



# The Daily Star

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SWINDLE BY PK HALDER

## So far, it is Tk 10,200cr

Ongoing ACC probe finds; he, his associates embezzled the money from 4 NBFIs and laundered it to Canada, India, Singapore

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The amount of money embezzled by Prashanta Kumar Halder alias PK Halder and his associates from four non-banking financial institutions (NBFIs) might leave you baffled.

It's neither Tk 2,500 crore nor Tk 3,500 crore --- figures which have been reported by the media lately. Investigators now say they have so far learnt that the amount is at least Tk 10,200 crore or \$120.36 crore.

With the money, at least seven structures like the capital's Mouchak-Moghbarz Flyover could have been built in the country.

Using 30 organisations, owned by Halder and his associates, Halder misappropriated



loans of Tk 10,200 crore from the NBFIs and laundered the money to Canada, Singapore and India, according to the investigators.

Sources in Bangladesh Bank also confirmed the matter to The Daily Star.

They said Halder, who is now in Canada, embezzled Tk 2,500 crore from International Leasing and Financial Services Limited (ILFSL), Tk 2,200 crore from FAS Finance, Tk 3,000 crore from Peoples' Leasing and Tk 2,500 crore from Reliance Finance.

The allegation of embezzlement against Halder surfaced after the Anti-Corruption Commission launched an enquiry into the

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People about to travel out of the country, mostly to join their workplaces in the middle eastern nations including Saudi Arabia, waiting at Dhaka North City Corporation kitchen market for their turn to get tested for the coronavirus. Thousands of expatriates, whose jobs and residency in foreign lands were at the stake due to flight shortage, have finally got hold of plane tickets. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## COVID-19 Test Many Saudi returnees on edge for tight flight schedule

RASHIDUL HASAN

From early morning to around 2:30pm yesterday, the situation seemed normal at the Dhaka North City Corporation Market at the city's Mohakhali as the Bangladeshi expatriates -- mainly Saudi Arabia and UAE-bound workers -- stood in the queue for Covid-19 test.

Medical and other related staffers were prioritising those whose flights were scheduled to leave from Dhaka within the next 48 hours.

But after 2:30pm, around 20 to 30 expatriate workers entered there hurriedly and requested the medical officials to collect their samples immediately and give them the test

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## Unpunished crimes led to horror like this

MC college principal tells The Daily Star

GOLAM MORTAZA

DS: If there is a rape incident at the college dormitory, the responsibility falls on you as the principal. I would like to know your reaction to what happened on your campus last night.



Saleh Ahmed

It is true that as the principal I am responsible for everything in this college. But I cannot predict if something is going to happen before it happens. You know the situation of our society, of the entirety of Bangladesh. The gate of our college was closed. The dormitories too were closed -- sometimes the gates are locked, sometimes they are not, because many teachers, staffers and their families live there.

Perhaps the gates weren't locked when the incident happened and the perpetrators went into the dormitory. There was also construction going on, on the fifth floor of the building.

There is also a hillock right behind the

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RAPE IN MC COLLEGE

## 6 accused BCL men moved with impunity

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Six Chhatra League activists have been accused of raping a woman at the hostel of Murari Chand College in Baluchar area of Sylhet on Friday night. The accused have been controlling the hostel for years and prime accused Saifur Rahman used to live in a bungalow designated for the hostel superintendent.

Officers found a pistol, four sharp weapons and many iron rods at the bungalow early yesterday and filed another case against Saifur under illegal arms law.

On Friday night around 8:00, a married couple was visiting the college campus when the suspects forced both of them to the hostel and gang-raped the wife while keeping the husband tied with a rope.

Police rescued the woman around 10:00pm and got her admitted to a hospital more than two hours later.

The husband filed the case later that night with Shahporan Police Station accusing Saifur Rahman, 28, of Sylhet's Balaganj, Shah Mahbubur Rahman Roni, 25, of Habiganj town, Arjun Lasker, 25, of Sylhet's Zakiganj, Mahfuzur Rahman Masum, 25, of Sylhet's Kanaighat, Tarek Ahmed, 28, of Sunamganj town, and Rabiul Islam, 25, of Sunamganj's Derai upazila.

The husband also accused 2-3 unnamed men. No one was arrested as of last night.

As there are no committees of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in the college, Sylhet city and the district.

Of the suspects, only Mahbubur is a student of the college and a legal resident of the hostel. Saifur, Arjun and Mahfuzur are former students of the college and the rest have never studied there, officials said.

The complaint made by the husband mentions that Mahbubur is a resident of Room-205 at Block C while prime accused Saifur Rahman's

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### BUSINESS

#### Incentives to boost digital payments

Say experts The government and the central bank should take initiatives to provide cash incentives to clients for adopting digital payments, experts said yesterday. A rise in digital payments during the pandemic has brought positive changes to the economy, they said at a webinar organised by Visa and The Daily Star.

STORY ON B1

## Ensure vaccine for all countries

Urges PM at UNGA, says Bangladesh capable of mass-scale vaccine production

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the world community to treat the Covid-19 vaccine as a "global public good" and urged the United Nations to ensure its timely availability to all countries at a time.

"We hope that the Covid-19 vaccine will soon be available in the world. It's imperative to treat the vaccine as a 'global



public good'. We need to ensure the timely availability of this vaccine to all countries at the same time," she said.

The PM made the plea while virtually addressing the general debate at the 75th United Nations General Assembly in Bangla like she did in previous years following the footsteps of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

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Rapid erosion by the Padma near Doulatdia ferry terminal in Rajbari's Goalanda upazila is likely to devour part of the terminal and at least 20 homesteads. The photo was taken on Friday afternoon.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

## 2m deaths 'likely' without collective action

Warns WHO as Covid-19 pandemic re-escalates

AGENCIES

Coronavirus deaths could more than double to two million without collective action against the pandemic, the World Health Organization has warned, as resurgence of cases across the world forced governments around the world to impose fresh curbs.

The number of cases worldwide has soared past 32 million, with deaths approaching one million, the global economy devastated, and major cultural and sports events disrupted.

"One million is a terrible number and we need to reflect on that before we start considering a second million," the WHO's emergencies

director Michael Ryan told reporters on Friday when asked how high the death toll could go.

"Are we prepared collectively to do what it takes to avoid that number?"

"If we don't take those actions... yes, we will be looking at that number and sadly much higher."

The novel coronavirus has killed at least 993,438 people since the outbreak emerged in China last December. At least 32,622,490 cases of coronavirus have been registered.

On Friday, 9,050 new deaths and 325,900 new cases were recorded worldwide.

Based on latest reports, the countries with the most new deaths were

Argentina with 3,901 -- a sharp increase due to a change in its counting method -- followed by India with 1,089 and the United States with 887.

The United States is the worst-hit country with 203,782 deaths from 7,033,925 cases. After the US, the hardest-hit countries are Brazil with 140,537 deaths from 4,689,613 cases, India with 93,379 deaths from 5,903,932 cases, Mexico with 75,844 deaths from 720,858 cases, and Britain 41,936 deaths from 423,236 cases.

The pandemic has spurred worldwide efforts to develop a vaccine to help defeat Covid-19, as well as efforts to try to ensure fair and

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**BANGLADESH  
UPDATE**



**1,106**  
New cases in 24hrs



**3,57,873**  
Total cases



**5,129**  
Deaths



**2,68,777**  
Recoveries



**GLOBAL  
UPDATE**



**994,834**  
Deaths



**32,841,697**  
Total cases

## Ensure vaccine for all countries

FROM PAGE 1

Hasina said if Bangladesh is provided with the technical know-how and patents, the country's pharmaceutical industry has the capacity to go for vaccine production on a mass scale.

She said the pandemic is a stark reminder that the fate of the human being is interconnected and that "no one is secured until everyone is secured."

The premier also said efforts to contain the pandemic and achieve Agenda 2030 have to go hand-in-hand. "Bangladesh's second voluntary national review [VNR] presented this year shows that we're well on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals."

She mentioned that the pandemic to a large extent kept all confined to their homes. Consequently, economic activities were greatly hampered along with the healthcare system.

Bangladesh achieved a GDP growth rate of 8.2 percent in 2018-2019 fiscal year. But the Covid-19 pandemic has impeded its economic progress, the PM added.

Hasina said the Bangladesh government announced a 31-point directive soon after the detection of the first Covid-19 cases in the country. It launched vigorous awareness campaigns and distributed personal protective kits aiming to contain the spread of the virus. These resulted in containment of seasonal diseases which are otherwise common in the country.

She said the government quickly identified the impending challenges of Bangladesh's financial sector and announced 21 stimulus packages.

Special arrangements have been made for keeping the industries running and for proper marketing of agricultural products and industrial outputs in full compliance with health guidelines, the PM said. "Consequently, our health sector and economy are still comparatively in better shape."

Despite the Covid-induced stagnation in global industrial outputs, Bangladesh's GDP has registered a growth rate of 5.24 percent which is expected to be 7 percent in the next fiscal year.

### ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Hasina said the government is trying hard to transform Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021, attain the SDGs by 2030, a developed country by 2041 and a prosperous Delta by 2100.

It is also crucial that graduating LDCs and recently graduated ones are accorded scaled-up international support and incentive packages in the transition and post-transition phases to minimise the pandemic-triggered impediments, she observed.

Regarding migrant workers, the PM said they are the frontline contributors to the economies of their host and home countries alike. Many of them have lost their jobs during the pandemic while many have been sent back home.

"We've allocated \$361 million for the returnee migrant workers. It is critical to help them regain employment in the post-Covid job market. I urge the international community and migrant-receiving countries to treat migrant workers fairly and with empathy," she said.

### COMMITMENT TO PEACE

Hasina said Bangladesh is the world's largest troops and police contributing country to the UN peacekeeping missions. "Our peacekeepers are putting their lives on the line to secure and sustain peace in conflict-ravaged countries. International community must ensure their safety

and security."

She also said this year all are celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. "As one of its original proponents, we call for due recognition of women's role in peace and security. We've already formulated a national action plan in this regard."

Bangladesh's unflinching commitment to peace has resulted in the adoption of a zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and violent extremism. National efforts have to be complemented by international cooperation to curb this menace, she added.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Talking about climate-vulnerable countries, Hasina said the pandemic is worsening the pre-existing vulnerabilities of these countries.

She said, "We are dealing with the dual impact of recent floods and the Cyclone Amphan even during the pandemic. As the current president of the CVF and the V-20 Group of Ministers of Finance, Bangladesh would lead the Forum to map out a sustainable and climate-resilient pathway out of the crisis. We also stand ready to contribute to securing a constructive and productive outcome in the Glasgow COP."

### GENDER EQUALITY

The premier said the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action has helped the international community come a long way to ensure gender equality. "As we are celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Declaration, we need to strengthen our resolve and mutual cooperation to address all the critical areas of concern."

In Bangladesh, she said, the government has closed 72.6 percent of the overall gender gap. Women's contribution remains at the core of its national development. They are also at the forefront of pandemic response and recovery efforts.

Talking about genocide, Hasina said Bangladesh's painful experience and the worst form of genocide and crimes against humanity that the nation had to endure during its struggle for independence motivated it to support the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people.

### ROHINGYA ISSUE

The premier said Bangladesh provided temporary shelter to over 1.1 million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals. More than three years have elapsed. Regrettably, not a single Rohingya could be repatriated. "The problem was created by Myanmar and its solution must be found in Myanmar. I request the international community to play a more effective role for a solution to the crisis."

Hasina said the Covid-19 pandemic has indeed aggravated existing global challenges. It has also reinforced the indispensability of multilateralism.

She also said on the 75th anniversary of the UN, the commitment to multilateralism as embodied in the UN Charter remains unflinching.

"At the national level, despite numerous challenges, we're committed to upholding the values of multilateralism and working towards building a 'Shonar Bangla' free of poverty and exploitation based on democratic principles with full enjoyment of human rights, as envisioned by the Father of our Nation. On the birth centenary of our Father of the Nation, this is our pledge to our nation and to the world," she said.

## 2m deaths 'likely'

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widespread distribution.

Without a vaccine or effective treatment, social distancing and lockdowns remain among the few options for governments to curb the spread of the virus, making large gatherings like spectator sports and music concerts highly risky.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics, postponed for a year, were the biggest such casualty, and Japan's new leader vowed to hold them in 2021.

"In the summer of next year, Japan is determined to host the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games as proof that humanity has defeated the pandemic," Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga told the United Nations General Assembly in a video message.

But with continued spikes worldwide, there are concerns about whether the event will be possible even next year if the pandemic is not under control.

Many European nations, meanwhile, are struggling with new waves of infections.

Spain expanded a lockdown in and around the capital Madrid to cover one million people from Monday.

In Britain, authorities announced restrictions now extending to a quarter of the population, while two supermarket chains said they were rationing purchases of certain goods to clamp down on panic buying.

Moscow, meanwhile, ordered vulnerable residents of the Russian capital to avoid infection by staying at home, while Israel tightened its lockdown by stopping people from

taking flights out of the country.

Russia's daily tally of new coronavirus cases hit its highest level yesterday since June 22 at 7,523, bringing its total to 1,143,571, the country's coronavirus task force reported.

France reported record figures -- daily cases soared past 16,000 for the first time on Thursday. But moves by the authorities to contain the virus are not popular with many because of their painful economic toll.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani yesterday authorised the country's provinces to impose lockdowns wherever necessary to stem a rapid rise in coronavirus cases.

Iran's death toll from the coronavirus rose by 172 yesterday to 25,394, and identified cases by 3,204 to 443,086, health ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari told state TV.

Meanwhile, an interim results published on Friday claimed that a single dose of Johnson & Johnson's experimental Covid-19 vaccine had produced a strong immune response against the novel coronavirus in an early-to-mid stage clinical trial.

The vaccine, called AD26.COV2.S, was equally well-tolerated at two different doses, the results showed. A single shot, versus a rival two-dose approach being tested by Moderna Inc and Pfizer Inc, could simplify distribution of the vaccine.

However, it is unclear whether elderly people, one of the populations most at risk from the virus, will be protected to the same degree as younger people with the J&J vaccine.



Rows of floating seedbeds used by farmers in Mugar Jhor area of Pirojpur's Najirpur upazila. The method is a blessing for farmers in the area which is mostly marshland.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## 6 accused BCL men moved with impunity



Saifur Rahman



Roni



Arjun Lasker



Mahfuzur Rahman



Rabiul Islam



Tarek

FROM PAGE 1

present address is the bungalow of the hostel superintendent.

### THE HOSTEL WAS THEIR DEN

Several former and present BCL activists of the college told this correspondent that their fellow men have been controlling the hostel since 2012.

After a new block was added to the hostel in 2014, a feud started between two BCL groups over taking its control.

The hostel remained closed for weeks multiple times because of the clashes between the groups, students said. Many of the rooms in the block where the rape took place was occupied by BCL activists.

Seeking anonymity, a BCL activist said, "The group [accused of raping] often engaged in extortion and harassed women on campus. We tried to stop them many times."

Abdul Kaiyum, officer-in-charge of Shahporan Police Station, said, "Since the prime accused used to live in the bungalow of the hostel superintendent, we raided it."

College principal Saleh Ahmed said, "The bungalow is damaged and not liveable. The hostel superintendent chose not to live there. They occupied the bungalow and we evicted them several times. We even snapped the electricity lines. But they managed to get an illegal electricity connection.

"They took over the bungalow after the last Eid. As the college is closed for the pandemic, the monitoring was not that strict."

Although the college has been closed, the authorities allowed some students to stay there.

The hostel superintendent Jamal Uddin yesterday issued a notice asking everyone to leave immediately.

### PROBE BODY FORMED

To investigate the rape, the authorities called an emergency academic council meeting yesterday afternoon.

A three-member probe body headed by Professor Anwar Hossain Chowdhury was formed at the meeting, the principal said.

"We suspended two security guards of the hostel and legal steps will be taken as per the probe body's recommendations," he said.

"We are embarrassed and ashamed by the incident. The perpetrators must be punished. If the student of our college is found guilty, we'll ask the National University to suspend his studentship."

### DELAYED ARREST

There are allegations that a group of local Awami League leaders tried to settle the issue over discussion which gave the suspects enough time to flee.

Talking to several present and former BCL activists of the college, this correspondent came to know

that all the accused are followers of Advocate Ranjit Sarker, former youth and sports affairs secretary of Sylhet district Awami League.

This correspondent could not contact Ranjit despite repeated attempts.

Police officials denied the allegations.

### ACTIVE ON FACEBOOK

Officials of Sylhet Metropolitan Police and Rapid Action Battalion said they would arrest the accused soon.

Two of the accused Rabiul Hasan and Mahfuzur Rahman Masum wrote on Facebook yesterday morning that they were innocent.

### PROTESTS FOR JUSTICE

General students along with a faction of BCL activists demonstrated in front of the college gate around 1:00pm.

They torched a tire and blockaded Sylhet-Tamabil Highway for around an hour until the college Principal and Police requested them to withdraw.

Bangladesh Chhatra Adhikar Parishad also demonstrated at Chowhatta Point in the city at around 12:00pm.

Sankhubbho Nagorik Andolon in Sylhet, organised a protest at Sylhet Central Saheed Minar where hundreds of concerned citizens gathered.

Ain O Salish Kendra expressed grave concern over the rape and demanded justice for the victim.

## So far, it is Tk 10,200cr

FROM PAGE 1

wealth of illegal casino owners last year.

On January 8 this year, the ACC filed a case against him for amassing property worth around Tk 274.91 crore from unknown sources.

The ACC and the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) of BB are now looking into the matter.

The two agencies are trying to unearth how Halder and his men got the money out of the NBFI.

Here are some snippets of information learnt from those linked to the investigation.

P&L International Ltd, owned by Halder, maintains an account with a bank. Investigators claimed to have traced suspicious transaction of over Tk 708 crore through that account.

In order to hoodwink any future investigation, the suspected fraudster used to move his money among multiple financial institutions and accounts.

PK Halder was a deputy managing director of Industrial and Infrastructure Development Finance Company Limited (IIDFC) in 2008. He joined Reliance Finance as its managing director the next year. He became the managing director of NRB Global Bank in July 2015.

Pointing to a Tk 60 crore loan to MTB Marine Ltd sanctioned at a board meeting of ILFSL on January 30, 2017, ACC sources said the money never reached the company's bank account.

It was rather transferred to accounts of different organisations and different people.

About Tk 5.5 crore was transferred to the accounts of Padma Weaving Ltd, Tk 14 crore to Paramount Agro, Tk 3 crore to Ookayama Limited, Tk 1.08 crore to Tasmih Book Binding, Tk 11 crore to JK Trade International and Tk 4 crore to four personal accounts.

The transfer took place between February and July 2017, said ACC sources.

Swapan Kumar Mistri was ILFSL's director while his wife was MTB Marine's chairman. Swapan was also a director of HAL International, owned by PK Halder.

Swapan's brother Uttam Kumar

Mistri is the managing director of Kolasin Limited. Uttam's wife Atoshi Mridha was the chairman of Kolasin, situated in Free School Street in the capital.

Together, they applied for a loan of Tk 79.7 crore as working capital for Kolasin on August 29, 2016. The loan was approved on September 5 the same year.

"It was an organisation only on papers. Showing loan against Kolasin, the money was transferred to the accounts of different people and organisations," one ACC official said, wishing not to be named.

Of the loan money, on December 27, 2016, about Tk 25.97 crore was issued to Nature Enterprise. The money was later transferred to Reliance Finance.

Nature Enterprise was one of the shareholders of ILFSL and two of its directors were board members of the NBFI, ACC sources said.

The money was used to adjust a loan for Nature Enterprise with Reliance Finance.

About Tk 17.4 crore was transferred to EBL Securities Ltd, Tk 6 crore to International Leasing Securities and International Leasing Capital, Tk 6.25 crore to Paramount Spinning Ltd and Paramount Holding Ltd, Tk 4 crore was transferred to JK Trader's account while about Tk 4.9 crore landed in two personal accounts, said investigation sources.

About Tk 50 lakh was transferred to Hal International's account at Bank Asia's Dhanmondi branch.

The ILFSL sanctioned loans of about Tk 83.34 crore to Moon Enterprise, owned by Shangkh Bepari, believed to be an associate of Halder.

Of the money, Tk 21.24 crore was used to adjust loan of Marco Traders with Reliance Finance. Director of ILFSL Nowsher-ul Islam is owner of Marco Traders.

Again, on March 29, 2016, about Tk 3 crore was transferred to PK Halder's personal bank account.

Hal International received Tk 6 crore while Tk 12.6 crore was transferred to Paramount Spinning Ltd's accounts with Mercantile and Meghna and NRB Global Bank Ltd.

Sources said between 2015 and 2019, PK Halder's cousin Amitav Adhikari was the director of People's Leasing and Financial Services and former colleague Uzal Kumar Nandi was its chairman.

Amitav is also the managing director of Anan Chemicals. Its current director and chairman is Uzal and his wife Anita Kar is its director. Although they were at the helm of the organisation, PK Halder was its actual owner, ACC officials said.

ACC sources said that using "name-only" organisations, PK Halder took money from ILFSL and became chairman and director of Peoples' Leasing. Later, he took money from Peoples' Leasing and dragged it down.

Earlier this month, PK Halder said he would come back to the country to return the money and settle the transactions and liabilities with the company if he gets "proper security for his life".

He has recently sent a letter to the ILFSL to this end.

The board of directors of ILFSL discussed the letter at its meeting. The organisation placed it along with an application before the High Court on September 7 through its lawyer Mahfuzur Rahman Milon for necessary orders.

After examining the letter and application, the HC yesterday directed the ILFSL to inform it when PK Halder would return to Bangladesh for settling his transactions and liabilities with the company.

The court said it would pass necessary orders for ensuring legal security of Halder's life on his return to the country and if he specifies his time of visit.

PK Halder will remain in the custody of the court after he returns, the HC bench said.

Board of directors, chairman and managing director of ILFS were also responsible for the scam, found an ACC enquiry.

In another development, Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) has recently frozen accounts of 83 people and organisations with different banks over suspicious transactions.

## Deepika Padukone questioned in drugs probe

AGENCIES

Indian police hauled in Bollywood megastar Deepika Padukone for questioning yesterday in an escalating drugs probe following the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.



Deepika was among three popular Bollywood actresses who were questioned yesterday in a drug probe that has sent shockwaves through India's film industry, already hurt by Covid-19 lockdowns.

Officials from the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) have been investigating alleged drug use in Bollywood for the last month in connection with the death of Sushant Singh Rajput, a popular actor who was found dead at his residence in June.

The investigation aims at finding whether there is a nexus between the film industry and the drug trade, a law enforcement official told Reuters.

Actresses Deepika Padukone, Shraddha Kapoor and Sara Ali Khan were seen on television walking into the NCB offices in Mumbai questioning.

Padukone, Khan and Kapoor were not immediately available for comment. Officials at NCB's Mumbai offices did not respond to Reuters requests for comments.

## Many Saudi

FROM PAGE 1

reports within last night or today morning at the latest as their flights will leave Dhaka at 12:30pm today.

Moinul Ahsan, the civil surgeon of Dhaka, told this correspondent that they were supposed to get 48 hours to prepare the test reports of Saudi-bound passengers and that the time was fixed by the Saudi authorities.

But in some cases, the Saudi Airlines are issuing tickets and setting flight schedules in such a way that the workers are left with less than 24 hours to get tested and have the results, he said.

As a result, some expatriate workers were coming to them with a request to provide test results within eight to 10 hours.

"But we need at least 24 hours to carry out the Covid-19 test," Moinul said.

Talking to this correspondent, several Saudi-bound passengers also blamed Saudi Airlines officials for confirming their flights without giving them the 48 hours.

While visiting the DNCC Market yesterday, this correspondent met a man rushing to the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport after getting his test report around 1:30pm with only four hours remaining in hand to catch his flight.

Asked the Saudi-bound Bangladeshi migrant worker hurriedly said he submitted his sample on Friday night and that his flight was scheduled to leave at 5:30pm.

Moinul Ahsan said they have been testing samples of around 1,500 to 1,700 people every day for the last couple of days.

So far, no Saudi-bound passengers have missed their flights due to delay in getting Covid-19 report from them, he said.

"We have the capacity to carry out more tests. But we need the minimum required time to carry out the tests," he added.

Tarik A Alowardi, manager at Saudi Arabian Airlines in Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar, could not be reached for comment.

A top commercial officer of the airline wishing anonymity said they needed to check the matter.

Saudi Airlines is now operating weekly two flights from Dhaka. The airline has applied to the Civil Aviation Authority Bangladesh to increase the number of flights.

Biman is scheduled to resume its regular flight to Saudi from October 1.

The two airlines are scheduled to operate 10 special flights to Saudi between September 23 and September 30 to carry the stranded Bangladeshis workers waiting to return to their workplaces.

**32 WORKERS BARRED FROM FLIGHT** Meanwhile, 32 Bangladeshi expatriate workers were not allowed by the immigration authorities to travel to Saudi Arabia as they got tested from private hospitals instead of the government-approved test centre at Mohakhali.

The Saudi bound flight SV-3807 left the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 6:30pm leaving them behind, said Plaban, an assistant health officer at the airport, told The Daily Star.

"Thirty-two passengers couldn't be issued boarding pass as they had not Covid-19 test report from the government-approved test centre," he also said.

The government initially designated 19 medical institutions and laboratories to carry out Covid-19 tests for overseas passengers following the scam of Regent Hospital and JKG Health Care.

In Dhaka there were three institutions -- National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Referral Centre, Institute of Public Health and National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine.

Later, sample collection booths were set up only at Dhaka North City Corporation Market for overseas passengers to carry out Covid-19 tests.





A hapless Saudi expatriate waits to get a ticket at Saudia Airline's booth in front of Sonargaon Hotel in the capital yesterday. It's been a rough week for the expat workers. Back home due to the coronavirus, they were facing expiry of their visa and iqama (residency permits), as flights were scarce. While Saudi authorities eventually permitted Biman to operate flights and agreed to extend the workers' visa and iqama, thousands are still coming to the ticket sales point every day, awaiting their turn to reissue their return tickets.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## 26 dope test-positive cops being dismissed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Shafiqul Islam yesterday said they started the process of dismissing the police personnel -- found positive in dope tests.

"We have conducted dope test on suspected police members. Of them, 26 were found to be positive," he said while inaugurating an office of the newly formed Mirpur Traffic Division.

The police personnel include a traffic sergeant, four sub-inspectors, three assistant sub-inspectors, a nayek and 17 constables.

The commissioner said they believe this action will send a clear message to the rest that none will be spared for involvement in drugs.

"Police members who are involved in drugs or are collaborating with drug dealers are being arrested in cases," he said, adding that many already quit drugs and returned to the right path.

Walid Hossain, deputy commissioner (media), said the 26 police personnel are from DMP's different units.

Total number of them who underwent dope tests could not be known immediately but officials concerned said the process will continue.

## SAVAR SCHOOLGIRL MURDER

# Smoke and mirrors surrounding arrest of two, alongside Mizan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Savar*

Savar police in a drive on Friday night arrested Mizanur Rahman (20), who allegedly stabbed Savar schoolgirl Nila Roy to death on Sunday night.

However, there were contradicting remarks about the number of arrestees in a drive at Savar's Raifulbaria area.

Maruf Hashan Sardar, SP of Dhaka told reporters at Savar Model Police Station yesterday noon that around 10pm on Friday, prime accused of Nila murder case Mizanur Rahman was arrested from a house owned by one Parvez.

Based on information revealed by Mizan, they also recovered the knife used for killing Nila, said the SP, adding that he was sent to Dhaka court with police seeking 10-day remand.

A Dhaka court placed Mizan on seven-day remand in connection with the case.

However, earlier on Friday night, Saiful Islam, inspector (investigation) of Savar Police Station told reporters that they arrested Mizan and his two associates -- Sakib and Joy -- from a house at Savar 's Rajfulbaria area, bringing the number of arrestees in the case to six. One Selim Palowan and Mizan's parents had been arrested earlier in the case.

His statement was broadcast in at least two TV channels, as well as published online on several news web sites including a leading newspaper.

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## GANG-RAPE IN KHAGRACHHARI

# Victim's mother identifies 3 rapists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khagrachhari*

The mother of the woman who was gang-raped in Khagrachhari on Thursday identified three rapists at the Sadar Police Station yesterday.

Mohammad Abdul Aziz, superintendent of Khagrachhari police, said, "The arrestees primarily admitted that they raped the Chakma woman and looted valuables from

their house."

The SP, however, did not disclose the number of the arrestees. He said all are from different parts of the district.

Meanwhile, the victim's mother said she remembered names of two perpetrators -- Shahin and Faruq. They were calling out each other's names that night, she said.

"Both are around 22 years old.

Faruq beat me mercilessly," the mother said.

"The nine rapists with sharp weapons broke into my house around 2am on Thursday, tied me and my husband up and raped my daughter," she said.

"It was a brutal incident. We will disclose identities of the rapists in the

SEE PAGE 4 COL. 1

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## New OCs join eight police stations in Cox’s Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox’s Bazar

Chattogram Range of police has appointed new officers-in-charge at eight police stations of Cox’s Bazar, in a series of overhauls after major (ret’d) Sinha’s killing.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Chattogram Range issued an order in this regard on Thursday.

Mohammad Hafizur Rahman, who was serving at Sirajganj district police, has been appointed at Teknaf Police Station, a station that was at the centre of discussion after Sinha’s death.

Sheikh Munir-Ul Gias was appointed at Cox’s Bazar Sadar, Ahmed Sanjur Morshed at Ukhiya, Mohammad Abdul Hai at Moheshkhali, Shaker Mohammad Jobaer at Chakaria, KM Azmiruzzaman at Ramu, Saifur Rahman Mazumdar at Pekua and Md Jalal Uddin at Kutubdia. All officers-in-charge have already assumed office.

Besides, three joined as additional superintendent of police at Cox’s Bazar district police and Cox’s Bazar Sadar circle.

In an unprecedented move, the police administration transferred 1,487 of its members, from constable to inspectors, from Cox’s Bazar. They were dispatched to different police ranges in the last week. This is the biggest transfer move of district police in recent history.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

**Footpaths illegally encroached by makeshift shops is nothing new, but one that’s set up right by the stairs of a footbridge is especially inconvenient. Pedestrians at the capital’s Mirpur must deal with this very problem, as they have little space to move through, and are compelled to just dangerously walk across the road.**

## Second derailment in 24 hours halts Dhaka-Narayanganj rail link

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Train communication between Dhaka and Narayanganj remained suspended since yesterday morning following the derailment of a metre-gauge commuter train in Narayanganj city.

This was the second derailment on the track within 24 hours.

Quoting witnesses, Station Master of Narayanganj Central Railway Station Golam Mostafa said a compartment of the Dhaka-bound train veered off the tracks in Ukilpara area around 10:30am.

The derailment cut off the rail link of Narayanganj with Dhaka, said the station master.

However, no casualty was reported in the incident, he confirmed.

The railway station authorities have already informed the authority of Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital for a relief train to remove the derailed compartment from the rail tracks, Golam Mostafa said.

Earlier on Thursday, four compartments of another metre-gauge train derailed in the city, halting train communication between Dhaka and Narayanganj.

UNHRC SESSION IN GENEVA

## Article 19 demands release of Kajol

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Article 19 has made a statement at the ongoing session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva demanding immediate release of Shafiqul Islam Kajol, a jailed photojournalist and editor of periodical Pakshakil, in cases filed under the Digital Security Act.

The UK-based human rights body, which works to protect freedom of expression and right to information, also called on the Bangladesh government to take action against those responsible for the inhumane treatment of Kajol, said a press release.

It made the call during the general debate at the 45th regular session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva yesterday.

The statement raised the issue of ongoing attacks on journalists in different countries of the world, including Bangladesh.

In this context, Article 19 Bangladesh and South Asia Regional Director Faruq Faisal said, “Kajol has been in jail for almost four months. His bail application has been rejected 13 times so far. The process by which Kajol has been detained has created a negative perception in the international arena about the situation of freedom of expression in Bangladesh and the protection of human rights.

“Therefore, in order to save the image of the country on the world stage, the government should immediately release Kajol,” he said.

### Victim’s mother

FROM PAGE 3  
morning,” the SP said yesterday. He confirmed all the criminals were settlers.

A case was also filed with Sadar Police Station.

The victim is now being treated at home as the family is unable to afford her treatment at the hospital, said her mother.

Meanwhile, rights body Ain o Salish Kendra expressed grave concern over the rape incidents at Khagrachhari and Sylhet MC College.

Incidents of violence against women and children have become frequent in the Chattogram Hill Tracts due to a culture of impunity, it said.

### 14th death anniv of Prof M Nabi

CRY DESK

Today is the 14th death anniversary of Prof Emeritus M Nabi Alam Khan.

He was former professor and head of cardiac surgery at National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases. He was also former professor of thoracic surgery at National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital.

Relatives and well-wishers are asked to pray for salvation of his departed Soul.



### Smoke and

FROM PAGE 3

The Daily Star has copies of the reports.

But yesterday, Saiful backtracked on the arrest of two others along with Mizan, saying only one person was arrested on Friday night.

When asked about Saiful’s previous statement, the SP told the reporters that they only arrested Mizan from that house. So far, four persons have been arrested over Nila murder case, he added.

The Daily Star tried to reach Shirajul Islam Shiru -- father of Sakib -- for comments, but his phone was found switched off.

On Thursday, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested Mizan’s parents Abdur Rahman (60) and Nazmunnahar Shadika (50) in the murder case filed by the victim’s father, and they are in two-day remand under police.

On Tuesday, police arrested Selim Palowan (28), an associate of Mizan, for alleged involvement in the murder. On Sunday evening, Nila -- a 10th-grader of Aced School -- was going to a hospital with her brother Alok when they were intercepted by Mizan, who had been pursuing Nila for a romantic relationship, according to her family.

Mizan then forced Nila into an abandoned house, where he stabbed and left her. Upon hearing her scream, locals rescued and rushed her to Enam Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

A day later, Nila’s father filed a case with against Mizan and his parents, and three to four unnamed people.

Locals alleged to this newspaper that Mizan was a member of “Shakil and Sakib” gang. Members of the gang extorted people and businesses, and were often involved in stalking girls and peddling drugs, said locals of Savar’s Dakkhin Para. Shakil and Sakib are sons of Awami League joint secretary of Savar Municipality Shirajul Islam Shiru.

Meanwhile, over a thousand residents of Savar under the banner of at least 25 organisations yesterday formed a human chain at Ganda area beside Dhaka-Aricha highway demanding capital punishment to Mizan and culprits involved the murder. Dr Enamur Rahman, state minister for disaster management and local MP of Savar, municipality mayor Hazi Abdul Goni, and Savar Upazila chairman Monaural Alam Razib, among others, were present.

## HSC examinee electrocuted while playing cricket in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A college student died of electrocution after he touched a tin-shed house while playing cricket in Dhaka’s South Kamalapur area yesterday afternoon.

The deceased is Ferdous Hasan Shuvo, an HSC examinee from BAF Shaheen College.

The mishap happened when Shuvo along with some others was playing cricket in an alley around noon, said Shahadat Hossain Fahim, his neighbour.

As the ball got stuck in a nearby tin-shed house, Shuvo climbed up an electric pole and touched the tin roof while trying to fetch it.

The shed possibly came in contact with live a wire and Shuvo was electrocuted, he said.

He passed away at Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 1:30pm.

Hailing from Sirajganj, Shuvo was eldest among three siblings and used to live with his family in Kamalapur.

Inspector Bachchu Mia, in-charge of the DMCH police outpost, said the body was kept at the hospital mortuary for autopsy.

### RAMNA PARK

## Petition seeks inquiry into position, possession

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A petition has been filed with the High Court seeking its directive on the home secretary to conduct an inquiry into the position and possession of Ramna Park including its natural environment and cost for its reconstruction during and before the pandemic.

Supreme Court lawyer Md Eunus Ali Akond submitted the petition to the HC on September 24 as a supplementary to his September 8 writ petition that sought an order on the government to reopen the park in 24 hours.

In the supplementary petition, he said the authorities concerned are destroying the natural environment of Ramna Park by cutting its trees and grass and by changing its land, footpaths in the name of so-called reconstruction, causing a loss of crores of taka. Tk 47 crore has reportedly been allocated for the so-called development and reconstruction of its lake and some other things. The lawyer told The Daily Star yesterday that the HC may hold hearing today on both the petitions.

On September 8, Advocate Eunus Ali Akond filed a writ petition with the HC seeking its directive on the secretary to the ministry of housing and public works to reopen Ramna Park in Dhaka in 24 hours so that people can walk and move.

The HC on September 17 wanted to know why the authorities concerned of the government are not reopening the park. On September 24, Deputy Attorney General Noor-Ul Sadik informed the HC that Ramna Park was closed for people’s safety and security during the Covid-19 pandemic. The authorities will reopen it if the HC orders, he said.

The HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam on Thursday fixed September 27 for passing order on the petition.

On September 8, Eunus submitted the writ petition as public interest litigation, praying to HC to issue a rule asking the housing and public works secretary to explain why closure of Ramna Park should not be declared illegal.

## A fairer ladder to climb up

*Police Headquarters to hold centrally-supervised exams to promote subordinate officers, in a bid to ensure transparency*

SHARIFUL ISLAM

From now on, Police Headquarters (PHQ) will hold centrally-supervised examinations for departmental promotion of lower-tier police officers, to bring an end to discrimination that many deserving candidates have allegedly long been facing.

As per the existing system, officers of a unit get promoted to that unit’s vacant posts after passing the examination. As a result, officers of other units do not get promotion despite obtaining higher marks in tests, because of post shortage in respective units, said PHQ officials.

To bring a change in the system, PHQ has already formulated a detail guideline on holding exams of subordinate officers for promotion in seven posts, such as constable to assistant sub-inspector (ASI) or equivalent, ASI to sub-inspector (SI) or equivalent, constable to nayek, and nayek to ASI or equivalent.

After holding the test centrally, it will prepare a merit list based on candidates’ successful results and will fill up vacant posts of any unit from the list serially, said officials at the headquarters.

Out of over 2.02 lakh members of the police force, 1,39,483 are constables, 7,748 are nayeks, 27,287 ASIs and 25,233 SIs, said Md Nasirul Islam, assistant inspector general (AIG, recruitment and career planning 02) at PHQ, during issuance of the guideline to unit heads on August 17.

A PHQ official said as almost 50 percent of SIs who investigate cases come after passing departmental promotion exams, this new system will help meritorious candidates get promotion.

“This will also result in quality investigation of cases,” he told this newspaper.

AIG (Media) Md Sohel Rana at PHQ said this attempt will bring a paradigm shift in promotions of subordinate officers.

“It will ensure a fair promotion and bring out more competent officers as investigators,” he told The Daily Star.

Till now, respective units would take promotion exams of its subordinates, with unit chiefs being head of exam committee. Additional superintendent of police (ASP)-ranked officials from PHQ would visit units as invigilators during the exams.

Allegations were rife against unit heads like district SPs for favouring their personal staff -- such as drivers, body-guards and candidates they knew -- in written and viva exams.

Citing an instance, an AIG at PHQ said last year, an ASP made a surprise visit to a district during promotion exams and found several examinees copying from books.

Such irregularity was taking place before the district SP’s eyes, who was present at the exam centre.

Another police official said as very few posts fall vacant in many units, promotion seekers desperately try to get transferred to different larger units where more posts fall vacant.

Due to this, an unhealthy atmosphere of corruption, nepotism and irregularities has formed, he told this newspaper.

There are instances when even ministers make requests for their bodyguards, who are police officers, to get them transferred to larger units or get favours in promotion exams, he said.

He further said higher officials of the department also often make similar requests for their personal staff.

## Changing lives thru’ counselling

Seven street children on journey to rehabilitation

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Seven children, between ages 6-14 years, used to eat, sleep and breathe in the streets of Sylhet city, with no one to look out for them. For years, they begged, pick-pocketed and even mugged, and at one point of their problematic lives, got addicted to sniffing glue, commonly known as “dandy”.

But their bad days seem to have ended. A kind-hearted initiative of Electronic Media Journalist Association (EMJA) and a group of volunteers made a life-changing impact on these kids, as they got education, counselling and rehabilitation at a shelter.

“It started out in the very first days of the pandemic. As thousands became jobless, we decided to arrange a food programme for the city’s floating population on May 9,” said Ashrafal Kabir, former president and coordinator of EMJA’s initiatives.

He said, “For 100 days, we fed more than a hundred people, including 30 kids. After stopping the food support, we decided to rehabilitate the kids through counselling. On August 19, we took 13 of them to our temporary shelter at Mohammad Ali Gymnasium.”

“It wasn’t easy. Families of three kids took them away, and another three ran away. But the remaining seven showed us hope. For 21 days, we gave them shelter, food, recreation and most importantly, professional counselling,” Ashrafal said.

On September 10, the kids were handed over to the custody of Sheikh Russel Children Training and Rehabilitation Centre in Sylhet, at a programme where government officials concerned were present.

Biman Talukder, a volunteer of the initiative, said, “All we needed was support from people, and we received it. These kids live a free life; rehabilitating them in a closed compound is hard. They need more time and open space, and a lot of care for recovery. It’ll take a long time to change their mindset.”

EMJA President Mahbubur Rahman Ripon said, “When we started our food initiative, we realised that these kids live a risky life. We came to know that the Department of Social Services tried to rehabilitate them before, but failed due to lack of proper counselling and guidance.”

“That’s what we focused on and finally handed them over to the centre, with a hope that this time they might stay there,” he said.

“These kids aren’t ordinary, so they can’t be easily rehabilitated. But they need proper care and physiological support, for which appropriate counselling is key. We’ll be following their status at the centre, as long as they’re okay with institutionalisation,” Mahbubur said.

EMJA will continue such initiatives, and other organisations should come forward to give these kids a better life, he added.

Nibash Ranjan Das, deputy director of Department of Social Services, said, “The initiative is simply splendid. We tried before, but could not succeed due to lack of proper counselling. EMJA realised this and has done a wonderful job. We are hopeful that these kids might be rehabilitated this time.”

“We have a post of psychologist at the centre, but it is still vacant. There was one life-skills trainer who used to take care of counselling, but he was transferred. Now, we seriously need facilitation of proper counselling for such kids,” he said.

“Once they are institutionalised, we will transfer them to the ‘Sishu Paribar’ for boys, where they can live and study until they are ready to enter society with dignity,” he added.



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WaterAid

# Request for Proposal



WaterAid Bangladesh is an international not-for-profit organisation, determined to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere. WaterAid has been working in Bangladesh since 1986.

WaterAid is inviting financial and technical proposal from bona fide research consultancy firms/organisations for an assignment titled:

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The WASH Accounts is an initiative of WASH sector actors and the Government of Bangladesh supported by WHO, Unicef and WaterAid.

The detailed request for proposal, including the terms of reference can be found at this link:  
[www.wateraid.org/bd/rfp](http://www.wateraid.org/bd/rfp)

The deadline for proposal submission is **18 October 2020**  
Proposals should be submitted in **WaterAid-Tender-TA@wateraid.org**

A pre-bid meeting will be held to discuss the RFP on **5 October 2020**. Interested firms/organisations having required qualifications are invited to participate in the pre-bid meeting through confirmation of their participation via email to **ZarifRasul@wateraid.org** by **3 October 2020**.

WaterAid Bangladesh reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the proposals without showing any reasons whatsoever. Any form of persuasion shall result in disqualification.







# History will be 'severe judge'

Warns Aussie PM on 'vaccinationalism'; Modi pledges to use India's vaccine-production capacity to help all

AGENCIES

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Friday insisted that any nation that develops a Covid-19 vaccine share it universally, warning that history will be a "severe judge" if not.

Morrison made the strongly worded appeal at the United Nations as the United States, a historic ally of Australia, resists global efforts to collaborate on a vaccine.

"When it comes to a vaccine, Australia's view is very clear -- whoever finds the vaccine must share it," Morrison said in a message to the virtual UN General Assembly recorded in front of the iconic Sydney Opera House.

"This is a global responsibility and it's a moral responsibility for a vaccine to be shared far and wide," he said.

"Some might see short-term advantage or even profit, but I assure you, to anyone who may think along those lines -- humanity will have a very long memory and be a very, very severe judge."

Morrison vowed that Australia will share a vaccine if it discovers it and promised support for Covax, the UN initiative that aims to have two billion doses of a vaccine ready for universal distribution by late 2021.

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday pledged at the United Nations that his country's vaccine production capacity would be made available globally to fight the Covid-19 crisis.

"As the largest vaccine-producing country of the world, I want to give one more assurance to the global community today," Modi said in a pre-recorded speech to the UN General Assembly. "India's vaccine production and delivery capacity will be used to help all humanity in fighting this crisis."

The United States, China and Russia -- which, to wide skepticism, has already unveiled its own vaccine -- have shunned Covax.

President Donald Trump's administration

has given notice that the United States will pull out of the World Health Organization, calling it biased toward China, and has refused to promise to share Covid research, fearing theft of intellectual property from US pharmaceutical companies.



Aussie PM promises support for WHO-led Covax UK pledges over \$400 million for WHO, urges end to 'ugly rifts'

Thai PM says vaccine should be considered as 'global public goods'

"Such 'vaccinationalism' is not only unfair, it is self-defeating. None of us is safe until all of us are safe. Everybody knows that," he told the General Assembly

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday pledged a 30% increase in funding for the World Health Organization while urging reforms to the global health body and calling for a revival of cross-border cooperation to end "ugly rifts".

He was scheduled to present a five-point plan to improve the international response to future pandemics. His plan includes a global network of research hubs, more vaccine manufacturing capacity, and an agreement to reduce export tariffs imposed at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He will commit an initial 71 million pounds to Covax to secure purchase rights on 27 million doses, and 500 million to a separate Covax initiative to help poorer countries access a vaccine.



Joe Biden and his wife pay their respects to the late justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as her casket lies in state in the Statuary Hall of the US Capitol, in Washington, DC; and people react seeing Donald Trump during a campaign rally in Florida. Photos were taken on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Can't lose to a guy who didn't campaign!

Trump mocks Biden for 'staying in again', lures Black, Hispanic voters with lofty promises

AFP, Atlanta

With just 39 days until the US election, President Donald Trump ramped up his campaigning with back-to-back events Friday in battleground states -- a frenetic pace in contrast with the more sedate approach of Democratic rival Joe Biden.

The 74-year-old president's grueling schedule includes hosting events in three states plus the capital Washington in a 12-hour slog that culminates with a nighttime rally in Virginia.

Trump -- who trails Biden in national polling and is narrowly behind in several swing states seen as crucial to his path to re-election -- is under pressure to make the most of the remaining weeks before the November 3 election.

During his whirlwind day the president mocked his rival for a lower-energy campaign, saying Biden was "staying in again today."

This guy never goes out! It's terrible, huh?" Trump asked, reviving his "low-energy" critiques of Biden at a black economic empowerment event in Atlanta.

"You better make sure I win. I'm gonna be very embarrassed, I lost to a guy that didn't campaign!" he told a laughing audience.

Biden traveled from his home in Delaware to Washington on Friday to attend a ceremony at the US Capitol as late Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg lay in state there.

But there was no in-person campaigning on the former vice president's schedule.

Trump began the day in Florida with a roundtable with Latino voters, a crucial constituency in the swing state.

Biden has "been very bad to Hispanics," the president said at the event which took place at his golf club in Doral, near Miami. "I'm a wall between the American dream and chaos."

Trump next flew to neighboring Georgia, which has voted Republican in the last six elections but is now rated a toss-up, where he insisted that as president he did "even more than I promised" for African Americans.

### US PRESIDENTIAL RACE 2020

"I did more for the black community in 47 months... than Joe Biden did in 47 years," he said, repeatedly swiping at Biden's legislative record in co-sponsoring 1990s tough-on-crime legislation that many experts say resulted in high incarceration rates for black Americans.

Trump said he was unveiling a "platinum plan" that aims to increase capital to African Americans, create three million new jobs for the black community and implement "the highest standards of policing."

He also wooed them with the promise of making Juneteenth, which commemorates the

end of U.S. slavery, as a federal holiday.

Trump then returns to Washington to gather with supporters before flying to a Make America Great Again nighttime rally at an airport in Newport News, Virginia.

Biden's campaign has been cautious ever since the pandemic forced several US states into extended lockdown, with the US death toll now topping 200,000.

Biden, 77, spent months mostly hunkered down in his Delaware home. While he has increased campaigning in swing states like Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan, his events are tightly scripted with only occasional interaction with voters.

The Democratic candidate visited Florida last week to kick off Hispanic Heritage Month, but the event featured no large audience.

His recent go-to strategy to counter Trump appears to be releasing statements that address the president's various campaign stops.

"Since President Trump's last visit to Florida just two weeks ago, over 40,000 more Floridians have tested positive for coronavirus and the state marked 13,000 Covid-related deaths," Biden said Thursday as Trump flew to a Jacksonville rally. "President Trump does not have a plan, but I do -- to beat Covid-19, build our economy back better, and protect and build upon the Affordable Care Act."



A Belarusian law enforcement officer detains an activist during an opposition rally to reject the presidential election results and to protest against the inauguration of President Alexander Lukashenko in Minsk, Belarus, yesterday. At least 10 protesters were detained yesterday, a Reuters reporter witnessed.

PHOTO: REUTERS

### STALEMATE IN FORMING NEW LEBANON CABINET

## PM designate resigns

REUTERS, Beirut

Lebanon's prime minister-designate quit yesterday after trying for almost a month to line up a non-partisan cabinet, dealing a blow to a French bid aimed at rallying sectarian leaders to tackle the worst crisis since the nation's 1975-1990 civil war.

Mustapha Adib, former ambassador to Berlin, was picked on Aug. 31 to form a cabinet after President Emmanuel Macron's intervention secured a consensus on naming him in a country where power is shared out between Muslims and Christians.

A source close to Macron said the situation that led to Adib's resignation amounted to "collective betrayal" by political parties but said France, the former colonial power, would not abandon Lebanon.

Under the French roadmap, the new government would take swift steps to tackle corruption and implement reforms needed to trigger billions of dollars of international aid to fix an economy that has been crushed by a mountain of debt.

Lebanon faced a further knock when a huge explosion on Aug. 4 at Beirut port

ruined a swathe of the capital.

Adib, a Sunni Muslim under the sectarian power-sharing system, announced he was stepping down but said Lebanon must not abandon the French plan or squander Macron's goodwill.

"I stress that this initiative must continue," he said after meeting President Michel Aoun, a Christian. He wished his successor well in the "hard task" of forming a government.

Politicians, whose loyalties tend to run along confessional lines, had promised Paris they would have a government in place by mid-September.

But Adib's efforts stumbled in a dispute over appointments, particularly the post of finance minister, who will have a key role in drawing up an economic rescue plan.

The cabinet formation hit a roadblock over a demand by Lebanon's two main Shia groups, Amal and the heavily armed Iran-backed Hezbollah, that they name several ministers, including finance, a position previously held by a Shia.

Adib held several meetings with Shi'ite politicians but failed to reach agreement on how the minister would be chosen.



### MILITARY PLANE CRASH

## Death toll climbs to 23 in Ukraine

AFP, Kiev

The death toll from the crash of a Ukrainian air force plane carrying mostly cadets in the east of the country climbed to 23 yesterday, emergency services said.

The Antonov-26 transport plane was carrying 20 cadets and seven crew when it crashed late Friday two kilometres from the Chuguiv military air base near the city of Kharkiv.

One more body was found under the charred remains of the plane early Saturday, the emergency services said, bringing the number of victims to 23. Two people were also injured.

"The search for two more people continues," the services said in a statement. The cause of the crash is being investigated.

### AMY CONEY BARRETT

## A judge on a mission to build 'Kingdom of God'

AGENCIES

Judge Amy Coney Barrett, whom US President Trump possibly picked to replace Ruth Bader Ginsburg's US Supreme Court seat, is a darling of conservatives for her religious views, but detractors warn her appointment would shift the nation's top court firmly to the right.

In 2018, she was on the shortlist presented by President Donald Trump for a seat freed up by the retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy, a position ultimately filled by Brett Kavanaugh after a ferocious confirmation battle.

At just 48, her lifetime appointment to the bench would ensure a strong conservative presence on the panel for decades, but her background -- the antithesis of "RBG," the champion of women's rights who died last week -- is a new flashpoint in an already polarised country.

Climate, minority and LGBT groups yesterday raised alarm over her selection.

A practicing Catholic and the mother of seven children, including two adopted from Haiti and a young son with Downs Syndrome, Barrett is personally opposed to abortion, one of the key issues dominating the cultural divide in the United States.

After a childhood in New Orleans in the conservative south, she became a top student at Notre Dame law school in Indiana where she later went on to teach for 15 years.

At the beginning of her legal career, she clerked for the renowned conservative Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia and took up his "originalist" philosophy of understanding the Constitution as it was meant to be read at the time it was written, as



opposed to more progressive interpretation.

Praised for her finely honed legal arguments, the university professor nevertheless has limited experience of actually presiding over a courtroom, having only taken to the bench in 2017, after being appointed by Trump as a federal appeals court judge.

Her critics often cite the numerous articles she wrote on judicial matters while she was at Notre Dame, and point to her recent rulings as a judge which they say betray her ideological leanings.

At the federal appeals court in Chicago, she adopted positions backing gun rights and opposing migrants and women seeking abortions, as well as going against the Affordable Care Act, or "Obamacare", the healthcare reform pushed through by the former president which Republicans have been trying to dismantle for years.

One of her lectures in particular, delivered to students at Notre Dame, is frequently used to reprimand Barrett.

Presenting herself as a "different kind of lawyer," she said that a "legal career is but a means to an end... and that end is building the Kingdom of God."

"Amy Coney Barrett meets Trump's two litmus tests for federal judges," said Daniel Goldberg, director of the progressive lobby group Alliance for Justice.

"A willingness to overturn the Affordable Care Act and to overturn Roe v. Wade," the landmark legislation that legalised abortion in the US.

On the other side, conservatives hail a woman they consider "brilliant" and "impressive."

### BID FOR UNSC PERMANENT SEAT

## Modi calls for India's inclusion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday made a strong case for India's inclusion as a permanent member of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and asked how long will his country be "kept out of the decision-making structures" of the global body.

Addressing the virtual 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), he said every Indian aspires for India's expanded role in a reformed and expanded UN.

"Today, the people of India are concerned whether this reform process will ever reach its logical conclusion. For how long will India be kept out of the decision-making structures of the United Nations?" Modi said.

"How long would a country have to wait particularly when the transformational changes happening in that country affect a large part of the world?" he said in his nearly 22-minute speech.

He said "reform in the responses, processes and in the very character of the UN is the need of the hour."

Modi pointed out that India is a country "which has hundreds of languages, hundreds of dialects, many sects and many ideologies. This is a country, which was a leading global economy for centuries and also one which has endured hundreds of years of foreign rule."

The PM recalled India's contributions to about 50 UN peace missions over the decades and said the country has accorded priority to the welfare of the entire world.

"India has always given priority to the welfare of the whole world. India is the country, which sent its brave soldiers to about 50 peacekeeping missions the world over to keep the peace. India is that country which, in the course of maintaining peace, has lost the maximum number of its brave soldiers," he said.

Modi said the UN need to change its reactions, arrangements and appearance to stay relevant.

"Today we are in a different era all together... There is a big question in front of the whole world community that whether the institution that was formed under the circumstances of that time is still relevant today," Modi said in his speech.



## India, Pakistan spar at UN

AGENCIES

India slammed Pakistan at the 75th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) yesterday saying that the rules and legislation brought in the Jammu and Kashmir are internal affairs of the country after Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan called India's Hindu-nationalist government a sponsor of hatred and prejudice against Islam.

India's response comes a day after Khan had raised the issue of Kashmir at the UN Assembly saying, "Pakistan has always called for a peaceful solution. To this end, India must rescind the measures it has instituted since August 5 in 2019."

The Indian side was represented by delegate Mijito Vinito, who had earlier walked out of the hall when Imran Khan's pre-recorded statement was played.

"The only dispute left in Kashmir relates to the part of Kashmir that is still under illegal occupation of Pakistan. We call upon Pakistan to vacate all those areas that it is in illegal occupation of," India said.

"This is the same country that provides pensions for dreaded and listed terrorists out of State funds. This is the same leader who called Osama Bin Laden a martyr. This is the same country which systematically cleanses the minorities including Hindus, Christians, Sikhs and others through its abusive blasphemy laws and forced religious

conversion," he said.

"What should rather be on the agenda of the UN is Pakistan's deep state and its unrelenting political and financial support to terrorist organisations and mercenaries which are a threat to global peace and security. The only crowning glory that this country has to show to the world for the last 70 years is terrorism, ethnic cleansing, majoritarian fundamentalism, and clandestine nuclear trade," India said.

India's response came as a part of its Right of Reply after all the country speeches in the high-level debate of the 75th session of UNGA concluded yesterday.

Addressing the UNGA on Friday, Khan said Islamophobia prevails in the world and threatens the nearly 200 million Muslims who live there.

"The one country in the world today where, I am sad to say, the state sponsors Islamophobia, is India. The reason behind this is RSS ideology that unfortunately rules India today," Khan said in a recorded speech to the UNGA, which is being held virtually amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"They believe that India is exclusive to Hindus and others are not equal citizens."

"There will be no durable peace and stability in South Asia until the Jammu and Kashmir dispute is resolved on the basis of international legitimacy," Khan said.



World Heart Day 2020

# Use your heart to beat CVD

PROFESSOR DR S M MUSTAFA ZAMAN

In May 2012, world leaders committed to reducing global mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by 25% by 2025. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is accountable for nearly half of all NCD deaths making it the world's number one killer. World Heart Day is, therefore, the perfect platform for the CVD community to unite in the fight against CVD and reduce the global disease burden. World Heart Day is celebrated every year on 29 September.

World Heart Day informs people around the globe that CVD, including heart disease and stroke, is the world's leading cause of death claiming 17.9 million lives each year, and highlights the actions that individuals can take to prevent and control CVD. It aims to drive action to educate people that by controlling risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, at least 80% of premature deaths from heart disease and stroke could be avoided.

World Heart Day is a global campaign during which individuals, families, communities, and governments around the world participate in activities to take charge of their heart health and that of others. It



unites people from all countries and backgrounds in the fight against the CVD burden and inspires and drives international action to encourage heart-healthy living across the world.

We are living in unprecedented times. The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the healthcare profession, national healthcare systems and our individual responsibilities – for our own health and the vulnerable in society. We do not know what course the pandemic will take in the future but we do know that taking care of our hearts right now is more important than ever.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the number one cause of death on the planet. It has many causes: from smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, to air pollution, and rare and neglected conditions such as Chagas Disease and cardiac amyloidosis.

In the time of COVID-19, CVD patients are faced with a double-edged threat. Not only are they more at risk of developing severe forms of the virus, but they may also be afraid to seek ongoing care for their hearts.

Your heart is about using your head to understand what it takes to live a heart-healthy life and to act on that knowledge,

changing your behaviour for a better quality of life now and in the future.

It is about your influence as an individual to set an example for your loved ones. As a healthcare professional to help your patients make positive changes for their heart health. As an employer to invest in the heart health of your employees. As a government to implement policies and initiatives that will lead to better societal heart health, such as sugar taxes, smoking bans and reducing air pollution.

Your heart is about compassion to look beyond the self and act in ways that support

the most vulnerable in society; those with underlying heart-related conditions that may put them at greater risk in the time of COVID-19.

**Use heart to make better choices:** We can all look after our hearts and help to prevent CVD by eating a healthy diet, saying no to tobacco, sticking to safe alcohol guidelines and getting plenty of exercise – setting an example for our children and loved ones.

**Use heart to listen to your heart:** If you have an underlying health condition, such as heart disease, heart failure, diabetes, high blood pressure or obesity, do not let COVID-19 stop you from attending your regular check-ups.

**Use heart for society, your loved ones and you:** Individuals, communities and businesses have responded to the pandemic in incredible ways, supporting each other, the healthcare profession and the vulnerable in society. It is about making better choices at every level – from the personal and our day-to-day choices, to the world's governments and population-wide policy choices.

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## DIABETES CARE



### Improved knowledge and disease management required for diabetes

The results of the CAPTURE study were announced recently, a global non-interventional study to uncover the prevalence of cardiovascular disease and risk and its management in people living with type 2 diabetes. The study, the first of its kind and involving nearly 10,000 participants from 13 countries across five continents, showed that 1 in 3 people with type 2 diabetes have established cardiovascular disease, and 9 in 10 of these had atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease.

Atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease is caused by the build-up of fats, cholesterol and other substances in and on the artery walls, which narrows the vessels and results in reduced blood flow, potentially leading to events like heart attack and stroke.

It is critical that cardiovascular disease is prioritised as a key factor in the management of type 2 diabetes. People with type 2 diabetes need to be more aware of their risk factors and physicians need to be actively screening for them. The risks can be addressed through treatments with proven cardiovascular benefits, as recommended by various treatment guidelines.

For the first time, information on cardiovascular disease in type 2 diabetes has been gathered from both primary and secondary care settings, also reflecting that a significant proportion of people with type 2 diabetes are being treated by primary care physicians in conjunction with diabetes specialists.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of disability and death among people with type 2 diabetes. Until recently, the importance of this link between type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease was not fully recognised on a global scale. With an increased understanding of the disease and its management, healthcare professionals will have a greater knowledge of the most appropriate way to manage this disease and improve patient outcomes.

## HEALTH bulletin



### Only a few developed antibodies in the first wave of COVID-19

The first cross-sectional, nation-wide analysis of more than 28,000 patients on dialysis in the United States found that fewer than 10% of adults had COVID-19 antibodies as of July 2020 and fewer than 10% were diagnosed.

Published recently in The Lancet, the new study also shows higher COVID-19 infection rates among ethnic minorities and people living in lower-income, high density, urban areas – underling the need for COVID-19 public health efforts that prioritise these populations to prevent general community spread.

The study demonstrates an urgent need for public health efforts dedicated to controlling COVID-19 to continue, with more attention paid to some of the highest risk communities the researchers identified: low-income neighbourhoods and densely populated metropolitan areas.

Despite high rates of COVID-19 in the United States, the number of people with antibodies is still low and the population has not come close to achieving herd immunity. Until an effective vaccine is approved, it is important to make sure more vulnerable populations are reached with prevention measures.

## Promoting Community Clinic services during COVID-19

DR ABDULLAHEL AMAAN AND DR KHAINOOR ZAHAN

The Government of Bangladesh launched the community clinic project to set up almost 18,000 clinics with an ambition of providing healthcare services to approximately 6,000 marginalised people through each community clinic at the grassroots level. Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the first community clinic in Gopalganj district on April 26, 2000.

Along with primary healthcare services, 30 essentials types of medicines, free of cost, are being successfully provided from 13,861 community clinics to date. Since 2009, over one billion rural people visited the community clinics, including more than 85,000 normal deliveries being conducted there.

Among the service recipients, over 23.2 million urgent and complicated patients were referred to higher facilities for better management. Moreover, Community Support Groups (CSGs) involving the beneficiaries have been encouraged to be established so that they can own this public-private partnership and make it successful.

In the weeks immediately after the pandemic spread in the country, and subsequent gross restriction of movement was imposed, the marginalised communities were at a risk of facing reduced access to all sorts of care, including healthcare. Among the vulnerable

groups, especially health services for pregnant women and newborns has been at great risk.

In such a catastrophic situation, healthcare providers in the community clinics, namely, Community Health Care Providers (CHCPs) had continued their healthcare service, as well as, reporting their higher authorities regularly, with courage and dedication.

As a result, the number of patients has substantially been increased at the community clinics than previously. A recent study finding states that 98.4% of community clinics were reporting regularly to their higher authorities.

With the relentless effort of the government and development partners, the antenatal care coverage, attending a delivery by skilled birth attendants (SBAs) and delivery at a facility has been remarkably

increased. This positive vibe is at risk of deceleration in the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Efforts from the mass media and the developing partners should be focused and enhanced in ensuring successfully functioning community clinics nationwide, so that the steady acceleration in the remarkable achievements do not get halted. Let us all work together hand in hand to the way of achieving the targeted indicators of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and prove the success of Bangladesh to the world.

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### Do not let parents become patients

The outbreak of COVID-19 has made Bangladesh stand in front of the mirror and see its fragile unethical health care system. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are advancing their claws like the speed of light – pulling the mortality up to the highest among those with NCD co-morbidities during the pandemic.

Due to the ignorance in clinical management; risk communication management; and the health care services of NCDs, the situation is becoming progressively worse, especially of the parents living with NCDs who are observed to be vulnerable to the coronavirus and are not conscious of the measures that should be taken during the pandemic to control the deteriorating physical condition.

Hence in the Global NCDs Action Week, Bangladesh Non-Communicable Diseases Forum (BNCDF) and Eminence organised a day-long virtual event on NCDs recently to ensure accountability of different stakeholders, spread awareness in people, and encourage the young generation to contribute their part for the parents living with NCDs.

Meanwhile, to improve quality treatment, care, and support services for people living with NCDs during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh Non-Communicable Diseases Forum is implementing a series of virtual policy dialogues and discussion on NCDs with health care professionals and stakeholders to share their viewpoint to prevent the huge upcoming burden on health care service in Bangladesh.

f b /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





# PM’s leadership in global fight against climate change laudable

*Bangladesh must also protect its own natural resources*

THE PM’s proposals at a virtual UN roundtable on climate action on the sidelines of this year’s UN Genral Assembly on Thursday has shown the leadership role Bangladesh can play in the world’s fight against the impacts of climate change. This is especially appropriate as Bangladesh is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change. It is also a country that has provided crucial models of disaster management for other countries to follow and is the current chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum. PM Sheikh Hasina has highlighted five precise recommendations that aim to combat the adverse effects of this very real threat the world is facing.

She called for leaders to encourage stronger international collaboration, limiting global temperature increase up to 1.5 degrees Celsius and implementing all Paris provisions. She also reiterated the need for funds promised by countries to be made available to vulnerable countries, the need for polluting countries to contribute to mitigation measures and emphasised the fact that rehabilitating climate refugees is a global responsibility.

We laud our prime minister for her decisive, firm message to the international community reminding world leaders that they must all work together to face the challenges posed by climate change. Bangladesh is already facing the consequences in the form of increased flooding caused by rains and river erosion that have left thousands of people homeless and destitute. Similar fates are shared by other vulnerable countries which include both developing and developed nations. At this time, every country has a role to play and this includes Bangladesh. While we should be supported by the international community in our fight against climate change impacts, we too have a responsibility to do our bit. Bangladesh must lead by example, by preserving its forests especially the Sundarbans which provides protection against cyclones and floods and switching to renewable energy sources like many other countries have done. We hope that our government will therefore take such decisive steps while providing leadership to the world in this looming environmental challenge that threatens the very existence of humankind.

# How many more girls will have to die at the hands of stalkers?

*Arrest the murderer of Nila Roy immediately and bring him to justice*

WE are shocked and outraged at the gruesome murder of Nila Roy, a 10th-grader of a local school in Savar, by her stalker Mizan on September 20. According to Nila’s family, she was on her way to the hospital with her elder brother to have her respiratory problem examined when they were stopped by Mizan. Mizan threatened to kill her brother and asked him to leave and forcefully took Nila to an abandoned house owned by his father where he stabbed her to death.

Reportedly, Mizan, the prime accused in this case, has been a member of the infamous “Shakil and Sakib” gang in the area. Shakil and Sakib are the sons of a local influential Awami League leader who used their father’s influence and power to cover up their crimes. According to the locals of the area, members of this gang often used to stalk and assault girls and are also notorious for extorting people and businesses as well as being involved in the drug trade. Although the gang committed many of these crimes in broad daylight, people in the area did not dare to protest fearing repercussions. They also alleged that the abandoned house where Nila was stabbed in is a crime hub where Mizan and other criminals used to gather regularly.

As Ain o Salish Kendra reported, from January till August this year, a total of 152 women were sexually harassed by their stalkers and of them 10 committed suicide and three attempted to commit suicide. Two of them were murdered by the stalkers because they protested. Nila is yet another girl who was murdered because she did not give in to her stalker’s demand.

In 2011, the High Court ordered the government to set up separate cells at every police station across the country to deal with cases of stalking. Have those cells been formed as yet? The regular incidents of sexual harassment by stalkers across the country gives us a signal that those directives by the court were hardly heeded by the concerned authorities.

We demand immediate arrest of Mizan, the stalker and murderer of 14-year-old Nila. The members of the “Shakil and Sakib” gang also need to be apprehended as they allegedly abetted Mizan in committing the crime. We would like to see prompt police action in arresting the murderer and demand justice for Nila.

LETTERS  
TO THE EDITOR

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Drug trade on the rise

The rate at which drug dealing and drug abuse is on the rise is surely alarming. In the past, such things would take place in narrow alleyways or similar places, but recently that is not the case. I have witnessed such acts multiple times out in the open. It is a very uncomfortable sight when the offenders, especially the youth, show such disregard for the people around them. Often, many are also under the influence, so they don’t even realise how wrong their behaviour is and it projects a very negative image of our society.

It seems that the law enforcement agencies are not doing enough to curb such activities. Drug use amongst the youth is a severe problem which tends to impact their personality, physical, social and emotional wellbeing in a very destructive manner. We must all collectively act now to help the youth from going astray before it’s too late.

Saiful Islam Ehaan, Dhaka

# EDITORIAL

# Preparing for the Covid-19 vaccine

## Strategic and operational priorities

MOHAMMED PARVEZ IMDAD

AS the Covid-19 pandemic continues and it’s second wave has already hit several countries, the need and urgency for the much expected vaccine has become critically more important than before. Despite extensive global efforts, it seems the vaccine (with compliance of relevant requirements and stages) will not be ready before the end of the current year or early next year.

There are strong indications that the vaccines currently at third or fourth stages of production and clinical trials, should be on board for marketing and distribution within the next six months to one year. The international community would expect more visible, substantive and results-based role and coordination from the World Health Organization (WHO) in this regard. Further clarity and updates on the range of collaboration between respective governments and key vaccine manufacturing and distribution agencies worldwide and subsequently efficient sale and distribution could be useful at this stage. Should developing countries be able to get the vaccine straight from manufacturing companies or should governments concerned need to have bilateral agreements with the manufacturers? Will WHO be able to confirm levels of compliance with required standards and effectiveness of the vaccines that are first expected to enter the market? Will WHO facilitate multilateral mechanisms for sale/distribution of the vaccine? The UN Secretary General has cautioned against “vaccinationalism” that propels segregated efforts of nations in proceeding with vaccines only for internal use. The global approach on vaccine should be centred on the Secretary General’s observation, “None of us are safe till we are all safe”, and efforts should be directed accordingly.

In Bangladesh, the Technical Committee tasked by the government and the pharmaceutical manufacturers are keeping track of the vaccine developments worldwide. Despite the initial challenges, actions taken within Bangladesh seems to reflect some positive trends, as compared to several other countries in the region and even beyond. It is high time to assess how well prepared we are to ensure most efficient use of the “effective vaccine” as soon as it is available. Have we identified our strategic priorities and envisioned interventions to get the best outcome? Based on these, there is a need to focus on the following aspects on an urgent basis:

**Strategic framework and operational layout**

We need to have in place a broad-based strategic framework and operational layout for procurement, storage and distribution of the vaccine. Based on our constitutional provision to ensure health of all citizens of the country, there is a need for a comprehensive plan to ensure every citizen of the country is well covered (the vaccine needs to be given in two stages to the same recipient). It may not be possible to obtain the enormous quantities of the vaccine in one stage. In that case, the vaccine may be obtained in stages covering one to two years. Other interrelated priorities within

the proposed strategic framework should include market review and monitoring, assessment of costs, storage, distribution and supportive governance and managerial mechanisms.

**Monitoring trends and progress and assessing market**

To add further value to our preparedness exercise, it is necessary to closely track and monitor current trends and progress in vaccine production worldwide. It is important to urgently proceed on advance negotiations (on cost, quality and delivery) and finalise agreement with governments and key pharmaceutical companies worldwide. We need to consider options of procuring/obtaining vaccines from multiple sources depending on our comparative advantages and overall health-related interests. The policy choices may revolve around whether we should wait for further details on the effectiveness factor or

as the stages of distribution. The process should be demand-driven as well as need-based. WHO and member countries may have different views as regards to the early stage recipients. For Bangladesh initial recipients should include elderly people (60 and above and patients with critical illness and those vulnerable to Covid-19 infection), physicians and medical staff, administration and law-enforcing agencies, electronic and print media staff, students, and people representing various professional groups and subsequently, all other segments of the society. The two core principles for the whole exercise should be: whoever needs the vaccine should have it without hindrance or difficulties and no one should be left behind.

**Enabling infrastructure, storage and mode of distribution**

The vaccine needs to be stored in compliance of prescribed requirements



**A laboratory technician fills a syringe with a COVID-19 novel coronavirus vaccine candidate ready for trial on monkeys at the National Primate Research Center of Thailand at Chulalongkorn University in Saraburi.**

PHOTO: AFP

promptly explore multiple sources at this stage so that we can eventually opt for the most effective choice to suit our interests.

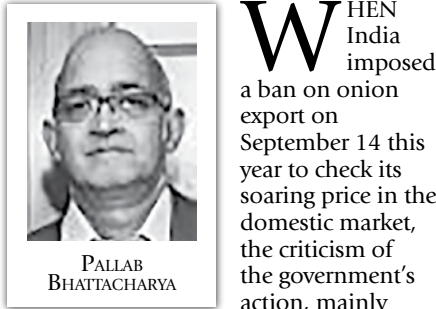
**Budgetary provisions and costs**

The government has allocated funds in the current budget for procuring vaccines. In this context, we need to explore our eligibility to get the vaccine either free of cost, or at concessional prices, keeping in view the categories of sale or distribution, based on per capita GDP and economic profile. Additionally, we must review the costs offered by producers depending on the stages of procurement/delivery (for instance, immediate procurement should be more expensive as compared to procurement at later stages). Should we have a programme to spread-out the purchase in five to six stages over a period of one to two years, we should be able to avail of the opportunities—in terms of access, availability and cost-effectiveness.

**Recipient categories and stages**

The government needs to decide urgently the different categories of recipients (that should ultimately cover all citizens) as well

# India’s Onion Dilemma



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

WHEN India imposed a ban on onion export on September 14 this year to check its soaring price in the domestic market, the criticism of the government’s action, mainly from farmers, was louder than it was less than a year ago when the same prohibition had gone into force. The reason was simple: last year when the ban was implemented, the price of onion in the domestic market had ranged between Rs 100-150 per kilo. This September, the price was in the range of Rs 40-45 a kilo when the export ban was announced. One of the main reasons for soaring price this year is excessive rain and flood in the major onion growing areas. But one cannot ignore the role played by an artificial shortage created by onion traders both at wholesale and retail markets and middlemen.

So, did the Indian government this time come out with a knee-jerk reaction? Could it have waited for some more weeks when the price could have risen further and then act? Not that onion prices in domestic market showed a downward trend post-export ban of September 14. In fact, it went up to Rs 50 55 per kilo. However, the ban may have slowed down the price rise. But it amply summed up the web of issues that defy an easy solution.

One easy answer for the September 14 ban on onion export was that it was done to ward off any negative impact the rising prices of the kitchen staple would have on the people of the eastern state of Bihar where fresh assembly elections are due in October this year. The Bharatiya Janata Party and its bigger ally Janata Dal (United) led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar are keen to return to power in Bihar. So, the BJP-led federal government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi obviously did not want to take any chance with the onion price which had proved

the saffron party’s Achilles’ heel in the elections in the past. It may be recalled that last year, there was no such immediate electoral compulsion to rein in onion prices before the ban was imposed in September. In fact, at that time, India had gone for imported onions from Egypt, Afghanistan and Turkey to tame domestic price. Another worry for the government over rising onion prices this year was that the latest data on consumer price index-linked inflation for August was 6.69 percent, higher than the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) upper target limit of 6 percent.

*Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the UAE are among the largest markets for onions from India. No doubt, the onion export ban by India in 2019 and 2020 did create misgivings in Bangladesh, the biggest importer of Indian onion.*

So, should India go for export ban on onion or for that matter any other agriculture produce to check prices at home? The opinion, as usual, remains divided. One view is that if the government resorts to banning exports to control prices, it hurts farmers’ interests. But what about consumers’ interests? No government can be mindful of just one side and be oblivious of the other. Clearly, there is a need to strike a balance between the two and that is easier said than done.

Whenever onion prices in domestic markets go up, the government has exercised two options: i) impose minimum export price and if that does not work; ii) ban export. Last year, the government had chosen a graded approach by first imposing minimum export price and when that failed to put a brake on the rising price, it went for the export ban. This year, the government did not go for a calibrated approach. It skipped the first option and jumped to the second, reflecting a sense of urgency primarily with an eye on Bihar poll.

A section of Indian economists

criticised the onion export ban saying this is not consistent with the government’s objective of freeing up the agricultural commodities from the curbs of the Essential Commodities Act of 1955 and removing all restrictions on the movement and stockholding limit restrictions on farm produce. In fact, the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose economic vision centres around deregulation of most sectors of the economy, promulgated an ordinance on June 5 this year keeping onion, potato, cereal, pulses, oilseeds and edible oils out of the purview of the Essential Commodities

Act. The aim was to ensure the market forces are allowed free play in availability and pricing of these goods.

The ordinance was replaced by a bill which got the stamp of parliamentary approval on September 22 in what was touted as a major farm sector reform. The bill allows traders, retailers and exporters to stockpile the six commodities without having to incur any penalty. However, the legislation also envisages that the stock-holding limit, which is an instrument to check surging prices, will come into play only in case of “extraordinary circumstances” like war, natural calamity or a situation of substantial price rise in order to protect the interests of the consumers. This makes it clear that any talk of completely free market and deregulating a sector is a myth because any government of the day cannot allow a free-for-all. This means exports will be allowed only as long as local prices remain under control. Economics can seldom be delinked from politics.

The problem with onion, and any agricultural produce for that matter, is

The task force assigned by the government is working in accordance with the given mandate. To better achieve the above-stated objectives, the current functional and institutional mechanisms need to be further strengthened through the following: Cabinet committee supervision, national commission on combating Covid (comprising experts, public representatives, law enforcing agencies and key NGOs with anti-covid programmess). The proposed national commission and current task force will strengthen and expand the range of cooperation to ensure efficient implementation of the vaccine access and distribution process.

**Governance and management instruments**

Given the challenges in implementing Covid eradication programmes, special attention should be given to improved governance and efficient management at every phase—access, storage and distribution. This is critically important to eliminate any form of corruption or unethical practices in the process of storage and distribution. The parliament may consider enacting an ordinance or appropriate regulatory framework for ensuring accountability as well as transparent and credible outcomes.

**Continued focus on health precautions**

Along with the recommended arrangements, it is important to continue the current health advisory practices. Given the impression that vaccine itself may not be sufficient at least in the short to medium-term to eliminate or significantly reduce Covid risks, continued focus on practices to “keep safe” should add value to check spread of the virus—till the pandemic is fully within control.

**Gearing up the potential for local production of vaccines**

The vision of “leaving no one behind” would be best achieved stimulating local production through technical compliance, fiscal incentives and external collaboration. Bangladesh’s promising and vibrant pharmaceutical sector should be able to support and facilitate this in the medium-term (two to three years). Health collaboration focus in inter or intra-regional cooperation frameworks could stimulate further research and propel search from best practices for better outcomes.

We should act fast on addressing the above issues whether we get the vaccine within this year or the next. Speedy decisions aimed at effectiveness, access and overall sustainability are crucial in moving ahead with the best interest of our people. Business continuity plan aimed at meeting pandemic-related challenges should add to our competencies in cushioning health-related shocks, for our overall national interests. As Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) goals and targets appear shaded with uncertainties and possibilities of delayed implementation, meaningful multilateralism is what the international community should aim for.

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that it remains subject to the vagaries of weather and price fluctuations. It has been suggested by some that one solution to ensure that high onion price does not pinch the consumers is to cut duties and taxes on petrol and diesel that will give households a lot more breathing space. It has also been suggested that a ban on exports cuts the farmers’ income from onions and thereby escalates the agrarian crisis. A major flaw in the second suggestion is that it does not take into account that the benefits of the rise in agricultural produce prices do not always reach the farmers and are siphoned off by middlemen and commission agents who help take the produce to local wholesale markets.

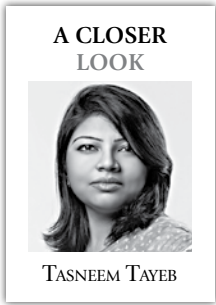
Another argument against onion export ban is that it hurts India’s goodwill as a dependable exporter. A lot of effort goes into building export markets. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the UAE are among the largest markets for onions from India. No doubt, the onion export ban by India in 2019 and 2020 did create misgivings in Bangladesh, the biggest importer of Indian onion. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had hinted at her displeasure last October when she had visited New Delhi a few days after the ban was clamped in 2019. This year, the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry wrote a letter to its Indian counterpart asking the Indian authorities to ensure that Bangladesh is not inconvenienced by the export ban.

A viable option for India, as recommended by economists from time to time, is to have a buffer stock of all essential foodgrains and release them into the market in times of shortage or soaring prices in order to insulate consumers on the one hand and protecting farmers from the burden of anti-inflation measures on the other. A credible buffer stock hinges on the creation of a countrywide network of storage facilities for crops. There is a home and the world for India to take care of when it comes to foodgrains and therein lies the dilemma.

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



# Who cares what happens to the children of Yemen!



**A CLOSER LOOK**

**T**HE world today is grappling with an unprecedented crisis. More than 900,000 people have already fallen to the scythe of the grim reaper and more are feared to become its victim as winter approaches. Once an ominous refrain from the hit HBO series Game of Thrones, “Winter is coming”, it has now become a real fear, as world leaders are grappling to prepare their nations and people to fight Covid-19 during the winter, when it supposedly becomes more sinister and resilient.

The crisis for the people of Yemen, however, is on a different level altogether. People there—of all ages, but especially the children and the pregnant—are dying in scores, not only because of the super-spreading, apparently unstoppable virus, but also because of a very easily avoidable reason: hunger. Of course there are other factors as well.

Five years of war, worsening flood conditions exacerbated by the ripple effects of the war, locust threat, spiralling Covid-19 outbreak in the backdrop of the an already crumbling healthcare infrastructure, and most importantly dwindling aid, have made the situation worse for the people of Yemen.

The people there are starving, dying, and at times hoping to die in search of respite from the pain of constant pangs of hunger. There are expecting mothers whose children are dying at childbirth, there are parents whose plea for help, for support, for the survival of their young children are being turned down by helpless aid workers who are left with no aid. There are the sick who are slowly making their passage to the other world with no treatment. And then there are

those who are helplessly watching their children, parents, and families wither away in front of their very eyes, with nothing to do but pray for an afterlife that is less cruel.

Added to these woes is the unjustified suspension of essential US fund for Yemen by the Trump administration. The situation in Yemen is so dire that leaders of Oxfam America, the International Rescue Committee, the Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE, Save the Children and Mercy Corps, jointly said that, “The most significant challenge to sustained life-saving humanitarian action today is the severe shortfall in funding, which has been exacerbated by the US suspension.”

At this point, one might rightfully question the reason behind the US suspension of funds. The answer is simple: the Houthis have a history of levying tax on aid and blocking them from reaching the people in need. However, the scenario seems to have changed recently, with the USAID’s acting administrator, and the chiefs of some major aid groups working in Yemen, in a letter suggesting that in view of the “improved humanitarian access” in Houthi-controlled areas, US fund can be resumed. Adding that, “our ability to do so now is jeopardised unless the US changes course...Time is running out for tens of millions of Yemenis.”

But despite the pleas the US has not moved an inch from its headline stance against sending funds to Iranian-backed Houthi controlled territories where around 70 to 80 percent of Yemenis live. And while halting aid to the helpless Yemenis, the US keeps selling arms to the Saudis fuelling the destruction in Yemen. According to an ABC News report, “the State Department’s federal watchdog found the Trump administration had not done enough to minimise civilian casualties as the US provides arms, including precision-guided bombs, to the coalition led by Saudi Arabia.” And not just the US, the United Kingdom, France and Canada

have also contributed to the war in Yemen by selling arms to the Saudis. But time is running out for Yemenis. 50,000 children, many of them newborns, die in Yemen every year, as per data released by the Houthi-linked Ansar Allah movement in March this year. Saif al Hadri, spokesperson for the Ministry of Health in Sanaa, revealed to TRT Arabi that, “one child dies every ten minutes in Yemen”, adding that, “80 percent of children in Yemen live in

And as late as May this year, the United Nations warned that around 48,000 women might die of child-birth related complications, as it had to shut down 140 of the 180 facilities it used to run in Yemen due to shortage of fund, affecting some 320,000 women.

As the war continues to unleash havoc in Yemen, “medical and water infrastructure has been hit during air raids at an average of once every 10 days during the conflict—damage that

USD 1 billion of the required USD 3.2 billion has been received. And the days ahead look bleak.

While the Saudis—a major player in the five year long war that has torn the nation apart—has signed deals to provide an additional USD 200 million in aid to Yemen through the United Nations, the aid is as uncertain as it is farcical. For one, of the USD 500 million aid that Saudi had announced earlier this year for Yemen, the UN has so far received only a paltry USD 23 million as disclosed by the organisation to CNN. And one cannot deny that the Saudi-led blockade of Yemen has had catastrophic economic impacts on the nation in the first place. Of course, other nations are pledging funds. But would those funds be enough and even be delivered in time? That remains to be seen.

For now, as aid dwindles in the wake of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, the world watches the spectre of famine, death and devastation unfold in front of their eyes with inertia. After all, this is happening so many miles away from our homes. Every country has its own problems to deal with, economic, societal, and of course, the Covid-19 outbreak that has stolen the limelight. So what that infants are dying, the unborn are dying, children are dying in another country. They are other’s children, children we have not seen, nursed or ever held. And there are so many of them in number that they are almost faceless, or perhaps they look identical: the same hollow eyes, the same ribs jutting out of the chest, the same bones sticking out of their shoulders. For the ones who are lucky, medical tubes are connected to their noses, or IV saline catheter pushed into their hands. For the unlucky ones, there is only one place to go: six feet under.

But so what? As long as our children are well fed and happy, who cares about what happens to the children of Yemen.

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for *The Daily Star*. Her Twitter handle is: @TayebTasneem



A photo taken on March 18, 2018, shows a Yemeni child looking out at buildings that were damaged in an air strike in the southern Yemeni city of Ta'ez.

PHOTO: AFP

a state of stunting and anaemia due to malnutrition.”

According to Unicef, “the number of malnourished children could reach 2.4 million by the end of the year, almost half of all under-fives. An additional 30,000 children could develop life-threatening severe acute malnutrition over the next six months.” And children die, day after day, of hunger, of malnourishment and of related complication. Expecting mothers also die. On June 14, 2019, Unicef said that one woman and six newborn die every two hours in Yemen due to complications.

has not just killed civilians, but also disrupted access to healthcare, clean water and sanitation”, suggested Oxfam and the Yemen Data, as mentioned in the same report by ABC News.

In the midst of the chaos and confusion, the efforts to contain Covid-19 have also been hampered as “three quarantine centres have been hit by airstrikes” since mid-March, reported ABC News citing Civilian Impact Monitoring Project.

And aid keeps getting scarcer. The UN on September 23 said that aid to around 300 health centres in Yemen was being stopped due to lack of funds. So far only

## What technological changes should the RMG sector embrace?

**SUMAIYA NOOR**

**W**HEN river starts running dry, start looking for water elsewhere. That’s what the global readymade garment (RMG) industry has been doing lately—reimagining apparel production line-ups and integrating technology for cutting cost and competition. Technological advancement and better efficiency are what the Bangladeshi RMG industry needs. This can be done with Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The RMG industry in Bangladesh is celebrated as its leading (and dominating) source of export earnings. Our position in the global market as the second-largest manufacturer of garments is an accolade that we wear proudly, and the industry has provided immense support to the economic development of the country.

AI, opposite to what is feared to be replacing people in the industry, can be used to embrace and create new opportunities. As far-fetched as it sounds, AI is a part of our daily lives: from Siri to Google search engine, to self-driving cars, customer service chat boxes and much more.

Bangladesh is becoming a more popular apparel sourcing destination for western retailers thanks to the ongoing US-China trade war. Geographical diversification of sourcing is underway, driven by the need for cost optimisation that predates the current tariff battles. Up to three-quarters of businesses said they were already looking for suppliers in new countries or had plans to do so in 2018 and some



of China’s long-standing competitors are emerging as their top choices. A notable portion of companies working in the cost-sensitive textile sector has mentioned plans to expand their sourcing to other Asian manufacturing hubs such as Bangladesh.

Brands in this modern-day market stay on the lookout for super vendors who have smaller lead times, shorter order runs, more styles and produce high fashion. In order to keep competing in this in-season change and highly competitive sector and hold their position, manufacturers in Bangladesh need to start embracing digital transformation and transform themselves into super vendors.

Bangladesh, according to an ILO report, has the lowest gender pay gap in the world. We have more than three million female garment workers who have graduated from abject poverty to

a position of economic empowerment. The report also refers to “impossible” targets being set for workers. In compliant factories, the targets are set by industrial engineers and workers often find them hard to accept. But with time, most factories can explain that there is a clear relationship between wage and efficiency. Bangladesh, limping at a national average of 40 percent efficiency has a long way to go compared with other factories in the world sporting an easy 70 percent mark.

When compared to 2016, there has been a 300 percent growth in investments in Artificial Intelligence capability in 2017 globally, as predicted by Forrester Research. An IDC research has predicted that the AI market will become worth more than USD 47 billion in 2020 growing from an USD 8 billion market in 2016. In

case of Bangladesh, re-branding and digitisation of the RMG industry to meet the global sourcing requirements will also require successful adoption on industry automation. For this purpose, specific cases must be reviewed with an objective yardstick.

Apparel retail, specifically, e-commerce, is driven by the fashions trending globally. AI can help computers identify images and recommend those products online which the customer is more likely to buy. E-commerce and M-commerce platforms, through AI capabilities, are able to leverage the information available about the customers and their inclinations, similarities and differences in the kinds of applications and products they seek.

AI intervention in merchandising can help companies to not just analyse large data volumes, but also predict consumer trends, making merchandising operation error free, and more aligned to the customer needs.

Apart from the capabilities discussed above, there is a sea of technologies that are already being offered by vendors like Amazon, Artificial solutions, Google, Creative virtual, Assist AI, etc. that apparel industry can use to improve its operating efficiency and gain cost advantages across the supply chain. Things like natural language generation, virtual agents, machine learning platforms, AI-optimised hardware, decision management, biometrics, robotic process automation and the list goes on.

An average order planning time

with manual systems is 35-40 minutes. Average order planning time with an automated system takes up to 7 minutes, giving vendors an 80 percent time reduction in order planning. With this improvement, if a factory produces 10 styles/day the lead time will be reduced by 5 hours in a day, 125 hours in a month and over 1,500 hours in a year. With the amount of time saved, more styles of clothing can be planned in a year with existing manpower. With order quantity shrinking per style and number of styles increasing, vendors can ensure that their costs don’t suffer.

In order to survive, vendors need to reduce lead time so that they can handle more style changes, cater to in-season change and reduce the cost to bid for more orders. Thus, the industry is ripe to be disrupted by digital transformation.

However, just like in a zero-sum game, what benefits business and industry, harms poor and marginal income groups. We will also have to take into consideration the possibilities of increased job loss and job replacement. Policymakers and industry practitioners will also have to adopt innovative measures to address these issues. In the competitive era of globalisation, the question is not whether or not we can sustain this position and adapt to the changing trends. The question is whether we are ready to embrace the technological change for a bigger gain.

Sumaiya Noor is a development sector research professional. Email: noor.sumaiya@outlook.com

**AYN RAND**  
(1905-1982)  
Russian-American writer and philosopher.

*The question isn't who is going to let me; it's who is going to stop me.*

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**

1 Ten topper

5 Fancy ties

11 First name in jazz

12 Mall units

13 Leave speechless

14 Report card signer

15 Adds

17 Road gunk

18 Allude

22 Attire

24 Field of film

25 Crew tool

26 Much of N. Amer.

27 Worries

30 Out of bed

32 Thoroughly

disgusted

33 Hill builder

34 Book parts

28 Chit

41 Diva's piece

42 "King of the Trumpet"

43 English county

44 Genetic copies

45 Advantage

**DOWN**

1 Witty remark

2 Choir voice

3 Tightly grouped

4 Dorothy's home

5 Nile reptiles

6 Flight units

7 Eye part

8 Vein makeup

9 Kayo count

10 Retired plane

16 Hosp. sections

19 Rattled

20 Different

21 Meg of movies

22 Remove

23 Quite uncommon

28 Fix, as a shirttail

29 Bubble shape

30 Drake's music

31 Consumption

35 Fine study

36 Flight site

37 Fill up

38 Comic Bernie

39 Maximum amount

40 Pi follower

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

G	A	G	S		M	A	J	O	R	S
A	L	I	T		A	T	O	N	A	L
L	E	V	Y		C	O	L	O	N	Y
A	X	E			S	A	L	T		
			S	C	O	W	L	T	A	B
F	E	A	R	S		S	P	A	C	E
A	U	R	A			O	K	R	A	
C	R	I	M	P		Q	U	E	E	N
T	O	P			H	O	U	R	S	
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BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



## Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12  
On Friday, Momen reiterated that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) will not send back 54,000 Rohingyas living there for decades.

“The Saudi government told us it’ll be helpful for them if we provide them with passports as Saudi Arabia doesn’t keep stateless people,” he said.

The foreign minister said they formed a three-member committee headed by Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen to look into the Saudi request.

There are many people to instigate because Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia maintain very good relations with 22 lakh workers in the KSA.

The foreign minister said many years ago -- around 39 to 40 years -- the then Saudi authorities took Rohingyas seeing their sufferings. They do not have any passport and they speak Arabic.

Bangladesh’s position is to scrutinise their identity first as it does not want to take additional burden.

Momen, however, said the Saudi government urged Bangladesh to take back 462 Rohingyas who are currently in Saudi jails for committing criminal activities.

Bangladesh Mission checked it and found only 70 to 80 having Bangladesh’s passports.

Momen said Bangladesh will bring back those 70 to 80 people having Bangladesh’s passports by issuing travel documents. “We don’t know about others.”

## Landmine

FROM PAGE 12  
organisation’s most successful “HeroRAT”.  
“The work of HeroRAT Magawa and APOPO is truly unique and outstanding,” said PDSA director-general Jan McLoughlin.

“HeroRAT Magawa’s work directly saves and changes the lives of men, women and children who are impacted by these landmines.”

Millions of landmines were laid in Cambodia between 1975 and 1998, causing tens of thousands of casualties.

Magawa, based in the northern city of Siem Reap, is the first rat to receive a PDSA medal in the 77 years of the awards, joining an illustrious band of brave canines and felines -- and even a pigeon.

The PDSA Gold Medal is the animal equivalent of Britain’s George Cross. The charity also awards the Dickin Medal, for military animals.

APOPO trained Magawa in his native Tanzania to detect the chemical compound within explosives by rewarding him with tasty treats -- his favourite being bananas and peanuts.

The rats alert de-miners by scratching the earth.

He can scurry across an area the size of a tennis court in just 30 minutes, something that would take four days using a conventional metal detector.

He is big enough to be attached to a leash as he goes about his business but light enough not to set off mines.

“The PDSA Gold Medal award brings the problem of landmines to global attention,” said Christophe Cox of APOPO.

Cox said its team of “HeroRATs” speeded up landmine detection because of their keen sense of smell and recall.

“Unlike metal detectors, the rats ignore scrap metal and only sniff out explosives making them fast and efficient landmine detectors,” Cox said.

APOPO currently has 45 rats finding landmines and 31 detecting tuberculosis in Africa and Asia, according to its website.

## Trump set

FROM PAGE 12  
Leaders of the Republican majority in the Senate, which is tasked with confirming Supreme Court nominees, said they have enough support to hold a vote on the nomination either before the election or at worst during the “lame duck” session between the election and the inauguration of the next president in January.

“We will certainly do that this year,” Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell said.

If Barrett is confirmed, the Supreme Court would have a 6-3 conservative majority.

Barrett was only appointed to the bench for the first time in 2017. A deeply conservative Catholic, she is considered hostile to abortion rights -- a key issue for many Republicans.

The left-leaning government watchdog group Accountable US was unimpressed with the reported choice. “Barrett has proven time and again that protecting businesses -- not people -- is her top priority,” said group president Kyle Herrig.

In 2018, the mother of seven was on the shortlist presented by Trump for a seat vacated by the retirement of justice Anthony Kennedy, a position ultimately filled by Brett Kavanaugh after a ferocious confirmation battle.

For Trump, nominating a conservative judge to the Supreme Court is a way to fire up his base heading into November’s election.

Ginsburg’s last wish, reportedly relayed to her granddaughter, was for her seat to be decided by whoever wins the next election.

# Gonoforum faction ousts Gen Secy

FROM PAGE 12  
make it a stronger people-oriented party.

He said they formed a 201-member preparatory committee, led by party former general secretary Mostafa Mohsin Montu, to hold the council.

Sayeed said their meeting decided to expel party general secretary Dr Reza Kibria, presidium members AOM Shafique Ullah, Advocate Mohsin Rashid and organising secretary Mostaque Ahmed for violating party discipline, and constitution and indulging in activities that go against the party’s interests and organisational unity.

They claimed that 283 leaders, including representatives from 52 districts, were present at the meeting.

Replying to a question on whether Dr Kamal will remain with them or not, Mostafa Mohsin Montu said it will be decided at the party’s council meeting.

Asked about the reason behind holding the meeting without the party president, he said they repeatedly tried to convince him to resolve the problems within the party and sit with the party leaders.

“He only bought time but didn’t take any step in this regard. That’s why we decided to hold the meeting... We hope he is with us and we urge him to abandon the controversial people... We also hope that our party will remain united and good sense will prevail upon him [Kamal] to take steps so that those of us started the

journey of Gonoforum 27 years back can work together,” Montu added.

Executive president Subrata Chowdhury urged party leaders and activists to get united and strengthen Gonoforum to free the country from “misrule, autocracy, corruption and criminalised politics”.

Kibria, however, said this meeting has no relation with Gonoforum since it was not convened by the party president and general secretary as per the party charter.

A close associate of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Dr Kamal Hossain founded Gonoforum in 1993 leaving Awami League.

Conflicts within the party leaders began after its fifth council held on April 26 last year as many party leaders, including the then general secretary Mostafa Mohsin Montu, were left out in the committee formed there.

Kibria was made party general secretary, but a group of leaders were not cooperating with him from the very beginning. Initially, Abu Sayeed and Subrata were on the side of Kibria, but later they engaged in conflicts with him over various decisions.

Party insiders said some Gonoforum leaders, including Montu, Subrata and Abu Sayeed, have strong reservations against Kibria, but not against Kamal. But they are unhappy with Kamal as he strongly supports Kibria and endorses his decisions.

Dr Kamal suffers from ‘memory problem’: Montu

Montu on Saturday said their party president is suffering from a little bit of memory problem as confuses many things these days.

Dr Kamal, however, said it is an “evil tactic” of a group of leaders who are trying to create chaos in the Gonoforum to mislead people.

Speaking to reporters after an extended meeting of a faction of Gonoforum leaders at the Jatiya Press Club, Montu said they frequently talked to Kamal Hossain and met him to hold a meeting of the party’s central committee and fixi a date for its national council.

“We also sent him a letter. We met him a few days back and he assured us of holding a meeting. Later, he denied saying anything like that...I think he is suffering from a little memory problem. Besides, he messes up many things due to the influence of an evil quarter,” he said.

Montu, however, hoped that their party will remain united. “We hope good sense will prevail upon him [Kamal] to take steps so that those of us started the journey of Gonoforum 27 years back can work together.”

Earlier, a faction of Gonoforum leaders, led by Montu, Dr Abu Sayeed and Subrata Chowdhury, had an extended meeting of the party’s central committee where they decided to hold a national council on December 26 next. They also decided to expel party general secretary Dr Reza Kibria and three other leaders

and the trend will continue, said Mokhlesur Rahman, executive engineer of WDB in the district.

A total 1,770 hectares croplands have so far been inundated since the last three days, said Masudur Rahman, DD of DAE in the district.

In Nilphamari, people of Dimla upazila are exhausted with repeated flood.

They returned home from shelter centres few days ago. They are now shifting to safe place leaving their submerged houses again.

“This year, we are going through extreme sufferings. I never faced such difficulties by flood in four phases in my life,” said Alekjon Bewa, 70, of Baishpukur shoal under Dimla upazila.

In Thakurgoan and Panchagrah, public lives have been paralysed in the last three days. Many areas have been inundated while many mud houses have been collapsed.

from the party.

“He [Dr Kamal] gave many dates, but unfortunately forgot those due to the invisible interferences by some individuals. That’s why we decided to hold the meeting.”

Asked whether Dr Kamal was with them, he said, “We surely think he’s with us, and we urge him to abandon controversial people.”

Replying to a question whether Kamal will remain their president if he does not accept their meeting’s decision, Montu said it will be decided at the party’s council.

Contacted, Kamal told UNB that the meeting in the name of Gonoforum is illegal as party president and convener is not aware of it.

“They’ve no organisational power and constitutional authority to hold a meeting in the name of Gonoforum. Our party has no relation with that meeting,” he said.  
Kamal said he is unwilling to talk about the decisions of the meeting since those are only opinions of some individuals.

As his attention was drawn to Montu’s remark that he now suffers from memory problems, the Gonoforum president said, “It’s their strategy to confuse people. I’m not interested in reacting to such a comment. In fact, I’ve no relation with them now.”

Replying to another question, he said those who illegally held a meeting in Gonoforum’s name are the troublemakers.

At least 2,000 families are passing days with immense sufferings due to flood.

People of low-income group are facing double sufferings as they are remaining unemployed.

“I did not get any work in the last three days. I bought daily essentials taking loans from others. I don’t know how many days we will be able to survive this way,” said Horen Chandra, 52, a resident of Yakubpur village in Thakurgoan Sadar upazila.

Farmers will have to incur huge losses as their winter crops have been damaged.

“I cultivated some winter vegetables investing around Tk 70,000. But my lands have been submerged,” said Babu, a resident of Farabari village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Bogura, Nilphamari and Thakurgoan contributed to the report.

## 36 more die

FROM PAGE 12  
rate was 10.27 percent while the overall positivity rate stood at 18.85 percent.

Bangladesh is currently ranked 15th in the list of worst affected countries in the world in terms of the number of confirmed cases.

The position is one step ahead of Iraq and one step behind United Kingdom, according to worldometer.info.

At least 1,753 Covid-19 patients have recovered in the same 24 hours which took the total number of recoveries to 2,68,777, while the overall recovery rate stood at 75.10 percent.

Among the 36 deceased, 25 were male and 11 were females.

Seven of them were aged between 41 and 50 years, eight between 51 and 60, and the highest 21 were above 60 years, according to the press release.

One each of the deceased was from Mymensingh, Barisal and Khulna divisions, two were from Sylhet, eight from Chattogram and the highest 23 were from Dhaka division.

## First labour

FROM PAGE 12  
equal number of representatives from workers and management to deal with the day-to-day problems including disciplinary action against the workers, would soon be set up in each industrial concern.

The problems which could not be resolved by the council would be referred to the proposed management board, he adds. It may be mentioned here that 85 percent of the investment in industries of the country are in the nationalised sector. He, however, makes it clear that the absence of collective bargaining by workers in nationalised or taken over industries would not mean cessation of trade union activities. The government, he says, is aimed at giving encouragement to the growth of democratic trade movement in the country.

DECLARATION OF THREE WEEKLIES CANCELLED

The government has cancelled the declaration of two Bangla weeklies Haq Katha and Mukhapatra and an English weekly Spokesman for publishing prejudicial materials. The presses from where these weeklies were being published have also been ordered not to publish books or newspapers until further orders.

SOURCES: September 28, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefa.

## AL nominee

FROM PAGE 12  
centres during polling hours, this correspondent saw a poor turnout of voters. No polling agent of the BNP nominee was present at those centres. However, there were agents of the AL candidate at all polling stations.

Three candidates, including the two from the AL and the BNP, contested the by-polls for this parliamentary seat which fell vacant following the death of AL lawmaker Shamsur Rahman Sherif Dilu on April 2.

Monojit Kormokar, presiding officer of Kalikapur school polling centre in the Ishwardi upazila, said no polling agent of the BNP candidate turned up at his centre until 10:30am. Only 30 voters out of the total 2,457 casted their votes at the centre until 10:00am, he told The Daily Star.

At Ishwardi’s Shahpur Shahid Abul Kashem School, the BNP candidate’s polling centre, there was no agent for him either.

Mohammed Ali, presiding officer at the centre, said he did not see any polling agent of BNP nominee Habib at his centre. Only 432 votes out of the total 3,488 were casted at the centre till noon, he added.

Meanwhile, BNP nominee Habib at a press conference at his Shahpur village home alleged that there was no election environment at the constituency.

“My polling agents could not go to any polling centre due to threats from ruling party men and harassment by police. Voters did not go to the polling centres either. This is not an election,” he told reporters.

He demanded the Election Commission declare the schedule for a fresh by-election to this constituency.

Refuting the allegations, AL Organising Secretary SM Kamal Hossain said the BNP joins an election only for “nomination trade”.

Speaking at a press conference at Pabna Press Club in the afternoon, he said the BNP has no target to win an election or make it competitive and that’s why it is making false allegations against the AL and the administration.

“The BNP did not take the polls seriously. Their leaders claim that they participate in an election as part of their movement and also to follow the rule of contesting it. They were nowhere in the electoral field. They are just making false and baseless allegations,” Kamal told reporters.

The district election office sources said 381,112 voters in 12 unions and two municipalities of Ishwardi and Athgoria upazilas were eligible to exercise their franchise.

Voting was held at 129 polling centres from 9:00am to 5:00pm, said Abdul Latif, district election officer and also the returning officer of the by-polls.





National cricketers enjoy practice as usual while BCB director Akram Khan, selectors Minhajul Abedin and Habibul Bashar, former captain Khaled Masud and BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury also enjoy viewing the player's practice from upstairs in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



# Tigers get three-day break as BCB assesses future

SPORTS REPORTER



Although the long and anxious wait to find out the fate of the Tigers' upcoming tour of Sri Lanka is still in the same uncertain state, it is almost certain that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will come to a decision in the coming days.

Upon completion of a week-long training schedule at their bio-secure residential camp, Bangladesh's 27-member preliminary squad were given a three-day break yesterday.

The Tigers were originally scheduled to travel to the island nation today, but the tour has been delayed as the BCB are yet to receive the health protocols from

Sri Lanka Cricket.

"We were supposed to leave for Sri Lanka tomorrow but we are not being able to do so. Head coach [Russel Domingo], selectors and BCB CEO [Nizamuddin Chowdhury] sat for a meeting and decided to give a three-day break to the players. We will return to training after three days and we hope that we will get a response from the SLC in two-three days," said BCB's cricket operation head Akram Khan yesterday.

The BCB appear hopeful and are now planning to travel to Sri Lanka between October 7 and 10, although the revised health protocols will arrive after SLC officials receive guidance from the country's Covid-19 task force.

"If everything remains positive,

we hope to go on the tour sometime between the 7th and 10th of the next month. Since the Lanka Premier League (LPL) has also been delayed, they have time," Akram added.

The former Bangladesh captain also informed that the BCB was moving forward according to plan and that even if the tour eventually got cancelled, the board would focus on domestic cricket.

Akram was asked whether the board would look for a new batting consultant after Craig McMillan decided not to join the Tigers for the Sri Lanka tour, but he replied that the BCB were concentrating more on the tour for the moment.

There were concerns that the three-day break would make it tougher to re-create a bio-

secure bubble as the players were being allowed to return to their families, but BCB's chief physician Debashish Chowdhury allayed them.

"The cricketers have been allowed to go home for this break. This of course means the bubble will pop. However, depending on the decision due in a couple of days, we can make the cricketers regroup again and create a bubble. The process will be similar to what it has been so far," said Debashish.

"We have to do a fresh testing for Covid-19," he said, adding that they did not complete the last Covid-19 test that was expected to be completed 72 hours before their departure. When queried on the length of the new bubble, Debashish said: "It will depend on the guidelines from SLC."

The international season of cricket in Australia got underway at Brisbane's Allan Border Field yesterday with a three-match series between Australia and New Zealand women's teams. The home side clinched a 17-run win over New Zealand in the first T20I. Both teams formed a barefoot circle to connect to the country ahead of the toss in a major public display of solidarity with the nation's Aboriginal community prior to the first international sporting fixture on home soil since the Black Lives Matter movement came to forefront earlier this year.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



## Indonesian GM wins title

SPORTS REPORTER



Indonesian Grandmaster Susanto Megaranto won the title of Joytu Sheikh Hasina International Online Chess Tournament, which concluded yesterday.

The 2517-rated GM, who led the table since the opening round -- either solo or joint -- beat Indian GM SL Narayanan and Iranian GM Amin Tabatabaei in Buchholtz tiebreak system after all three of them finished on seven points each from nine rounds.

SL Narayanan settled for the second position while Tabatabaei finished third.

Five players finished on 6.5 points each while six players, including Bangladesh's FM Subrato Biswas, FM Mohammad Javed and IM Abu Sufian finished on six points. They were accommodated separate positions on the basis of tie-break, with Subrato finishing 12th, Javed on 14th and Sufian 15th.

GM Surya Sekhar Ganguly of India, the highest rated player in this tournament with a rating point of 2646, finished 10th. Bangladesh's highest-rated player, GM Ziaur Rahman, finished in 22nd position with five points.

A total of 74 players took part in the nine-round online event which was held to mark the 74th birthday of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

## 'Weird to stay in the hotel'

REUTERS

Serena Williams finds it 'weird' having to stay in a hotel during the French Open despite owning an apartment in Paris as she continues her chase of a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title.

As part of the Covid-19 protocols, the French Open organisers have told all participants to stay in two designated hotels.

"It's definitely weird. This has always been my home away from home. I always loved being here," Williams told reporters on Saturday. "It has been really different for me staying at a hotel when I'm like, 'Oh, this is what we normally do'. I guess it's a must."



Former national captain and star striker Alfaz Ahmed runs with the ball during a friendly football match between Bogura Sonali Otiti Football Club and Sonali Otiti Football Club, Mirpur in front of around 3,000 spectators at the Alhaz Momtaz Uddin Stadium in Bogura on Friday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Stars steady themselves as battle in Paris commences



Novak Djokovic



Simona Halep



Rafael Nadal



Dominic Thiem



Serena Williams



Victoria Azarenka

AGENCIES



Four months after it was originally scheduled to take place, Roland Garros will now host the final Grand Slam of the season from today.

The clay-court event features more of the top players than the US Open, but it remains notable for who isn't playing -- Roger Federer is still sidelined as he recovers from surgery on his right knee, and world No. 1 and reigning champion Ashleigh Barty, No. 3 and 2020 US Open champion Naomi Osaka and No. 7 and 2019 US Open champion Bianca Andreescu are all missing the event due to concerns related to the coronavirus pandemic and lack of preparation time.

Still, this event is not lacking in star power. Rafael Nadal, a 12-time champion in Paris, makes his return after missing the U.S. swing, as does 2018 champion and top women's seed Simona Halep.

Novak Djokovic will look to redeem himself after a controversial early exit in New York, and Serena Williams will continue her quest for Grand Slam title number 24

## HIGHLIGHT

The French Open starts on Sunday with an ever-shrinking number of spectators allowed at Roland Garros, the players facing tight restrictions and bad weather threatening to wreak havoc during the fortnight. Organisers were hoping to welcome up to 20,000 fans a day into the grounds but that number was reduced to 11,500, then 5,000 and eventually 1,000 as the French government intervened amid a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the country.

## FRENCH OPEN 2020

**Edition:** 124  
**Schedule:** September 27 -- October 11  
**Venue:** Stade Roland Garros (Paris)  
**Surface:** Clay  
**Prize money:** €38,000,000  
**Defending champion:** Men's: Rafael Nadal, Women's: Ashleigh Barty  
**Top seed:** Men's: Novak Djokovic, Women's: Simona Halep  
**Most singles titles:** Men's: Rafael Nadal (12), Women's: Chris Evert (7)

after falling in the semifinals at the US Open. Players such as newly crowned major champion Dominic Thiem, US Open finalists Alexander Zverev and Victoria Azarenka, and surging American Jennifer Brady will look to bring their hot streaks

to another continent. Supporting Nadal, Dominic Thiem also voiced his opinion regarding the slow pace of the Wilson ball as the Austrian, who recently won the US Open 2020, said that it will be challenging to play in the French Open 2020.

King of clay Nadal expressed his disappointment even before the tournament commenced. The Babolat balls have been replaced by the slower Wilson ones.

"I practiced for two days at home with the ball. Now, of course, here. As I said, I'm a little bit sad because the Babolat at Roland Garros, it was my favorite ball, it was perfect," Thiem said. "Obviously, it was the ball from my racket company. Was fast, was taking the spin incredibly well. But the Wilson ball is good as well. It's just a little bit slower. It gets a little bit bigger after a while. In general, the conditions are going to be slower. It can be rainy, it can be very cold. So we will see," he added.

Andy Murray said a delay in receiving his COVID-19 test result on his return to Britain made him wait to seek treatment for a pelvic issue, but he was fit ahead of the French Open.

continue the facade. After years of being the perfect ambassador, the Argentine again aired the displeasure which stems from the board challenging him to take the club to court if he were to have his way and leave.

For his part, Bartomeu has repeatedly praised himself for keeping hold of Messi, while also saying: "Messi guarantees success". That claim may be hyperbolic, but in the sense of attracting fans and, in turn, sponsors, it is fact.

The 33-year-old has attempted to get things right on the field at least, having participated in training and the pre-season friendlies. His shaking hands with Koeman after a friendly was seen around Spain as a sign that the duo had buried the hatchet after an awkward first meeting.

Although more signings will be needed to replace outgoing and ageing players, Philippe Coutinho's return after an encouraging campaign at Bayern and Ousmane Dembele's from injury will be welcome. Miralem Pjanic, who arrived from Juventus, said Barcelona would be eager to show the world that loss to Bayern was "an accident".

Fans will also be eager to see how

case, then the number of signatures would fall below the 16,00-odd votes required to force a second phase of voting. That verification process will begin on September 29.

There are somewhat darker rumours that Bartomeu is acting out of self-interest, keeping in mind the board is liable for a portion of the losses that the club suffers. Selling Suarez, Vidal, Rakitic and Nelson Semedo will reportedly save 52 million euros each season on salaries alone, and go a long way towards curbing Barcelona's inflated wage structure.

When Messi finally broke his silence and decided to stay at Barcelona, he said that he had become disillusioned by the direction of the club. He felt that they were not making the kind of effort that was needed to stay competitive. In the time since, they have done nothing to put their most valuable player, whose contract expires at the end of the season, at ease.

They have not made changes that their best player feels will help them, but they expect him to live up to his 'guarantee' of success. Given his reputation, it would not be entirely surprising if he did.

## 'The point is to score'

REUTERS

Manchester United beat Brighton & Hove Albion 3-2 away in the Premier League on Saturday after an incredible finale in which Bruno Fernandes struck the winning goal from the penalty spot in the 100th minute of the game.

Fernandes's winner, which came after referee Chris Kavanagh had initially blown for fulltime, concluded an enthralling match which saw Brighton hit the woodwork five times and have a penalty overturned by VAR, while United had a goal ruled out in each half for offside.

Kavanagh eventually gave the 97th-minute penalty after consulting the pitchside VAR monitor and Fernandes lashed into the net from the spot, moments after Solly March had levelled for Brighton in the fifth minute of added time.

United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was happy to admit his side had ridden their luck.

"We got away with one. Maybe one point we deserved, we didn't deserve more. But the character deserved more," he told reporters. "Last season we had too many draws, so that is a big plus for us."

United's match winner Fernandes made no apologies. "Maybe they deserved more, but the point is score goals not hit the bar. Sometimes you have to have some luck."





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# Outcry ignored, result obvious

Locals keep protesting while factory waste continues to pollute waterbodies in Habiganj

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

The water has a yellowish tinge and is even somewhat black in parts. The strong stench it emanates keeps people from going near it.

This is Ekhtiarpur canal, a waterbody testifying to severe pollution as the result of a factory dumping untreated liquid waste.

The canal leads to the Sutang River, which ultimately meets and pollutes the mighty Meghna. Along the way, it poses health risks to locals living along the canal and harms their livelihoods and the surrounding environment.

On World Rivers Day -- the theme of which is "waterways in our communities" -- The Daily Star takes a look at how one factory's pollution affected a local canal and all the communities which depend on it.

Many such factories and industrial establishments dump untreated waste into canals, rivers and other waterbodies in the Shahpur area in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila.

Locals have protested on several occasions but Maize Advance Argo Refineries Limited (MAAR Ltd), which primarily produces starch powder, continued to pollute Ekhtiarpur canal since it started operations around eight years ago.

Nurul Islam, a resident of Ekhtiarpur village, said many people in the area were suffering from various diseases, including skin diseases due to contact with water

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**WORLD RIVERS DAY 2020**



An agro refinery factory dumps toxic industrial waste into Ekhtiarpur Canal in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila, turning the water dark, causing severe water pollution, and immense public sufferings. Today is World Rivers Day 2020 with the theme Waterways in our Communities. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

## PABNA-4 BY-POLLS AL nominee leads in polls marred by controversy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

By-election to Pabna-4 was held yesterday amid a low voter turnout and allegation and counter-allegation over the polls.

BNP candidate Habibur Rahman Habib alleged that ruling Awami League men threatened his polling agents and they also faced harassment from police. He demanded a re-election to the constituency.

The AL, however, denied the allegation and said the BNP was trying to call the by-polls into question.

According to final unofficial results of 71 polling centres out of the total 129, AL candidate Nuruzzaman Biswas secured 141,732 votes, Reazul Karim Khokon of Jaitya Party 2,773 and Habib of BNP bagged 22 votes, Abdul Latif, returning officer of the by-polls, said last night.

Visiting 10 polling

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## 4th-time flood, incessant rain hurting the north

STAR REPORT

Recurrence of flood and incessant rain are hitting people hard in the northern districts of the country.

Vast areas of croplands have been submerged in the last few days due to heavy downpour and onrush of water from upstream.

Most of the farmers in the region were cultivating winter crops. If water did not recede quickly, the crops would be damaged, farmers said.

Many people, who returned home from flood shelters few days ago and were struggling to repair their houses, have left their houses again and taken shelter in flood centres.

However, officials of Water Development Board (WDB) in some districts said there was no possibility of long-term flood.

This year, flood first hit northern region in June. It hit the region in second and third phases in the following months. Finally, the fourth phase hit the districts last week.

Our correspondents from different districts reported on flood situation.

In Lalmonirhat and Kurigram, over 35,000 people of nine upazilas are still marooned by floodwater.

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## FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

### First labour policy announced

September 27, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

#### NATION PROUD OF BAF PATRIOTISM

Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman expresses his firm confidence that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country would ever remain intact under the united and coordinated efforts of the heroic Bangladesh Air Force, the Army and the Navy. In a message to the Bangladesh Air Force on the occasion of the First Air Force Day on the September 28, Bangabandhu says that the nation is proud of the discipline, devotion, and patriotism of the air force.

#### MANAGEMENT BOARD, COUNCIL TO RUN INDUSTRIES

A top management board will be set up for nationalised or taken over industries by the government. The board will ensure participation of workers in the management of the industries. The management board will consist of two representatives each from employers and workers and one from financial institution. But the wage structure and other financial benefits to be granted to the workers will not be within the scope of top management board. These will be directly handled by the government. This is disclosed by Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury, minister for labour and social welfare at a press conference in Dhaka today.

Announcing the country's first ever labour policy, Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury also reveals that workers management council, with

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



## Gonoforum faction ousts gen secy

Decides to hold council in December

UNB, Dhaka

Ousting party general secretary Dr Reza Kibria, a faction of Gonoforum leaders on Saturday decided to hold the party's national council on December 26 next.

In an apparent move to hasten the split in the Dr Kamal Hossain-led party, the decision was taken at an "extended meeting of Gonoforum's central committee" convened by the faction at the Jatiya Press Club.

Party president Dr Kamal Hossain and general secretary Dr Reza Kibria were not invited to the meeting.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, party executive president Dr Abu Sayeed said their meeting has decided to hold Gonoforum's national council on December 26 to

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

## Landmine detection rat wins bravery award



AFP, Londres

Heroes come in all shapes and sizes. A five-year-old giant African pouched rat called Magawa, however, has to be one of the world's most unlikely life-savers.

The rodent has won the animal equivalent of Britain's highest civilian honour for bravery because of his uncanny knack of sniffing out landmines and unexploded ordnance.

British veterinary charity the PDSA on Friday awarded Magawa its Gold Medal "for his life-saving bravery and devotion to duty", which had transformed the lives of people in Cambodia.

Magawa, who was trained by the Belgian charity APOPO, has sniffed out 39 landmines and 28 items of unexploded ordnance, making him the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## 36 more die from virus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-six people were reported dead from Covid-19 in 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday, according to a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With this, the total number of deaths rose to 5,129 while the death rate stood at 1.43 percent.

Another 1,106 cases were recorded in the meantime, taking the total number of people infected to 3,57,873, added the press release.

Against a number of 10,765 tests, the positivity

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### PRAYER TIMING SEPTEMBER 27

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4:35 12:45 4:15 6:00 7:30  
JAMAAT 5:10 1:15 4:30 6:05 8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## Bangladesh, Saudi FMs to have talks today

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud will discuss bilateral and current issues over phone today.

The telephone conversation is scheduled to begin at 5pm, an official told UNB yesterday.

The Saudi government on Wednesday positively responded to workers' issues ending barriers to their return to the workplaces in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

The first batch of over 300 passengers left Dhaka on flight SV-802 of Saudi Airlines early yesterday.

The Saudi government recently raised the issue of 54,000 Rohingyas but it could not be confirmed whether the issue will be discussed or not during the telephone conversation.

Bangladesh is already overburdened with over 1.1 million Rohingyas living in Cox's Bazar district.

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Large potholes on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway near Abdullahpur in the capital. The section of the road used by vehicles going to Mymensingh division and the northeast. The road has become prone to accidents due to its poor condition. Repairs have been made but those did not help. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## VACANCY IN US SUPREME COURT

# Trump set to pick Amy Coney Barrett

Say reports as focus shifts to Senate

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump was set to unveil his Supreme Court nominee yesterday, barely five weeks out from the November 3 presidential election, with US media reporting that he has chosen conservative judge Amy Coney Barrett for the job.

If the 48-year-old law professor is indeed nominated and confirmed, her appointment would consolidate a conservative majority in the country's top court.

Citing sources close to the process, various media outlets, including The New York Times and CNN, said Trump would put forward the 48-year-old judge.

"We are going to be announcing somebody great," the US president said in Virginia on a whirlwind three-state campaign tour Friday.

"Tomorrow [Saturday] I think is going to be a big day!" he added, as the crowd roared with approval.

The president did not name his nominee but earlier said his decision was made. Barrett was "outstanding" he said.

Media reports noted the mercurial Trump could still change his mind before the official announcement, expected at 5:00 pm (2100 GMT) Saturday.

Democratic opponents, led by presidential candidate Joe Biden, have demanded that Republicans back off on replacing Ruth Bader Ginsburg -- a liberal icon -- until after the November 3 election.

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