

Meanwhile, thousands of students of the madrasa, which is also known as the base of Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh, in the last two days staged a demonstration inside the campus demanding termination of Anas Madani, son of Hefazat chief Ahmad Shafi.

Their demands also include reinstatement of Junayed Babu Nagri, who was removed from the post of the madrasa’s assistant director in June, and removal of several inefficient teachers and members of the madrasa’s Surah committee.

The agitating students allegedly carried out vandalism inside the campus yesterday, police sources said, adding that a large number of police and Rab personnel were deployed in the madrasa area to avoid any untoward incident.

The students locked the entrances of the campus from inside and no one, including police and administrative officials, was allowed to enter until the filing of this report last evening.

This correspondent tried several times to contact a number of senior members of Hefazat and madrasa board members, but all of their phones were found switched off.

Rich nations grab stocks

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European Union, Australia, Hong Kong and Macau, Japan, Switzerland and Israel.

The remaining 2.6 billion have been bought by or promised to developing countries including India, Bangladesh, China, Brazil, Indonesia and Mexico.

‘VACCINE NATIONALISM’
Trump on Wednesday said he would begin rolling out a vaccine in America as soon as next month, contradicting doubts expressed by a top health expert in his administration who said a jab was unlikely to be widely available until mid-2021.

CDC director Robert Redfield, in testimony to a congressional committee, said that general availability of a vaccine could come by “late second quarter, third quarter 2021.”

“We’re very close to that vaccine as you know... We think we can start sometime in October” or shortly thereafter, Trump said.

Democrats have expressed concern that Trump is pressuring government health regulators and scientists to approve a rushed vaccine in time to help his uphill bid for re-election in early November, reports AFP.

“We’re within weeks of getting it, you know -- could be three weeks, four weeks,” the president told a town hall session with voters in Pennsylvania Tuesday.

But in an implicit swipe at Trump’s America First approach to the pandemic, von der Leyen said Europe would support multilateral

bodies such as the World Health Organization with its attempts at a more equitable rollout.

“None of us will be safe until all of us are safe -- wherever we live, whatever we have,” she said.

“Vaccine nationalism puts lives at risk. Vaccine cooperation saves them.”

‘GOING HARD AND EARLY’
The global economy has been devastated by the pandemic, with many nations still maintaining restrictions on their populations to contain fresh outbreaks.

New Zealand was added to the list of economic casualties yesterday when it reported it had plunged into recession for the first time in a decade.

The country posted a record contraction of 12.2 percent for the April-June quarter, which coincided with a strict lockdown from March to May.

The decline follows a 1.6-percent contraction in the first three months of 2020, confirming New Zealand is in recession.

But there was optimism that the stage had been set for a strong recovery.

“Going hard and early means that we can come back faster and stronger,” finance minister Grant Robertson said.

“Economists expect the current September quarter to show a record jump back to growth.”

There were also positive signs in South Africa where authorities announced borders would be reopened to most countries from next month -- part of a wider easing of anti-virus curbs as infection figures improve.

9 Covid patients flew

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that they were carrying Covid-19 patients.

“We asked them for a strict monitoring system to ensure that Covid-19 positive patients cannot travel,” Tauhid said.

Out of nine patients, five flew on Saudia, two on Qatar Airways, one on Bangladesh Biman and one on SalamAir.

Two of them landed in Dhaka on August 24th and 26th, the others reached on September 4th, 6th, 7th, 14th and 17th.

The civil aviation authority said all the patients were sent and admitted to Kurmitola General Hospital after their arrival in Dhaka.

Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman, chairman of the Civil

Aviation Authority Bangladesh, told The Daily Star that the concerned airlines were warned and explanations were sought from them.

“If the response is not satisfactory, we will inform the concerned civil aviation authority that the airlines violated health rules and will request them to take steps,” he said.

International flights were suspended for long due to the pandemic and resumed on a limited scale on June 16th.

The civil aviation authority also issued a circular of health guidelines before the resumption of flights.

Expatriates from different countries started rushing back to the country once the coronavirus began to spread in China in late December.

Bangladesh took a positive initiative when it put 312 of its nationals, who were brought back from China’s Wuhan province, on a 14-day quarantine in Dhaka’s Ashkona camp on February 1.

But afterwards, the returnees were allowed to go into home quarantine, risking the spread of infection across Bangladesh.

According to Johns Hopkins University, Bangladesh has jumped up to 25th on Monday, surpassing China, in the list of countries with the highest Covid-19 related casualties.

With the new cases, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 3,44,264 -- the 15th highest in the world, according to the reference website worldometers.info.

LatAm opening up too early

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around the corner,” Etienne warned.

“We must be clear that opening up too early gives this virus more room to spread and puts our populations at greater risk. Look no further than Europe,” she said.

Etienne said governments must monitor travel very carefully because reopening to tourism can lead to setbacks. That has happened in the Caribbean, where several countries that had virtually no cases have experienced spikes as tourism resumed.

According to a Reuters tally, Latin America has recorded around 8.4 million coronavirus cases, and over 314,000 deaths, both figures being the highest of any region.

The world health body yesterday warned of “alarming rates of transmission” of Covid-19 across Europe and cautioned countries against shortening quarantine periods.

The WHO’s regional director for Europe Hans Kluge said the number of cases seen in September “should serve as a wake-up call for all of us.”

“Although these numbers reflect more comprehensive testing, it also shows alarming rates of transmission across the region,” he told an online press conference from the Danish capital Copenhagen.

The health body also said it would not change its guidance calling for a 14-day quarantine period for anyone exposed to the novel coronavirus.

“Our quarantine recommendation of 14 days has been based on our understanding of the incubation period and transmission of the disease. We would only revise that on the basis of a change of our understanding of the science,” WHO Europe’s senior emergency officer Catherine Smallwood said.

In France for instance, the recommended length for self-isolation in case of exposure has been reduced from 14 to seven days.

It is 10 days in the UK and Ireland, and several other European countries, such as Portugal and Croatia, are currently considering reducing their recommendations.

“Knowing the immense individual and societal impact even a slight reduction in the length of quarantine can have... I encourage countries of the region to make scientific due process with their experts and explore safe reduction options,” Kluge said, adding that the “concept of quarantine must be protected” and “continuously adapted.”

COVID ‘FATIGUE’
The 53 member states of WHO Europe have recorded nearly five million cases of Covid-19 and more than 227,000 related deaths, according to the organisation’s own figures.

The number of daily cases recorded is currently between 40,000 and 50,000, comparable to a daily peak of 43,000 on April 1 -- although testing in many countries has increased

considerably.

A new record was set on September 11, with some 54,000 cases recorded in 24 hours.

Following the introduction of strict measures in many countries around Europe, cases hit an all-time low in June, Kluge stressed.

“If you lift the pressure from the virus, naturally you’re going to see this increase,” he said.

However, noting reports that Europeans were experiencing Covid “fatigue”, he said that rather than returning to lockdowns authorities ought to “focus on reducing harm, where and when possible.”

“Engage the youth in finding new and safe ways to be social,” Kluge said.

Meanwhile, India reported another record jump in daily coronavirus infections with 97,894 cases in the last 24 hours, data from the health ministry showed yesterday.

With 5.12 million cases in all, India is the world’s second-worst affected country, and trails only the United States, which has a caseload of around 6.6 million.

Deaths, which have been relatively low so far, are showing an uptick, and the country has recorded more than 1,000 deaths every day for the last two weeks.

Yesterday, the federal health ministry said 1,132 people died of Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, taking total fatalities from the disease to 83,198.

BGB-BSF border

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smuggling of phensedyl, hemp, liquor, yaba tablets, Viagra, Senegra tablets and other narcotic drugs into Bangladesh, smuggling of weapons, ammunition and explosives, detaining and picking up of Bangladeshi citizens, crossing the border illegally/ forcing people to enter Bangladesh and pushing mentally challenged Indian nationals into Bangladesh were discussed on the first day of the formal talks.

Besides, some other issues, including carrying out developmental construction work within 150 yards of the border, protecting riverbanks along the border, constructing a visitor gallery at Banglabandha ICP, conducting joint patrols for the implementation of Coordinated Border Management Plan, arranging regular meetings of region/ frontier level officers, and ways to enhance the mutual communication and existing friendship between the two border forces came up for discussion.

Earlier, the BGB-BSF talks was postponed on September 13 as the BSF delegation failed to reach Dhaka due to a technical glitch in their aircraft.

Three in city

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“It is requested as per an order to start treatment of general patients in those hospitals, due to having no or a very few Covid-19 patients,” the circular said.

As of yesterday noon, there were only 29 patients against 66 general beds in Mohanagar Hospital, one against 121 in Lalkuthi Hospital and 11 against 2,013 beds in Bashundhara hospital, says a press release from the health directorate.

Among them, only Lalkuthi Hospital had five ICU beds.

The health directorate also reported there were a total of 14, 275 general beds and 547 ICUs in Covid-19-dedicated hospitals across the country.

Of those, 6,107 general beds and 307 ICU beds were in the capital.

Meanwhile, the health directorate reported 1,593 new cases of Covid-19 till 8:30am yesterday.

The positivity rate stood at 11.65 percent against 13,673 people tested for Covid 19.

A day before, the positivity rate was 12.09 percent while the overall positivity rate remained the same at 19.3 percent.

With this, the total number of people tested positive since January 21 rose to 344,264, according to a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Additional 36 patients have died raising the death toll to 4,859 and taking the death rate to 1.43 percent.

With 2,443 patients recovering in those 24 hours, the total number of recovered cases now stands at 250,412 which takes the recovery rate close to 73 percent.

Eight of the newly deceased were females and 28 were males. Two of them died at their homes and 34 in hospitals, added the press release.

Among the deceased, two were aged between 21 and 30, one was between 31 and 40, five were between 41 and 50, seven between 51 and 60, and the highest 21 were over 60 years old.

So far, more than 50 percent of the deceased were aged over 60.

Each of the deceased was from Rangpur and Sylhet divisions, two were from Khulna, three from Barisal, four from Rajshahi, five from Chattogram and 20 were from Dhaka division.

Prices must be

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He asserts that the process of importing food must continue until the shortfall is overcome. He, however, says, “We can’t go on depending on the imports of food grains as such. All measures should be taken to increase the production at home and for this all necessary imports must be arranged as expeditiously as possible.”

The prime minister asks officials to resolve any case of complaint in the distribution of relief materials. He says that malpractices of any kind in relief work will not be tolerated. Bangabandhu calls upon the officials to gear up the administrative machinery to meet the challenging demand.

After the meeting with commissioners, Bangabandhu holds a separate meeting with IG, DIGs and SPs.

BANGABANDHU MEETS POLYTECH STUDENTS

The students of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute bring out a procession in support of their 5-point demand today. They demonstrate in front of the secretariat. Failing to meet the education minister, they go straight to Gono Bhaban to meet Bangabandhu. The representatives of the polytechnic students meet Bangabandhu and apprise him of their demands. Bangabandhu gives them a patient hearing.

The 5-point demands include a total change in the system of technical education, provision for enabling them to pursue BSc engineering course, increase in the number of seats in polytechnic institutes and higher pay and status for diploma holders.

SOURCES: September 19, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.