

Your Right to Know

Safar 10, 1442 Hijri



'No, it's eight degrees… it's ridiculous, it's too cold. What's the point? Sitting here like ducks.' A FUMING VICTORIA AZARENKA TO THE SUPERVISOR DURING A FRENCH OPEN MATCH HALTED BY DRIZZLE. PAGE 11

"It is clear that Lukashenko has to go." FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON ON BELARUS'S LEADER AFTER EU'S REFUSAL TO RECOGNISE HIM AS THE LEGITIMATE PRESIDENT OF THE EX-SOVIET COUNTRY PAGE 6



'He's sort of like Goebbels. You say the lie long enough, keep repeating it, repeating it, repeating it, it becomes common JOE BIDEN ON TRUMP AHEAD OF FIRST US PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE PAGE 6

DGs run by a driver!

Investigations, staff narratives yet to shed light on how a Class-IV staffer dictated terms of health directorate; stories of his partners in the corruption remain untold

Mohammad Al Masum Molla and Mahbubur Rahman Khan

Directors general came and went, but the power and influence that the health directorate driver gained stayed.

Through his unholy alliance with key officials at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Abdul Malek, who studied up to class 8, had powers that could be compared to those of the DG.

"Be it a transfer request or a coveted work order, people would turn up to Malek. They knew Malek would get things done," said a line director, wishing not to be named.

The staggering wealth accumulated by Malek and him becoming what many called the shadow DG have been the talk of the town after Rab arrested him last week. Investigations revealed that he has wealth valued at no less than Tk 1,000 crore.

The Daily Star visited the DGHS several times, talked to over a dozen employees of different levels, and officials of the investigating agencies, but all they could tell is how the health directorate succumbed to the influence of a grade IV employee. Nobody opened up about Malek's partners in crime.

The case of Malek is just the tip of the iceberg. There are even more corrupt people at the DGHS. Like him, some grade III and IV employees might get caught. But DGs, ADGs, and line directors will remain beyond reach," said a top official of the DGHS.

Malek, now aged around 60, formed a driver's association and became its president only to influence the drivers' recruitment and transfers.

Some of the DGHS officials did not raise a voice against him because they were afraid while others only made him stronger, according to sources.

Even the immediate past DG, Dr Abul Kalam Azad, chose not to bother Malek. This frustrated many doctors and top officials.

 $It is a \, custom \, at \, the \, DGHS \, to \, place \, wreaths \, at \,$ the sculpture of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the DGHS premises on August 15. Over the years, the DG accompanied by other top officials placed the wreath.

In recent years, Malek started accompanying the DG. "Many doctors felt insulted and they refrained from joining the programme," said an official.



Mahbubey Alam passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent jurist and Attorney General of the republic Advocate Mahbubey Alam is no

He passed away at 7:25pm yesterday while undergoing treatment at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka, Sumon Mahbub, son of Advocate Mahbubey Alam, told The Daily Star last

Mahbubey Alam's son-in-law Reajul Hoque said they were yet to decide where the burial would take place.

The longest-serving attorney general of SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

68pc lost jobs in Dhaka and Ctg

Finds a rapid phone survey by World Bank on those who stopped working during pandemic

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and AHSAN HABIB

Around 68 percent of the people who had to stop working in urban areas of Dhaka and Chattogram due to the pandemic have lost their jobs, according to a World Bank

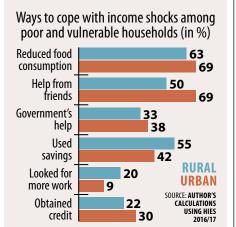
The rate of the job losses was 76 percent

in the capital while it was 59 percent in

the port city, said the report, titled "Losing Livelihoods: The labour market impacts of Covid-19 in Bangladesh". Slum areas witnessed higher -- 71 percent -- job losses than non-slum areas where it was 61 percent, it said, adding that

some of the people expecting to resume their previous jobs may not be able to do so, thus the actual job losses may have been even higher. The report was prepared based on rapid

panel phone surveys among respondents from Dhaka, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar. The survey was carried out in two phases -- one after the pandemic began and the second one from June 10 to July 10.



In Dhaka, one in four respondents reported not actively working in the week preceding their interviews but having worked before March 25. This figure was 22 percent in Chattogram.

In Cox's Bazar, economic lockdowns

Saudi Returnees

Many worried despite govt assurances

JAMIL MAHMUD and RASHIDUL HASAN

Migrant workers, who had been stranded at home ever since they came back from Saudi Arabia for holidays, yesterday said they were worried about the renewal of their work permits despite assurance from Bangladesh government.

The workers were not able to fly back to the Gulf country due to the Covid-19 pandemic

A number of them said their work permits were not renewed even after the Saudi government announced an automatic extension of the validity of the work permits earlier this month.

Some saw their work permits renewed following the announcement but the extended validity will end soon, they added

Several thousand migrant workers vesterday rushed to the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in the capital's Gulshan diplomatic area after Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on Wednesday said they

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3 INCREASE FLIGHTS: MOMEN TO KSA -- PAGE 2 BCL REIGN OVER MC COLLEGE

Crimes thrive on factional politics

2 accused in rape case held

Dwoha Chowdhury, Sylhet

Ten years ago, Uday Singha Palash, a student of Murari Chand College and a Bangladesh Chhatra League activist, was murdered in Sylhet city's Tilagarh area in a factional clash.

The college's BCL unit was then dissolved and no new committee has since been formed, but BCL activists are still involved with factional politics.

Since 2018, four BCL activists were murdered in separate incidents, and they were said to be victims of factional clashes. The actions of BCL activists have come under the

spotlight after six were accused - and two arrested yesterday -- of raping a woman in the college's hostel on Friday night, creating a furore in the country and sparking protests.

Asad Uddin Ahmed, former general secretary of Sylhet city Awami League, said, "It took a long process of bad practice to turn some young BCL activists into people who could commit heinous crimes.

"There are senior political leaders backing them. To achieve their [leaders'] political ambition, they use the students. Overlooking these activists' smaller crimes has led to the situation we are facing now. The backers of the rape accused should be punished or at least socially dishonoured," he said.

It was learned after talking with several present and

RAPE OF CHAKMA GIRL

All 9 rapists are robbers

Claim Khagrachhari police

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

All the nine rapists who raped a Chakma girl are professional robbers and they confessed about their crimes, police said in a press

conference in Khagrachhari. Mohammad Abdul Aziz, superintendent of police in Khagrachhari, said they already arrested seven of the nine accused and were trying to arrest the rest.

The arrested criminals confessed that they raped the girl and looted valuables from her house, he said.

"They all have previous criminal records. They met each other in jail," the police official said.

Those criminals intruded into the victim's house at 2:30am and stayed there for two hours till 4:30 am, he further said, adding that all the accused hailed from different upazilas in

Khagrachhari district. The arrested accused are Amin, 40, Belal Hossen,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6 VOICES RAISED FOR RAPE VICTIMS -- PHOTOS ON PAGE



Armenia-Azerbaijan dispute

Heavy fighting tests shaky truce

Casualties reported on both sides; Turkey backs Baku; West, Russia call for calm

Baku and Yerevan put themselves on a war footing after heavy fighting erupted yesterday between Azerbaijan and Armenian separatists, claiming military and civilian casualties on both sides.

The worst clashes since 2016 have raised the spectre of a fresh war between arch enemies Azerbaijan and Armenia which have been locked for decades in a territorial dispute over the Armenia-backed breakaway region of Nagorny Karabakh.

The region is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but controlled by ethnic Armenians. Armenia and Azerbaijan broke away in the dying years of the Soviet

A major confrontation between the ex-Soviet Caucasus neighbours risks drawing in big regional players Moscow and Ankara.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday pledged support for Muslim-majority Azerbaijan during the new crisis while Russia, traditionally seen as an ally of Armenia, called for an immediate ceasefire and talks to

France, Germany and the EU swiftly urged an "immediate ceasefire," while Pope Francis prayed for peace.

The Armenian defence ministry spokesman, Artsrun Hovhannisyan, said intense fighting continued along the Karabakh frontline yesterday afternoon.

Azerbaijan said it had captured seven of its Armeniancontrolled villages, a claim Yerevan denied. It also claimed to have killed sixteen Armenian separatist fighters.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5







2,70,491 Recoveries



PM for better co-op

outgoing Indian envoy makes farewell call

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday stressed the need for better cooperation with neighbouring countries for the development of the people of this

"We always think that better cooperation is needed with the neighbouring countries firstly for the development of the people of the region as our foreign policy is 'friendship to all

and malice towards none'," she said. The PM made the remarks when outgoing Indian High Commissioner Riva Ganguly Das called on her at the

After the meeting, PM's Press Ihsanul Karim briefed Secretary

Hasina added that the neighbouring countries can use Chattogram, Sylhet and Saidpur airports for their

commissioner discussed bilateral issues. The Covid-19 situation and the Rohingya crisis also came up during the

Riva said the two countries are working together to combat the virus.

She also appreciated the steps Bangladesh has taken under the leadership of Hasina to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Bangladesh's economic development under the PM's leadership amid the pandemic.

Shafiul Alam Chowdhury Nadel,

organising secretary of Bangladesh Awami League central unit, said, "Even

though there is visible conflict between them, they are united. In the last Eid-

ul-Adha, they were united when it

came to securing the lease of Animal

Haat at MC College field."

All the accused of the rape at the Murari Chand College hostel last

Friday were supporters of advocate Ranjit Sarker, local BCL activists and

Contacted, Ranjit Sarkar told The

"The conflict between me and Azad

is media created. We have been good

friends for decades. Whenever anything

happens in Tilagarh, everyone brings

our name to the forefront. How could

we be close to activists who are the age

Daily Star, "It's been 20 years since I left

Chhatra League and entered the legal

the politics of Awami League.

of our children?"

the Sylhet city AL.

Hasina said people of all classes and professions are working together during

She mentioned that large-scale programmes had been taken on the occasion of the "Mujib Barsho". "But we couldn't celebrate many programmes due to the coronavirus outbreak," she

The PM said alongside the government's tree plantation campaign, her party has taken a programme to plant 10 million trees across the country during the "Mujib Barsho".

The high commissioner handed over a letter from Indian PM Narendra Modi in which he greeted Hasina on the occasion of her 74th birthday.

The high commissioner also wished Hasina on the occasion of her birthday. Hasina thanked Modi and Riva for greeting her, the press secretary said.

She recalled India's contributions to Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

 $Has in a said the people of India \, and \, its$ political parties extended overwhelming support to Bangladesh's Liberation War and in the same way they supported the historic land boundary agreement with Bangladesh.

The Indian high commissioner informed the prime minister that the foreign ministers of the two countries are likely to hold talks virtually on Tuesday.

PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus and Indian Deputy High Commissioner in Dhaka Bishwadip Dey were present on the occasion.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handing gifts to outgoing Indian High Commissioner Riva Ganguly Das when the latter called on Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Saudi Returnees

Arrange more flights for their return to KSA

Momen urges Riyadh DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has urged Riyadh to increase flight frequency between Bangladesh and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to facilitate quick return of Bangladeshi migrant workers to their workplaces in the gulf nation.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen made the call during a telephone conversation with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan Al-Saud vesterday evening. Momen welcomed the Saudi

Araba's decision of renewing visa and extending iqama (work permit) period of the stranded Bangladeshi He also requested his Saudi

counterpart to allow Biman Bangladesh Airlines to operate flights between Dhaka and Dammam.

DGs run by a driver!

Malek used to know every move made at the DGHS. A section of the staff members and officers used to give him the information.

Two administrative officers, two personal assistants of top officials and several office assistants joined hands with Malek to lobby for appointments and transfers of officers and other employees at the DGHS, the official

Mohammad Shahjahan, personal assistant to the DG, used to inform Malek about every move the DG made at the office, the source added.

An employee of the Institute of Public Health, which operates under the DGHS, said two administrative officers and one store keeper of the institute used to inform Malek about important files and documents.

Malek knew how to capitalise on the information and make money.

Whenever an officer disagreed with Malek, he fed newspapers information against the officer and made sure everyone read the news when it got published.

"This is why officials did not cross him," a source said.

Through lobbying, he not only gained large amounts of money and assets, but also reportedly had 27 of his relatives recruited at the DGHS.

Malek's properties include 24 flats in three multi-storey buildings he owns in the capital and a dairy firm, all of which has a combined value of over Tk 100 crore, according to Rab. Malek's name was in a list made

by the Anti-Corruption Commission ACC) in early 2019 of 45 grade III and IV health sector employees who were possibly involved in corruption.

THE RISE OF MALEK'S WEALTH Malek started the job in 1982. He first tasted power in early 2000 when Syed Modasser Ali was the DG. He became a close aide of Modasser and

started exercising power. Sources in law enforcement agencies said the driver started making a fortune in 2009 when he chauffeured around the then DGHS chief Prof Shah Monir Hossain.

Malek successfully lobbied for the appointment of over 100 assistant directors in upazilas and earned over several crores, an officer said, preferring anonymity.

Shah Monir also got financial benefits from Malek's lobbying, he

Khondokar Md Shefayetullah replaced Shah Monir in 2010 and worked there until 2015.

MALEK'S PROPERTY

- >> Two seven-storey buildings in Tongi
- A 10-storey being constructed in Dhanmondi
- land in Tongi

Shefayetullah opened a canteen for the grade III and IV employees. Malek took over the canteen soon

space, sources said. In recent years, he was the driver of Dr AHM Enayet Hossain, who was an additional director general at

DGHS. Soon after Enayet became the DG of Directorate General of Medical Education, Malek also got transferred and continued to be his chauffeur. Besides, Malek had

maintained good relations with several Mustafa Jalal Mohiuddin.

Contacted, Mohiuddin said, "I don't know Malek.

Dr Shah Munir said, "I was the DG and he was my driver. Is it possible for me to have a good relationship with him? I was not aware of his wealth. I just

"He knows how he gained wealth. But why was my name implicated? This is embarrassing. Contacted, Enayet Hossain said

appointment and procurement during the time he was my driver," he said.

minimal."

immediate past DG Prof Azad for Prof Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad

Khurshid Alam, the current DGHS boss, said, "No one will be spared if found engaged in any unlawful activities.

wealth in a day, he added. "More people will face the music in

A three-member ACC team, headed by a deputy director, was tasked to probe

the allegations against Malek and 44 DGHS staff members.

they made the move after the corruption of Abzal Hossain, administration officer

The ACC found over Tk 284 crore in

DGHS, came to the fore.

different bank accounts of Abzal and his Asked about the investigation against

at the Institute of Health Technology of

Malek and the others, Safiqul said the ACC had filed 17 cases on the basis of enquiries against the 45 suspects. When it comes to illegal wealth, we

need to do a pre-enquiry to confirm the allegation. That's why it takes time," he Between 70 and 80, mostly grade III

and IV, health sector employees are now under the ACC scanner. The ACC last week filed a case against

former DGHS director and principal of the Institute of Health Technology M Aminul Hasan, DGHS Deputy Director Yunus Ali, Assistant Director Dr Shafiur Rahman and Research Officer Dr Didarul Islam in connection with the Regent Hospital scam.

A top ACC officer said, "Corruption by top officials is more visible and we've recently lodged cases against some of them. But these grade III and IV employees somehow stayed under the radar... We are trying to break their syndicate everywhere.

Heavy fighting FROM PAGE 1

Later, Azerbaijan's presidency claimed its forces captured from Armenian rebels a strategic mountain that helps control transport communications between Yerevan and the Armenian-held enclave.

Azerbaijani forces have taken the 3,000-metre-high "strategic" Murovdag eak in Karabakh, presidency spokesman Hikmet Hajiyev told journalists.

In a televised address to the nation earlier in the day, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev vowed victory over Armenian forces.

"Our cause is just and we will win," Aliyev said, repeating a famous quote from Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's address at the outbreak of World War II

in Russia. "Karabakh is Azerbaijan," he said. Both Armenia and the breakaway region of Nagorny Karabakh declared martial law and military mobilisation.

"Get ready to defend our sacred homeland," Ármenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Facebook

'I call on the international community to use all existing levers to prevent Turkey's meddling (in the conflict) which can once and for all destabilise the (Caucasus) region," Pashinyan said

in a televised statement.

Many worried despite govt assurances

could get their expired visas renewed

permits (iqama) would remain valid until October 17.

from Cumilla's Titas, said he came to Bangladesh with a six-month re-entry visa and was supposed to return to Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh in April.

application.

invalid'," said the migrant worker, who lived in Saudi Arabia for more than two decades. "I am very worried now," he said, adding that he saw some other workers'

had been invalid for the past two months. He communicated with his employer in Saudi Arabia who advised him to communicate with Saudi

embassy in Bangladesh. Preferring anonymity, a migrant worker from Cumilla's Homna, said his iqama's validity was expired on Saturday even after automatic renewal

The worker, who lived in Dammam, said he came home in March on a twomonth vacation and has remained stranded because of flight cancellations.

Md Alam, a worker from Brahmanbaria, said his iqama will remain valid till September 30, which was also automatically extended.

the Covid-19 outbreak on a two-month vacation and is also stranded now. Alam, 45, said he first went to Saudi

shop in the city of Ha'il. BARRED FROM REACHING **EMBASSY**

Arabia in 1994. He had a good monthly

income of about Tk 2 lakh at a motor

vesterday. They were asked to submit their papers to a number of "services offices

approved by the embassy" to get their

distributed among the workers. Firoz, who was on duty, said those offices will provide the required services to the workers on behalf of the Saudi

He added that the migrant workers were asked to communicate via those agencies as giving such a large number of people access to the embassy was difficult amid the pandemic situation. SAUDIA TO OPERATE TWO MORE WEEKLY FLIGHTS

In another development, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) has given permission to Saudi Arabian Airlines to operate two more weekly flights from Dhaka to the KSA from October 1.

operate two more weekly flights from us and we gave them that permission," CAAB Chairman Air-Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman told The Daily Star

He also said CAAB is ready to allow Saudia to operate as many flights it wants from Dhaka so that stranded Bangladeshi migrant workers can return to their workplaces without any problem.

Airlines' Dhaka office said that from October 1, the airlines will operate two more flights in addition to its existing two weekly flights, meaning Saudia will operate four weekly flights from Dhaka. Earlier in the last week, CAAB

chairman said Bangladesh is also ready to give permission to other airlines of Saudi Arabia to operate from Dhaka to carry Bangladeshi expatriate Bangladeshi workers. The government on September 23

said the Saudi government has agreed to extend igamas and visas for 24 days for the Bangladeshis who returned home on holiday but could not go back to the kingdom due to the pandemic

Home to more than 22 lakh Bangladeshis, Saudi Arabia is also the prime destination of Bangladeshi migrant workers and the biggest

Mahbubey Alam

the country has left behind his wife, two children and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed profound shock and condolence at the demise of the attorney general.

In his condolence message, Abdul Hamid said Mahbubey Alam had shown extraordinary skills in handling different cases, including the ones filed over Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's murder.

"His death is an irreparable loss to the country," the president said.

PM Hasina in a condolence message said the nation would always remember Mahbubey Alam with gratitude for his contributions to the country's legal arena.

"As an eminent jurist, he played his role with great skills in many legal matters of national importance. He also devoted himself to his profession righteously, which will always remain as a noteworthy example for all," she

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah, deputy leader of the House and Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Law Minister Anisul Huq, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan, Finance Minister AHM Mostafa Kamal, Planning Minister MA Mannan, among others, expressed grief at the attorney general's death.

They prayed for the salvation and eternal peace of the departed soul and expressed deep sympathy for the bereaved family members.

Mahbubey Alam had been receiving treatment at the CMH since September 4 after being infected with Covid-19. He was taken to the ICU on

September 18 after his health condition suddenly deteriorated. Mahbubey Alam was born in Mouchhamandra village under Louhajong upazila in Munshiganj on

February 17, 1949.

He completed his honours degree in political science from Dhaka University in 1968 and obtained a master's degree in public administration from the

same university in 1969. Later, he obtained an LLB degree from Dhaka University in 1972.

Mahbubey Alam attained a certificate from Bangladesh Bar Council, the statutory body that gives licences to lawyers for practising law in courts, in 1973.

He became a member of the Dhaka Bar Association in the same year.

He got permission to practise law in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court in 1975 and he got permission to practise law in the Appellate Division of the Supreme

Court in 1980. Mahbubey Alam was enrolled as a senior lawyer of the Appellate Division

He achieved a diploma degree on constitutional law and parliamentary law from the Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies in New Delhi in India in 1979.

He served as the additional attorney general of the state since November 15. 1998 to October 4, 2001.

He served as an elected executive nember of Bangladesh Bar Council from 2004 to 2007

appointed as the attorney general of the state on January 13, 2009. At the same time, he also performed as the ex-officio chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council. He placed arguments before the

Advocate Mahbubey Alam was

Appellate and High Court Divisions on many important cases including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination case, and the cases regarding the constitution's fifth, seventh, 13th and 16th amendments. Besides, Mahbubey Alam had

placed arguments before the apex court to ensure punishment of war criminals Matiur Rahman Nizami, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, Muhhammad Kamaruzzaman, Abdul Mollah, Mir Quashem Ali, Salah Uddin Quader Chowdhury, Delwar Hossain Sayedee and ATM Azharul Islam for their crimes against humanity and war crimes during the Liberation War of the country in 1971.

All 9 rapists

FROM PAGE 1

23, Abdul Halim, 28, Shahin Mia, 19, Antor, 20, Abdur Rashid, and Iqbal Hossen, read a press release of Khagrachhari police.

They were arrested from Chattogram and different areas of

The nine accused allegedly broke into the victim's house with sharp weapons, tied up her mother and stepfather, and raped her on Thursday early hours in Bolpaiye Adam area of Khagrachhari Sadar upazila.

They also looted cash and gold

with neighbours

Says it's needed for regional development as

Gono Bhaban.

reporters.

convenience. Ihsanul said the PM and the high

talks, he said.

The high commissioner lauded

Crimes thrive on factional politics

means there is no guidance."
2 ACCUSED RAPISTS ARRESTED former BCL leaders and activists that the two main BCL factions in Tilagarh Saifur Rahman, the prime accused, are allegedly led by two friends -was arrested in Chhatak upazila in Sunamganj while Arjun Lasker, fourth accused, was arrested in Advocate Ranjit Sarkar, former youth and sports secretary of Sylhet district AL and Azadur Rahman Azad, a Madhabpur upazila in Habiganj, said councillor of the city corporation and Jyotirmoy Sarker, additional deputy former education affairs secretary of commissioner (media) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police.

> Rahman Roni, 25, of Habigaj town, Mahfuzur Rahman Masum, 25, of Sylhet's Kanaighat, Tarek Ahmed, 28, of Sunamganj town, and Rabiul Islam, 25, of Sunamganj's Derai upazila are on the run.
> VICTIM'S TESTIMONY RECORDED

The other accused, Shah Mahbubur

The victim's testimony was recorded in a closed court yesterday afternoon. The victim was taken to the court where Sharmin Khanam Nila, metropolitan magistrate, recorded the testimony in a closed court, said

Metropolitan Police. profession. All I am involved with is PROTEST CONTINUES Sylhet City Mayor Ariful Haque Choudhury and councillors of the corporation protested the heinous crime and demanded justice yesterday

They walked from the city hall to

the SMP commissioner's office after a

meeting where they decided to keep

protesting such crimes and vowed to

cultural activists of Sylhet protested the

rape in a demonstration in front of the

hostel, jointly organised by Sammilita

Sangskritik Jote and Sammilita Natya

around

make a safer city for women.

Meanwhile,

afternoon.

Amulya Bhushan Chowdhury, assistant

commissioner (prosecution) of Sylhet

him with the rapists on their social media profiles, Ranjit said, "Anyone can take photographs and claim my acquaintance; that doesn't prove the Ranjit, also a lawyer practising in

Sylhet Court, said, "The problem is

there are no BCL committees, which

When asked about photographs of

68pc lost jobs in were imposed early. Around 90 percent of the Bangladeshi living in the district

reported being employed during a

According to the World Bank report,

coronavirus-driven lockdown

the income losses were widespread across the three areas. In Dhaka and Chattogram, about 80 percent of wage earners and 94 percent of business owners said their earnings were lower Median wages for salaried and daily

workers declined by about 37 percent

compared to usual earnings immediately

before the Covid-19 struck. The decline was higher in Dhaka -- 42 percent -- and in Chattogram, it was 33 percent. Among waged workers, daily and weekly wage labourers faced much higher

losses in income (49 percent) compared to salaried workers. Given the low rates of female labour force participation, women appear to be disproportionately affected by the pandemic and have experienced relatively

higher job losses, the report said.

percent household reduced their food consumption; the same number of people took help from their friends. Thirty-eight percent household surveyed received government help while

To cope with the income losses, 69

42 percent used their savings, according to the World Bank data. This is mentionable there is a widespread uncertainty among participants in Dhaka and Chattogram about keeping jobs and business running. Only 58 percent of active workers surveyed thought they would be able to keep their job or activity running in the coming

months. In Chattogram, it was 69 percent. In the meantime, high levels of uncertainty in the job market are generating stress and anxiety that may further exacerbate health impacts associated with the pandemic, notably in mental health, the report said.

In poor areas of Dhaka and Chattogram, eight in 10 adults reported experiencing stress or anxiety that affected their ability to carry out their day-to-day

"Reductions in wages among salaried

high engagement in the garment sector and housemaid services, both of which pandemic. Among those who lost jobs, cleaning workers or housemaid received the

losses were reported in these arenas. Second highest job loss was reported in the garments sector with 19 percent. regarding poverty, the report said a large share of the population -- eight in 10

falling into poverty before the pandemic.

About 25 percent of population was

living in poverty and another 54 percent could be considered vulnerable as they had consumption levels very close to the poverty line, according to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016-17.

most of the cases, the people are from the informal sector. Incomes of informal workers and in affected sectors are assumed to decline by 50 percent and international remittances

Covid-19, in 2020, average household per capita consumption would decline by an estimated 13 percent with an estimated loss in annual consumption of about \$ 10.7 billion.

The national upper poverty rate is estimated to rise from 23 percent to 35 percent. This represents approximately 2.1 crore additional people falling into poverty in 2020.

and daily workers were significantly higher for women, consistent with their have been severely impacted by the

biggest blow because 54 percent job

About the pre-pandemic situation Bangladeshis -- were poor or vulnerable to

That indicates income losses related to Covid-19 are likely to push a large share of the population into poverty. And in

are also assumed to fall by half. Comparing with a scenario without

>> A dairy farm on 15 katha of

after it was launched and made it office

always leaders of the Bangladesh Medical Association, especially with its president

learnt everything from the media.

Malek used to drive his official vehicle "I was not involved in any job

"The relation was very formal and The Daily Star could not reach the

Malek had not accumulated his

the coming days."
ANTI-GRAFT MOVE

ACC Director Kazi Safigul Alam said

The minister also said their work Shah Alam, a migrant worker

He said he checked the validity of his qama yesterday using a recommended "The app showed my iqama was still

iqamas get renewed automatically. Alam said the app showed his igama

by the Saudi government.

He said he came home 15 days before

Migrant workers were not allowed to reach the Saudi embassy premises and were stopped yards away by police

required service. Asked, Nazmul Hasan Firoz, assistant deputy commissioner (Gulshan) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the Saudi Arabian embassy has provided a list of the service offices that police

embassy

"Saudia sought permission to over the phone.

A top official of Saudi Arabian

Around 50,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers have been worrying about losing their jobs if they fail to return to Saudi Arabia before the expiry of their visas and igamas.

remittance-generating country Bangladesh.

Khagrachhari district, it read.

ornaments from the house. Victim's mother said her daughter

had been suffering from mental ailments after losing her brother and father in 2005 and 2006.



VOICES RAISED FOR RAPE VICTIMS

A number of organisations from different parts of the country yesterday came to the streets, to denounce the recent spate of rape and violence against women -- particularly in Sylhet and Khagrachhari. Cultural activists of Sylhet held a rally in front of MC College, where a girl was raped by six youths on Friday, top. In the capital, right, activists of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Bangladesh Chhatra League and a citizens' group held human chains in front of Jatiya Press Club, Raju Bhashkorjo at DU and National Museum respectively.







A submerged city

Almost entire Rangpur under water following record rainfall

KONGKON KARMAKAR

Since Saturday night, almost all areas of Rangpur city got inundated in record-breaking overnight rainfall in the district, causing untold sufferings to thousands of residents.

More than 50,000 people have been stranded due to the incessant rain. There's hardly any area in the city that was not waterlogged.

The main thoroughfare, almost all the alleys and lanes went under rainwater.

Frustrated residents took to the social media, blaming the Rangpur City Corporation (RCC) for their inaction to resolve the issue

The Meteorological Department in Rangpur has recorded 433mm rainfall in the district from 10pm Saturday to 10am yesterday. This is the highest rainfall in the shortest duration in 100 years, said officials. They forecast more rainfall in the next 48 hours.

During a visit to different city areas, this correspondent found that all the roads and thoroughfares were under waist- to knee-deep water.

People were seen wading through filthy water to go to their destinations. Some were busy protecting their homes and shops from water while others were trying to drain and

People in low lying areas were the worst sufferers.

In an city of 203 sqkm, most areas including Shapla Square, Hajipara, Chamrapatty, Karanjai, Senpara, Newsenpara, Adarshapara, Babukha, Kamarpara, Jummapara, Keranipara, Alamnagar, Hanumantola, Munsipara, Mulatol Amtola, Goneshpur, Babupara, Lalbag KDC Mor, Bus Terminal, Shalbon, Mistripara, Kamalkasna, Mahiganj, Kolabari Darshna, Medical Pakarmatha, Jolkor, New Jummapara and Khatkhotia went under water.

Many had to seek shelter elsewhere as their homes got

Chandana Karmaker, a resident of the Palpara, said her neighbourhood is under waist-deep water. She said the



Prime Minister's birthday today

Bss, Dhaka

Today is Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's 74th birthday.

The eldest of five children of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Begum Fazilatunnesa was born on this day in 1947 at Tungipara of Gopalganj.

Like previous years, Awami League and its affiliated organisations will be celebrating the day by organising various events. On the occasion, milad and doa mahfils will be held

across the country. Special prayers will be offered at different places of worship seeking good health and long life of the premier.

Hasina spent much of her childhood in the village where she was born. In 1954, when Bangabandhu was elected legislator, the family relocated to Dhaka.

In her student life, she actively took part in the sixpoint movement of 1966 and the student movement of 1969, which saw the

'Govt trying to sell public-owned jute mills to pvt sector'

Says Zonayed Saki; LDA leaders at rally demand reopening of mills by September STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is conspiring to sell the public-owned jute mills to the private sector, Zonayed Saki told a protest rally yesterday.

The chief coordinator of left-leaning political party Gonosamhati Andolon made the remark at the demonstration organised by the Left Democratic Alliance (LDA) in front of the Jatiya Press Club, protesting the government's decision to shut down all state-run jute mills.

Chaired by Bazlur Rashid Firoz, central leaders of left wing political parties spoke at the protest rally.

"At first, the government had said the jute mills would be reopened through public-private partnership; now they are saying the jute mills will be leased to industrialists. Actually, the government is conspiring to sell the public-owned jute mills to the private sector," Saki added.

Sajjad Jahir Chandan, assistant secretary general of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), said, "While hundreds of thousands of people in Bangladesh have already been unemployed by Covid-19 pandemic, the 'fascist' Awami League government has made 51,000 jute mill workers unemployed by shutting down the jute mills. Some four crore people of the country who are directly or indirectly involved with jute industry will be affected by this decision. The government must reopen the jute mills under state-ownership within September.

Moshrefa Mishu, noted garment workers' leader and general secretary of Ganatantrik Biplobi Party, said, "According to the government, the mills were incurring heavy losses. The reasons behind the loss were unrestrained corruption of mill authorities and age-old machineries. The government did not take any step against the corrupt officials or to modernise the equipment. Instead, they sacked thousands of workers."

The protesters later marched towards the ministry of jute and textiles, where they were stopped by police. The rally ended there, with the announcement that the prime minister's office would be 'besieged' on October 5 with the same demand.

The government closed all 25 jute mills run by Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) on July 1, laying off 24,886 permanent and 32,000 substitute or temporary workers. Although the minister for jute and textiles had initially said the jute mills would be reopened through public-private partnership or government-to-government agreement or through lease process, BJMC and ministry officials have recently said they are more SEE PAGE 4 COL 2 | interested to lease out the mills to the private sector for short term.

A race against time to get tested

Saudi expat gets Covid-19 report in 9hrs with luck on his side, manages to fly out in time

RASHIDUL HASAN

Around 2pm on Saturday, Mir Abdus Salam was frantically explaining to sample collectors why he needed his Covid-19 test report in less than nine hours. He had a flight the very same day and had to be at the airport by 11:30pm, which means the Saudi expatriate only had that much time to give samples, get them processed and collect the report, a highly unlikely outcome.

As it turned out, it was Salam's lucky day, as the sample collectors stationed at Mohakhali DNCC Market rose to the occasion and accomplished to do just that. Due to this extraordinary service at the lone sample collection centre for overseas passengers, Salam managed to catch his flight and land in Riyadh yesterday.

The Saudi-bound worker [Salam] came to the centre when we were scheduled to stop our activities," said Dhaka Civil Surgeon Dr Moinul Ahsan.

But Salam told staffers that he got his ticket a few hours ago, and his flight is scheduled to depart at 3:30am, he told The Daily Star.

"Usually, we are supposed to get 48 hours to carry out tests of overseas passengers, as per the guidelines of Saudia [Saudi Arabian Airlines]," he said. "But due to our respect for remittance earners, we took Salam's case as a challenge. We immediately collected his sample and sent it to National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Referral Centre through a special messenger.

Both the staffers and Salam were quite lucky. At that very moment, a machine that has the capacity to process 94 samples simultaneously was being prepared to start processing. As per instructions, Salam's sample was included, as there was room for it, Moinul added.

Immediately after staffers got the report, they completed other related work and handed it over to Salam around

'We got information that he reached the airport by 11:30pm and caught his flight," Moinul said.

The civil surgeon said Saudia should issue tickets and allocate flight schedules in a way that allows staffers to get

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Blind date with a book!

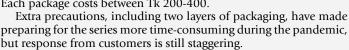
LABIBA KABIR, Star Books Desk

In the fourth instalment of "Blind Date with a Book", online bookstore PaperCut Books are once again sending out pre-packed book bundles. The catch is those who place orders will not know what titles await them until unpacking their delivery.

"When you read and buy a lot of books, it [can get] boring eventually. We love surprises and books as gifts, and that's where 'Blind Dates with a Book' comes in," says Tahmina Habib, founder of PaperCut Books, who launched the initiative with her partner Sheikh Abdullah Aal Mamun in 2019.

Each time PaperCut receives a new shipment, they set aside 10-20 of the new "local copies" for the blind date series. They make sure not to promote those titles online. The books are packed with a free custom-made bookmark; the deliberately chosen plain brown packaging offers minimal hints. Customers, however, get to pick from

a selection of genres, spanning poetry, graphic novels, contemporary nonfiction and others. To further cater to their areas of interest, phrases such as "festive short stories" and "about people who disappear in search of a better life" are mentioned. Each package costs between Tk 200-400.



"It was a big risk, because people might already have some of the books in their collection. But once the reviews hit, we sold out most of the packages in a day and even had to turn down a few customers. It was heart-warming to see all our books sell out without us mentioning authors or titles," Tahmina says.

Amrina Ahmed, who recently bought one of the blind date packages, points out, "We often buy books based on the title or cover, but when it's covered up this way, we can't make that judgment."

"I was particularly satisfied with the book I received and its quality. It was one I hadn't heard of before," adds Rafid Saleh, another customer.

Based on reviews, the initiative seems to be bringing back elements of the reading experience that are often diluted amidst the media hype surrounding books—like the whimsy and adventure of approaching a book with a fresh mind, discovering books that one otherwise might not have tried, and reading for reading's sake only.

Follow Daily Star Books on Facebook and @thedailystarbooks on

Verdict in arms case against Md Shahed today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

testing and treatment.

The judgement in the arms case filed against Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed is set to be delivered by a Dhaka tribunal today.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Special Tribunal-1 of Dhaka is scheduled to read out the judgement around 2pm, Additional Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Tapash Kumar Pal confirmed to The Daily Star.

Earlier, the prosecution and defence completed their arguments in the case.

The prosecution told the tribunal that they have been able to prove the charges against the accused and sought highest punishment -- life term imprisonment -- for the accused.

The defence, however, told the tribunal that the prosecution has failed to prove the charges in the case. They sought acquittal of their client. Shahed was arrested on July 15 from Satkhira when he

was trying to leave the country on a boat. He was later remanded in a case filed over issuing fake Covid-19 test results and charging patients unfairly for

On July 19, a team of DB police found Shahed's private car in front of a house in Sector-11, in the city's Uttara Paschim area. They then seized a pistol with a round of bullets from the car and later a case under the Arms Act was filed against him.

DB Inspector Md Sairul Islam on July 30 submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka, showing 13 people as prosecution witnesses. The Special Tribunal-1 of Dhaka framed charges against Shahed, accused in over 60 cases, on August 27 in the case.

Eleven prosecution witnesses, including the case's complainant, so far gave their depositions before the tribunal.



The Shah Amanat Bridge on river Karnaphuli in Chattogram wears a gleaming new look, as the Roads & Highways Department last week completed decorative lighting on the bridge. Officials said the work was undertaken marking Mujib Borsho, and was halted for a few months due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Lake Road to come under speed limit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Authorities will set speed limit for vehicles on Lake Road, which passes through Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban and Crescent Lake at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, to stop rough driving on the VIP road.

Metropolitan Dhaka Police (DMP) gave the proposal and Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) will set the limit at 40 kilometres "soon", officials said.

"We agreed on principle to set speed limit at 40km. We will take the final decision after talking with Public Works Department, which has constructed the road," said BRTA Chairperson Nur Mohammad Mazumder.

DMP on August 22 gave a proposal to restrict speed after incidents of road crashes and rough driving were reported recently, said BRTA Director (Road Safety) Mahbub-E-Rabbani. A meeting over the

proposal was held on Thursday, presided over by the BRTA chairperson.

The road, around 1.4 km, starts from south-west end's boundary of Gono Bhaban to north-east end's boundary of Jatiya Sangsad.

FROM PAGE 3 48 hours to carry out tests. But due to the way it is being done now, staffers are not even getting 24

"If they fail to get their reports, Bangladeshi workers might miss their flights. Who will take responsibility for this?" he questioned.

Moinul said even though staffers are supposed to stop collecting samples after 2pm, they have been doing so till late at night for the last few days, considering the remittance earners. "But we usually need at least 24 hours to carry out the test.

Talking to this correspondent, several Saudi-bound passengers blamed Saudia and travel agents for mismanagement of tickets and schedules, leaving them with insufficient time to get

This correspondent repeatedly tried to contact Tarik A Alowaidi, country manager at Saudia, regarding the claims, but he did not respond. However, another top official of the airline, wishing anonymity, said they will have to verify the allegations.

Saudia is now operating two flights weekly from Dhaka, and is scheduled to operate four from October 1. Biman is scheduled to resume its regular flights to Saudi Arabia from the same day.

Around 50,000 stranded Bangladeshi workers are waiting to return to their workplaces since March, due to the pandemic.

Many of them are afraid of losing their jobs if they fail to return before expiry of their visa and work permit.



Intensify actions to ensure people's right to info

Right to Information Forum urges govt STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Right to Information Forum Bangladesh yesterday called upon the government to accelerate actions at every levels involving all stakeholders to fulfil the true spirit of the RTI Act 2009 for improving governance situation in the country.

In a statement, marking the Right to Know Day today, which will also be observed globally as International Day for Universal Access to Information, RTI Forum said the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that right to information strengthens access to health, education, ensure justice and contribute towards reducing inequalities.

"During the ongoing pandemic, it was seen that the relationship between government and the people has been badly affected due to lack of interaction. The RTI Act can help the government reduce citizen's concerns about their actions, empower citizens and hold duty-bearers accountable in times of crisis," reads the statement.

Appreciating progress made so far in the implementation of the RTI Act 2009, RTI Forum emphasised that these achievements need to be sustained and scaled-up.

The forum urged the government to review various targets set in the RTI Implementation Strategy and draw up revised plans, in the light of findings of RTI Survey 2019, and global indicators under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). It also called upon the Information Commission to play a greater role to increase public awareness about the law and urged the media -- both print and electronic -- to give attention to this act.

RTI Forum is a coalition of institutions and individuals that played a pivotal role in the enactment of right to information law in 2009 and since then have been supporting the government in its implementation and promotion.

RELOCATION OF DOGS FROM DSCC

HC adjourns hearing till Oct 6 as mayor to meet with petitioners

The High Court yesterday adjourned till October 6 the hearing on a writ petition that challenged the Dhaka South City Corporation's (DSCC) move to relocate stray dogs from

The court postponed the hearing following a time prayer moved by the petitioners' lawyer Saqeb Mahbub and Additional Attorney General Murad Reza.

They told the court that DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh is scheduled to hold a meeting tomorrow with the petitioners and other stakeholders to settle the issue on

They prayed to the HC bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Mohammad Ali to wait for the outcome of the meeting before hearing the petition.

Actor Jaya Ahsan and animal welfare organisations -- Obhoyaronyo and People for Animal Welfare -- submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC on

It requested he HC to stay the DSCC move to relocate stray dogs and dump them in the Matuail landfill.

In the petition, they also challenged the legality of the DSCC move and urged the HC to issue a rule asking the government and DSCC to explain why it should not be declared

Citing the petition, Barrister Sageb Mahbub, lawyer for the petitioners, told The Daily Star that no animal including stray dogs can be removed, relocated and dumped as per section 7 of the Animal Welfare Act, 2019.

Dogs have reportedly been removed from TSC and Dhanmondi areas and relocated to the landfill under the verbal order from DSCC, he said.

DSCC veterinary officer Dr Shafiqul Islam reportedly said they removed some dogs from the areas and left them in Matuail because they were creating "problems" and there were "objections" against them.

'Derogatory FB Posts

SC suspends enrolment of Eunus Ali Akond for 2 weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday suspended the enrolment of Advocate Md Eunus Ali Akond as a lawyer for next two weeks for posting derogatory comments about the udiciary on his Facebook account recently.

The apex court directed Akond not to practice law before the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the SC for two weeks.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division led by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain also summoned him to appear before it on October 11 to explain his conduct. The apex court came up with the order on a voluntary move after Additional Attorney General Murad Reza placed Akond's Facebook posts before the court.

The SC also ordered BTRC to immediately remove the derogatory posts given by Akond and to block him from Facebook, said Murad Reza, acting attorney general.

On August 12, the SC issued a contempt of court rule against lawyer Syed Mamun Mahbub for posting a derogatory status about the chief justice and the judiciary on Facebook. It, however, exempted him on August 23 as he apologised unconditionally.

Prime Minister's

abdication of General Ayub Khan.

In 1968, she married nuclear scientist Dr Wazed Miah. During the Liberation War, Hasina and her family were interned at a house in Dhaka. On July 27, 1971, her first child Sajeeb Wazed Joy was born. Her second child Saima Wazed Hossain was born on December 9, 1972.

After the assassination of Bangabandhu and most of her family members on August 15, 1975, Hasina along with her sister, Sheikh Rehana, was offered political asylum in India, where she stayed till 1981. During the time, she was elected president of Awami League in her absence.

Hasina returned home on May 17, 1981.

In 1996, 21 years past the assassination of Bangabandhu, Hasina led Awami League to power and became the prime minister. In 2008, she led the alliance to another victory with 90 percent of the seats in parliament.

In 2014, Hasina once again became prime minister. She assumed office of the prime minister for the third consecutive term after winning the December 2018 election.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted her Bangladesh counterpart on the occasion. A letter from him was handed to Sheikh Hasina by outgoing Indian High

Commissioner Riva Ganguly Das at Gono Bhaban yesterday. Meanwhile, a letter from the Communist Part of China, the ruling party of the country, also wished the premier, terming her contribution "significant" to the development of Bangladesh and Bangladesh-China relations.

Sheikh Hasina has been honoured with various honorary degrees, accolades and awards in recognition of her leadership excellence. Her most recent role in providing humanitarian support to Rohingyas drew accolade from global leaders, institutions and personalities.

Arms Case against Papia

Court sets Oct 12 for verdict

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday set October 12 for delivering the judgment in an arms case against expelled Jubo Mohila League leader Shamima Nur Papia and her husband Mofizur Rahman Sumon on completion of the trial within nine working days.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of Special Tribunal-1 of Dhaka fixed the date after the defence lawyers completed their

During yesterday's hearing, the defence told the court that the prosecution has failed to prove the charges brought against their clients. They also sought acquittal of their clients from the case.

Earlier, the prosecution on September 24 completed arguments and sought the highest punishment -- life term imprisonment -- for the couple.

12 prosecution witnesses, including complainant of the case. The same tribunal framed charges against the couple in the case on August 23.

A team of Rab arrested Papia and her husband -- a former Chhatra League leader -- and their two accomplices from Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on February 22 while they were trying to leave

The following morning, Rab raided Papia's house on Indira Road in Farmgate and recovered a foreign pistol, two magazines, 20 bullets, five bottles of foreign liquor, Tk 58,41,000 in cash, credit and debit cards of different banks.

On February 24, an arms case was filed against the couple with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station. On June 29, Rab Sub-inspector Arifuzzaman submitted the charge sheet against them to the Chief The tribunal recorded statements of Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

Biman, US-Bangla to resume flights to Muscat next week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman and US-Bangla Airlines yesterday decided to resume their flights on Dhaka-Muscat-Dhaka route from October 2 and 1 respectively.

Both Biman and US-Bangla will operate two weekly scheduled flights on this Middle Eastern destination in compliance with all the health guidelines.

The national flag carrier will operate its flights on Mondays and Fridays, Biman Managing Director and CEO Mokabbir Hossain said in a message.

US-Bangla Airlines will operate flights on Mondays and Thursdays to Muscat, the airlines said in a release.

Flight of US-Bangla Airlines is scheduled to leave Dhaka at 10pm on Mondays and Thursdays. The return flight from Muscat will leave at 2pm (local time) for Dhaka.

With the resumption of Muscat route from October 1, Biman so far resumed its regular flight operations on Kuala Lumpur, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, London and Doha routes.

The national airliner is also scheduled to resume regular flight operations to Saudi Arabia from October 1.

Operations Wing

AND ACCESSORIES DEPARTMENT (PCHAD) 20 Dilkusha C/A (9th floor), Dhaka –1000

Tender Notice

Sealed Tenders are hereby invited by Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited from reputed Manufacturers/ Local Agents/ Companies/ Dealers/ Distributors/ Resellers for supplying 15,00,000 units EMV VISA Chip Card & Dual Interface (DI) Credit Card for Islami Bank Bangladesh limited under the following terms and conditions:

FAVP & Head of Department

Engineering Division PROCUREMENT OF COMPUTER HARDWARE

The intending bidders have to apply in their letter head pad for purchasing tender document to supply 15,00,000 units EMV VISA Chip Card & Dual Interface (DI) Credit Card for IBBL. The tender document will be sold upon payment of Tk.5,000/- only in cash (non refundable) from 28.09.2020 to 11.10.2020 during office hours. Tender will be received at the office of the undersigned during office hours up to 03.00 PM on 12.10.2020 and Technical offer(s) will be opened at 03:10 PM on the same date at the same place in the office of the undersigned in presence of the Bidder(s) or their representatives (who may like to attend). Details information relating to the Tender are available at Bank's website: www.islamibankbd.com or in the form of hard copy in the office of the undersigned.



At one point on Mohammadpur's Ring Road in the capital, Dhaka Wasa had dug a large hole for their work two and a half months ago, and the scene hasn't changed since then. As a result, a bottleneck has formed at that point, constricting traffic and pedestrian movement. The photo was taken earlier this week.

PALASH KHAN

Contact Center: 16259

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) PKSF Bhaban, E-4/B, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Phone: 8181658-61, 8181664-69, Fax: 8181678, Website: http://www.pksf-bd.org, www.facebook.com/PKSF.org

Request for Expression of Interest (REoI) (Selection of Consulting Firm: National)

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) is hereby requesting for applications in sealed envelope from competent national consulting firms for providing the following two short term consulting services under a project titled Promoting Agricultural Commercialization and Enterprises (PACE) Project of PKSF jointly financed by PKSF and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Least Cost Selection (LCS) method and Standard Request for Proposal (SRFP: PS-5) documents for selection of consulting firm on Lump-sum Contracts of the Public Procurement Rules-2008 of the Government of Bangladesh will be followed for evaluating the applications of the consulting firms.

- 1. Package No: PKSF/PACE/SD-02: Impact Study on "Buffalo Rearing by using improved management technique" value chain development sub-project.
- 2. PKSF/PACE/SD-03: Impact Study on "Increasing income and creating employment through production and marketing of imitation gold jewelry" value chain development sub-project.

Each of the impact study mentioned above will be considered as separate one. The detailed Terms of Reference (ToR), Request for Expression of Interest (REoI) documents and Short-listing Questionnaire are obtainable from the office of the undersigned during office hours: 10:00 am to 4:30 pm at free of cost. It will be also available at PKSF website (http://tender.pksf-bd.org). Interested eligible consulting firms are requested to submit EoI along with all necessary documents in sealed envelope to the office of the undersigned directly or by courier/mail by 2:30 PM on or before 15 October 2020.

Any kind of persuasion will be treated as disqualification of the consulting firm. PKSF reserves all rights to accept or reject any or all EoI or cancel this advertisement without assigning any reasons whatsoever.

> Dr. Md. Jashim Uddin **Deputy Managing Director**

A submerged

water pump of her four-storey building went out of order as it got inundated. "All the families in my building are now stranded as we

have no scope to get out in this situation. We are in need of food and other essentials," she said over phone yesterday Many areas in the city are also facing power outage.

According to residents, such waterlogging was reported in the city on July 20 after heavy rainfall. But no action was taken to increase the water flow of Shyamasundari and KD canals -- considered the lifeline of Rangpur city.

"We would get some relief if their water flow is restored,

said Tuhin Wadud, an assistant professor of Begum Rokeya

University. Also, water is not receding smoothly as the sewers cannot drain towards the rivers, he said. The number of drains in the city is not adequate, he added. "Bhagat river

can be used to drain out water," he said. According to city corporation sources, the city has 200km of drains.

This correspondent tried to reach RCC Mayor Mostafizur Rahman Mostafa but his phone was found switched off. In July, the mayor said such a problem would not exist after a couple of months.

had also said they will take steps to clear the sewers on a regular basis to mitigate people's suffering. Asked, Mostafizur Rhaman, assistant meteorologist of Rangpur Meteorological Department, gave a forecast of

Md Emdad Hossain, superintendent engineer of RCC,

more rainfall in the next 48 hours. But the fire service and water development board officials claimed Shyamasundari and KD channels are

enough to drain out water. They, however, said more rainfall will unleash more sufferings.

Meanwhile, water of Teesta, Karatoa, Ghagat and Jamuneshwari has been flowing near the danger level. Large croplands in the area have already been flooded due to the rainfall.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Barishal, Patuakhali, Bhola, Jalokathi, Borguna Madaripur & Shariatpur Agricultural Development Project Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) Khamarbari, Dhaka

Memo No. BADP/DAE/LLP/2020-21/17 Date: 24/09/2020

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement mentioned below:

Tender ID	Description	Tender last	Tender	Tender				
No.		selling date	closing date	opening date				
		& time	& time	& time				
498131	Supply of LLP	27/10/2020	28/10/2020	28/10/2020				
	(Low Lift	(05.00pm)	(03.00pm)	(03.00pm)				
	Pump) set and	, , ,	` ' '	, , ,				
	Canvass pipe							
	at Project area.							

- This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
- To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is mandatory.
- The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Zahidul Alam **Project Director**

E-mail: pdbadp@gmail.com

GD-1523



বিশেষ ক্রোড়পত্র

সোমবার ২৮ সেপ্টেম্বর ২০২০

অঙ্গসজ্জা : চলচ্চিত্র ও প্রকাশনা অধিদপ্তর (ডিএফপি) ♦ তথ্য মন্ত্রণালয়





বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের ন্যায় বাংলাদেশেও 'আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস, ২০২০' পালিত হচ্ছে জেনে আমি আনন্দিত। এ বছর আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবসের প্রতিপাদ্য 'তথ্য অধিকার সংকটে হাতিয়ার' যা বর্তমান প্রেক্ষাপটে অত্যন্ত সময়োপযোগী হয়েছে বলে আমি মনে করি।

তথ্য প্রাপ্তি ও জানা মানুষের গণতান্ত্রিক অধিকার। তথ্য মানুষকে সচেতন করে এবং সঠিক সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে সহায়তা করে। তথ্যের অবাধ প্রবাহ ও দেশের জনগণের তথ্য অধিকার নিশ্চিতের জন্যই প্রণীত হয়েছে 'তথ্য অধিকার আইন ২০০৯'। এ আইন আবশ্যিকভাবে তথ্য প্রাপ্তিতে জনগণকে দিয়েছে আইনি ভিত্তি। এর ফলে সরকারি স্বায়ত্তশাসিত ও সংবিধিবদ্ধ এবং সরকারি ও বিদেশী অর্থায়নে সৃষ্ট বা পরিচালিত বেসরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বচ্ছতা, জবাবদিহির পাশাপাশি দুর্নীতিমুক্ত পরিবেশে দায়িত্ব পালন ও সুশাসন প্রতিষ্ঠার পথ রচিত হয়েছে।

এ বছর আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস এমন একটি সময়ে উদযাপিত হচ্ছে যখন কোভিড-১৯ ভাইরাস সংক্রমণে বাংলাদেশসহ পুরো বিশ্ব বিপর্যন্ত। এই ক্রান্তিকালে তথ্যের অবাধ, সঠিক ও সময়োচিত প্রকাশ একদিকে যেমন জনগণের মধ্যে সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি করবে; অন্যদিকে কর্তৃপক্ষের সুশাসন নিশ্চিত হবে, জনগণ ও রাষ্ট্রের মধ্যে আস্থার সম্পর্ক সমুন্নত থাকবে। জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান ক্ষুধা ও দারিদ্রামুক্ত সুখী-সমৃদ্ধ সোনার বাংলা প্রতিষ্ঠার স্বপ্ন দেখেছিলেন। মুজিববর্ষে বঙ্গন্ধুর সেই স্বপ্ন প্রণের জন্য আমি সকলকে ধৈর্য ও সাহসের সাথে সহযোগিতার মনোভাব নিয়ে সংকট মোকাবিলায় এগিয়ে আসার জন্য উদাত্ত আহবান জানাচিছ।

তথ্য অধিকার আইনের সুফল জনগণের দোরগোড়ায় পৌছে দিতে তথ্য কমিশন নিরলস কাজ করে যাচ্ছে এবং জনগণের তথ্য প্রাপ্তির ক্ষেত্রে বিরাজমান বাধাসমূহ দূর করতেও অব্যাহত প্রয়াস চালিয়ে যাচেছ। তথ্য কমিশনের গৃহীত পদক্ষেপসমূহ জনগণকে তথ্য জানার অধিকার সম্পর্কে আরও সচেতন করবে - এ প্রত্যাশা করি। আমি 'আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস, ২০২০' উপলক্ষ্যে গৃহীত সকল কর্মসূচির সফলতা কামনা করি।

খোদা হাফেজ, বাংলাদেশ চিরজীবী হোক।









দেশে অবাধ তথ্য প্রবাহ নিশ্চিত করার লক্ষ্যে ২৮ সেপ্টেম্বর 'আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস , ২০২০'। 'তথ্য অধিকার সংকটে হাতিয়ার'- প্রতিপাদ্যকে সামনে রেখে সমগ্র দেশব্যাপী 'আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস, ২০২০' পালিত হতে যাচেছ। তথ্য কমিশন এ দিবস উদ্যাপন উপলক্ষে প্রতি বছরের ন্যায় এ বছরও নানামুখী উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করেছে। আমি তথ্য কমিশনের এ উদ্যোগকে স্বাগত জানাই।

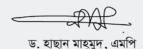
জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের নেতৃত্বে ত্রিশ লক্ষ শহীদের রক্তের বিনিময়ে আমরা পেয়েছি স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশ। এদেশকৈ জাতির পিতার স্বপ্লের সোনার বাংলা গড়ার অন্যতম পদক্ষেপ হিসেবে জনগণের ক্ষমতায়ন নিশ্চিত করার মহান লক্ষ্যে বঙ্গবন্ধ কন্যা প্রধানমন্ত্রী জননেত্রী শেখ হাসিনার সরকার ২০০৯ সালে তথ্য অধিকার আইন প্রণয়ন করে। এর মাধ্যমে প্রতিষ্ঠিত তথ্য কমিশন তথ্য অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠার মাধ্যমে সরকারি-বেসরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহের কর্মকাণ্ডে ষচ্ছতা ও জবাবদিহিতা বৃদ্ধিকল্পে এবং দুর্নীতি রোধে কাজ করে চলেছে। 'তথ্য অধিকার আইন, ২০০৯' আজ সুশাসন প্রতিষ্ঠার একটি অনন্য হাতিয়ার।

তথ্য প্রাপ্তির চাহিদা প্রতিনিয়ত বন্ধি পাচ্ছে। তথ্য প্রাপ্তির আবেদন সংখ্যা বন্ধি প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহের স্বচ্ছতা জবাবদিহিতার সাথে কাজ করার প্রক্রিয়াকে তুরান্বিত করছে। এই প্রক্রিয়া অব্যাহত রাখতে আইনটির ব্যাপক প্রচার, প্রসার ও বাস্কবায়নে গণমাধ্যমকে অগ্রণী ভূমিকা পালনে আহ্বান জানাই।

বাংলাদেশসহ বর্তমান বিশ্ব আজ একটি বিশেষ পরিছিতির মুখোমুখি। কোভিড-১৯ ভাইরাসে আজ পুরো বিশ্ব আক্রান্ত। এক দেশ থেকে আরেক দেশ এবং পর্যায়ক্রমিকভাবে এটি বৈশ্বিক মহামারীর আকার ধারণ করেছে। বিশ্বব্যাপী লক্ষ লক্ষ মানুষের প্রাণহানি ঘটছে। বাংলাদেশেও এ ভাইরাসে আক্রান্তের সংখ্যা ক্রমাগত বৃদ্ধি পাচেছ। কোভিড-১৯ মহামারী থেকে মুক্তির জন্য সঠিক তথ্যের প্রচার ও প্রকাশ করা এবং স্বাস্থ্যবিধি মেনে চলা প্রয়োজন। সঠিক তথ্য প্রকাশ একদিকে যেমন জনগণের মাঝে সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি করবে, তেমনি তথ্যের সঠিক ব্যবহার জাতিকে এই মহামারী থেকে মুক্তি দিতে সহায়ক হবে।

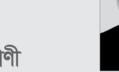
মুজিববর্ষে তথ্য অধিকার দিবস উদ্যাপন তথ্য অধিকার নিশ্চিতকল্পে একটি বিশেষ মাত্রা যোগ করবে। দিবসটি উদ্যাপন নি:সন্দেহে এ সংকটকালীন পরিছিতিতে তথ্যের অবাধ প্রবাহ নিশ্চিত করবে এবং তথ্যের সঠিক ব্যবহারের মাধ্যমে জনগণের অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠিত হবে বলে আমার বিশ্বাস।

আমি 'আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস , ২০২০' উপলক্ষে গৃহীত সকল কর্মসূচির সর্বাঙ্গীন সাফল্য কামনা করছি। জয় বাংলা, জয় বঙ্গবন্ধু বাংলাদেশ চিরজীবী হোক।





প্রধান তথ্য কমিশনার তথ্য কমিশন



২৮ সেপ্টেম্বর আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস। এবারও বিশের অন্যান্য দেশের মত আমরা দিবসটি পালন করছি। এবার এ সময়ে সারাবিশ্ব করোনা ভাইরাস মহামারিতে আক্রান্ত। তাই ইউনেন্ধো এবারের প্রতিপাদ্য ঘোষণা করেছে-'Access to information in times of crisis' আর আমাদের প্রতিপাদ্য-'তথ্য অধিকার সংকটে হাতিয়ার।' সংকট উত্তরণে এটি খুবই তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ও সময়োপযোগী। অজানা ভাইরাস সংকট মোকাবেলায় মানুষের সঠিক তথ্যে সময়োচিত প্রবেশাধিকার নিশ্চিতকরণের বিকল্প কি হতে পারে? ব্যাপক জনগোষ্ঠীর স্বাস্থ্য সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধিতে, স্বাস্থ্যবিধি মেনে চলার মানসিকতা তৈরি বা অভ্যাস গড়ে তুলতে, কর্তৃপক্ষের গৃহীত বিভিন্ন পদক্ষেপ যথা- স্বাস্থ্য, চিকিৎসা ও অন্যান্য আর্থ-সামাজিক কার্যক্রম, প্রণোদনা ও সুবিধাদির তথ্য জনগণের জন্য অবারিত ও নিশ্চিতকরণ তথা অবাধ তথ্য প্রবাহ সমুন্নত রাখা অত্যাবশ্যক। এ সকল বিষয়কে সামনে রেখেই এবার সারাদেশে কেন্দ্র থেকে উপজেলায় গৃহীত হয়েছে নানান কর্মসূচি। উল্লেখ করা যেতে পারে, এবারই প্রথমবারের মত উপজেলা পর্যায়েও (ইউনিয়ন ও পৌর ডিজিটাল সেন্টারগুলোকে সাথে নিয়ে) পালিত হচ্ছে দিবসটি, গৃহীত হয়েছে পৃথক পৃথক কর্মসূচি।

করোনা সংকট মোকাবেলায় অবাধ তথ্য প্রবাহ রচনার মাধ্যমে জনগণকে সম্পুক্ত ও সচেতন করার লক্ষ্যে শুরু থেকেই মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী সম্মুখ যোদ্ধাদের নিয়ে স্বয়ং সারাদেশে নিয়মিত ভিডিও কনফারেন্সে যুক্ত হয়ে মানুষের জীবন রক্ষা ও নিরাপদ রাখতে একদিকে যেমন জনগণকে স্বাস্থ্য সচেতন করার প্রয়াস নিয়েছেন, সামাজিক ও অর্থনৈতিক পুনরুদ্ধারে নানা কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ ও প্রণোদনা প্যাকেজ ঘোষণা করেছেন, বাস্তবায়নের দিক নির্দেশনা দিয়েছেন অন্যদিকে সকল কর্তৃপক্ষকে জনগণের প্রতি দায়িত্বশীল রাখতে সচেষ্ট হয়েছেন যা দেশে-বিদেশে সমাদৃত হয়েছে। করোনা সংকটে মানুষের জীবন রক্ষায়, করোনার ছোবল হতে মানুষের জীবন নিরাপদ রাখতে ব্যাপক জনগোষ্ঠীর স্বাস্থ্যবিধি মেনে চলায় উদ্বুদ্ধকরণে, জনগণের স্বাস্থ্যসহ অন্যান্য আর্থ-সামাজিক বিভিন্ন কার্যক্রম গ্রহণ বা বাস্তবায়নে জনগণের তথ্যে প্রবেশাধিকারের ভূমিকাকে বিশেষভাবে গুরুত্ব দিতে হবে। সংশ্লিষ্ট সকল কর্তৃপক্ষের উচিত হবে সংকট উত্তরণে সঠিক চিকিৎসা গ্রহণ ও প্রদানে, নমুনা পরীক্ষায়, চিকিৎসা সামগ্রী সরবরাহ ও ব্যবহারে. আর্থ-সামাজিক বেষ্টনী রচনায়, প্রণোদনার সুবিধা প্রাপ্তিতে সঠিক, সময়োচিত ও স্বেচ্ছাপ্রণোদিতভাবে তথ্য প্রদান নিশ্চিত করা ও তা অব্যাহত রাখা। জনগণের এ সকল তথ্যে প্রবেশাধিকারের বিষয়টিকে সংকট উত্তরণের হাতিয়ার হিসাবে গণ্য করতে হবে। মনে রাখতে হবে মানুষের স্বাস্থ্যসহ সকল মৌলিক অধিকার নিশ্চিতকরণের পূর্বশর্ত তথ্যে তাদের প্রবেশাধিকার। তাই সঠিক ও সময়োচিত তথ্য প্রদান এ করোনা সংকটে মানুষের জীবন ও স্বাস্থ্য নিরাপদ রাখবে , কর্তৃপক্ষের স্বচ্ছতা , জবাবদিহিতা , দায়িত্বশীলতা নিশ্চিত করবে অন্যকথায় সুশাসন নিশ্চিত হবে, সরকার ও জনগণের আস্থার সম্পর্ক সমুন্নত রাখবে, সংকট উত্তরণ ত্রান্বিত হবে। আমাদের ল্লোগান হবে-'সংকটকালে তথ্য পেলে, জনগণের মুক্তি মেলে।'

তথ্য অধিকার সংকটে হাতিয়ার

সুরাইয়া বেগম এনডিসি, তথ্য কমিশনার, তথ্য কমিশন

আজ ২৮ সেপ্টেম্বর ২০২০ আর্ম্ভজাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস। সারা বিশ্বে অবাধ তথ্য প্রবাহ এবং তথ্যে সার্বজনীন প্রবেশাধিকার নিশ্চিত করার জন্য পালিত হয়ে আসছে এ দিবসটি। এ বছরে ইতিহাসের এক শ্বাসরুদ্ধকর ৯ মাস পার করছে বিশ্ববাসী। করোনা ভাইরাস থামিয়ে দিয়েছে স্বাভাবিক জীবন। বৈশ্বিক মহামারির বহুমাত্রিক হুমকির বিরুদ্ধে বিশ্ববাসী বেঁচে থাকার জন্য লড়াই করছে। করোনা ভাইরাসের আন্ত এবং সুদূরপ্রসারী মারাত্বক প্রভাব একাধিক সংকটকে একযোগে এক নজীরবিহীন মাত্রায় প্রকাশ করেছে। বর্তমান প্রেক্ষিত বিবেচনায় ইউনেসকো এ বছরের দিবসটির প্রতিপাদ্য নির্ধারণ করেছে Access to Information in times of crisis এবং তথ্য কমিশন কর্তৃক সময়োপযোগী প্রতিপাদ্য "তথ্য অধিকার সংকটে হাতিয়ার" নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে।

Wikipidia তে Crisis কে বৰ্ণনা করা হয়েছে A crisis is an event that is going to lead to an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an indivisual, a group, community or whole of society. অন্য কথায় বলা হয়েছে- A crisis is difficult or dangerous time in which a solution is needed quickly.

তথ্য অধিকার আইনের প্রেক্ষাপট:

বর্তমানে তথ্য অধিকার জনগণের একটি মৌলিক মানবাধিকার হিসেবে আন্তর্জাতিকভাবে স্বীকৃত। ১৭৬৬ সালের পূর্বে সরকারের কর্মকাণ্ডের উপরে জন অধিকারের বিষয়টি পুরোপুরি উপেক্ষিত ছিল। প্রথমে সুইডেনে জনগণের তথ্যের অধিকারের বিষয়ে আইনের ভিত রচিত হয়। কিন্তু জনগণের অসচেতনতা এবং সরকারসমূহের অনীহার কারণে এই ধরনের আইনের প্রচলন অন্যান্য দেশে বিস্তার লাভ করেনি। ১৫০ বছর পর কলম্বিয়া একই ধরনের আইন প্রচলন করে তথ্য অধিকার সংক্রান্ত মানবাধিকারের স্বীকৃতি দেয়। বর্তমানে ১২৭ টি দেশ তথ্য অধিকার সংক্রান্ত আইন বা নীতিমালা

জনগণের তথ্য অধিকারের বিষয়টি আন্তর্জাতিকভাবে খীকৃত হয় সংকট সময় উত্তরণের অভিপ্রায় থেকেই। দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধের বিভীষিকাময় সংকটের পর একটি নিরাপদ বিশ্ব গড়ে তোলার প্রত্যাশায় ১০ ডিসেম্বর ১৯৪৮ সালে জাতিসংঘ ইউনিভার্সেল ডিক্লারেশন অব হিউম্যান রাইটস বা সার্বজনীন মানবাধিকার ঘোষণা করে। এই ঘোষণাপত্রের ১৯ অনুচ্ছেদে তথ্য অধিকার বিষয়ক সিদ্ধান্ত গৃহীত হয়।

এদেশের ইতিহাস থেকে দেখা যায়, তথ্য অধিকার জনগণের ক্ষমতায়নের মাধ্যম হওয়ায় বৃটিশ এবং পাকিস্তান সরকার ১৯২৩ সালের Secret Act-এর আবরণে জনগণকে সরকারি কাজের জবাবদিহিতার বাইরে রাখে। বাংলাদেশের জন্মও হয়েছে এক অর্থে এই প্রবঞ্চনা বা জবাবদিহিতার অভাব থেকেই। বাংলাদেশ স্বাধীন হওয়ার পর ৯ মাসের মধ্যেই গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশের সংবিধানে জনগণকে সকল ক্ষমতার মালিক হিসেবে স্বীকৃতি প্রদান করেন জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান। মানুষের মৌলিক প্রয়োজন অন্ন , বন্ধ , বাসস্থান , শিক্ষা ও চিকিৎসা পূরণ করার অঙ্গীকারের পাশাপাশি সংবিধানের ৩৯ অনুচ্ছেদে চিন্তা, বিবেক ও বাকস্বাধীনতাকে নাগরিকের অন্যতম মৌলিক মানবাধিকার হিসেবে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করে যাতে জাতিসংঘের সার্বজনীন মানবাধিকার সংক্রান্ত সিদ্ধান্তও প্রতিফলিত হয়।

নব্বই দশক থেকে সারাবিশ্বে আইসিটির ব্যবহারে সরকারি কাজে স্বচ্ছতা আসতে শুরু করে যার ছোঁয়া লাগতে থাকে বাংলাদেশেও। এদেশের জনগণ, বিভিন্ন এনজিও ও মানবাধিকার কর্মী যেমন দাবী তুলেছে তথ্য অধিকারের তেমনই রাজনৈতিক নেতৃত্ব ও জবাবদিহিতামূলক শাসন ব্যবস্থার অঙ্গীকার নিয়ে ২০০৮ সালে 'ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশ' তথা স্বচ্ছ, জবাবদিহিতামূলক 'Vision 2021' ঘোষণা করেন। ফলশ্রুতিতে ২০০৯ সালে তথ্য অধিকার আইন পাশ করে জনগণকে ক্ষমতায়নের পথ উন্মুক্ত করা হয়। তথ্য কমিশন প্রতিষ্ঠা করে রাষ্ট্রীয় শাসন ব্যবস্থায় জনগণকে সম্পুক্তকরণ, রাষ্ট্রীয় অর্থ সম্পদ ব্যবহার সম্পর্কে জনগণকে অবহিতকরণ এবং উন্নয়ন কর্মকাণ্ডে জনগণের অংশগ্রহণ নিশ্চিত করার ব্যবস্থা নেয়া হয়।

বিগত ১০ বছরে তথ্য কমিশন কর্তৃক দেশের ৬৪ টি জেলা এবং ৪৭৮ টি উপজেলায় তথ্য অধিকার আইন সম্পর্কে সংশ্রিষ্ট দায়িতুপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তাদের প্রশিক্ষণ দেয়া হয়েছে এবং জনসাধারণকে এই আইনের আওতায় ক্ষমতায়নের জন্য ৪৯৭টি জনঅবহিতকরণ সভা অনুষ্ঠিত হয়েছে। সরকারি কর্মকর্তা / এনজিওকর্মী এখন প্রায় সকলেই এই আইনের আওতায় তাদের জবাবদিহিতা সম্পর্কে অবহিত। তবে গ্রামীণ বা সমাজের প্রান্তিক স্তরে যারা অবস্থান করছেন, তথ্য যাদের জীবনমান উন্নয়নে সবচেয়ে প্রয়োজনীয় অনুসংগ তাদের কাছে তথ্য কমিশন বা সহযোগি এনজিওরা এখনো তেমনভাবে পৌছতে সক্ষম হয়নি। তথ্যপ্রাপ্তি সহজীকরণের জন্য Online Tracking System চালু করা হয়েছে। ডিজিটাল সেন্টারের উদ্যোক্তাদের প্রশিক্ষণের আওতায় এনে সাধারণ মানুষের কাছে তথ্যসেবা পৌঁছে দেয়ার চেষ্টা অব্যাহত রয়েছে। সংকটের এ বছরে অন্যান্য সকল কার্যক্রমের পাশাপাশি তথ্য অধিকার আইনের মাধ্যমে তথ্য প্রাপ্তির আবেদনের সংখ্যাও অনেক কমেছে। ২০১৯ সালে ৬৪ টি জেলায় তথ্য চেয়ে আবেদনের সংখ্যা ছিল ৬৯৯৫ টি যা ২০২০ সালের আগস্ট মাস পর্যন্ত দাঁড়িয়েছে ১২৮৭ টিতে। তথ্য কমিশনে প্রাপ্ত অভিযোগ সংখ্যা ২০১৯ সালের আগস্ট পর্যন্ত ছিল ৩৫১ টি যা ২০২০ সালের একই সময়ে কমে দাঁড়িয়েছে ১৫৮ টিতে। তবে এই সংকটকালেও জনগণের তথ্য পেতে যাতে অসুবিধা না হয় এজন্য ভার্চুয়াল কোর্ট সংক্রান্ত অধ্যাদেশ জারির পর থেকেই তথ্য কমিশন কর্তৃক ভার্চুয়াল কোটের মাধ্যমে তথ্যসেবা প্রদানের জন্য অভিযোগ নিষ্পত্তি করা হচ্চে

বর্তমান করোনা সংকট:

বিশ্ব ইতিহাস বা বাংলাদেশের বিভিন্ন সংকটকালীন অবস্থা পর্যালোচনা করলে দেখা যায় প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগ যেমন বন্যা , খরা , জলোচ্ছাস , খাদ্য সংকট , স্বাস্থ্য মহামারী বা যুদ্ধবিগ্রহ যেখানে বেশি ক্ষয়ক্ষতি হয়েছে তার মূল কারণ ছিল মানুষকে সংকট সম্পর্কে অবহিত না রাখা বা জনসচেতনতার অভাব। উদাহরণস্বরূপ বাংলাদেশে ১৯৭০ সালের ঘূর্ণিঝড়ে ৫ লাখেরও বেশি মানুষ মারা যায় বলে ধারণা করা হয়। কারণ ঝড়-জলোচছাসের পূর্বাভাস মানুষকে সঠিকভাবে দেয়া হয়নি। কিন্তু বর্তমানে আবহাওয়া অধিদপ্তর, স্থানীয় প্রশাসনের মাধ্যমে ঝড-জলোচ্ছাসের পর্বাভাস জনসচেতনতাসহ প্রয়োজনীয় সহায়তা করার ফলে ক্ষয়-ক্ষতির পরিমাণ কমিয়ে আনা হয়েছে। অনেক ক্ষেত্রে মৃত্যুর সংখ্যাও ১০-১৫ জনে

কোভিড-১৯ আমাদের পৃথিবী বদলে দিয়েছে। এটি সারা দুনিয়ার সব মানুষ, কমিউনিটি আর সব জাতিকে এক জায়গায় নিয়ে এসেছে। আবার বিচ্ছিন্নও করেছে পরুষ্পর থেকে। এ বছরের জানুয়ারি থেকে গত ২৩ সেপ্টেম্বর পর্যন্ত সারা বিশ্বে ২১৩ টি দেশে ৩,১৭,৮৩,৯৫৮ জন কোভিড-১৯ রোগী শনাক্ত হয়েছে এবং এর মধ্যে মারা গেছেন ৯.৭৫.৪৭২ জন। বাংলাদেশেও আক্রান্তের সংখ্যা ৩.৫২.১৭৮ জন এবং মতের সংখ্যা ৫.০০৭ তে দাঁড়িয়েছে। কর্মস্থল বন্ধ হওয়ায় বাংলাদেশসহ বিশ্বের কোটি কোটি মানুষ বেকার হয়েছে। শতকোটি শিশু-কিশোরের শিক্ষা জীবন ছবির হয়েছে। কোনো কোনো ক্ষেত্রে Crisis এর সুযোগ নিয়ে কিছু ব্যক্তি বা গোষ্ঠী লাভবান হয়েছে বা Corruption এর সুযোগ নিয়েছে।

ইতিহাসবিদ Charles Rosenberg এর মতে, Epidemic বা সংকটের একটি Cycle আছে যাতে তিনটি বাঁক থাকে।

প্রথমত : সংকট অম্বীকার করে অজ্ঞতা বা অর্থনৈতিক ক্ষতির আশংকায়।

দ্বিতীয়ত : সংকটকে শ্বীকৃতি দেয় এবং উত্তরণের জন্য নানা পথ খুঁজতে থাকে। তৃতীয়ত : এক সময় সংকট শেষ হয় সামাজিক প্রতিরোধ বা প্রতিষেধকের মাধ্যমে।

এক্ষেত্রেও আমরা দেখেছি চীনের উহান প্রদেশের কর্তৃপক্ষ প্রথম দিকে তথ্য গোপন করে। সেটি ignorance বা অর্থনৈতিক interest এর কারণেও হতে পারে। তথ্য গোপন করার বা অজ্ঞতার কারণে সারা পৃথিবীর মানবজাতি আজ মহাসংকটে পতিত হয়েছে। বর্তমানে বিশ্ববাসী ২য় ধাপে অবস্থান করছে এবং সংকটকে শ্বীকৃতি দিয়ে নানাভাবে সংকট থেকে উত্তরণের পথ খুঁজে বেড়াচ্ছে।

সংকট উত্তরণে তথ্য অধিকার আইন:

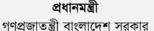
করোনা সংকটের প্রভাব বিশ্লেষণ এবং এর থেকে উত্তরণের জন্য প্রতিটি দেশের সরকার বিজ্ঞানসম্মত উপায় বের করার প্রচেষ্টা চালিয়ে যাচেছ। বিশ্বের অত্যন্ত নামকরা নোবেল বিজয়ী অর্থনীতিবিদ Jeffry Sachs কে প্রধান করে জাতিসংঘ কোভিড-১৯ কমিশন গঠন করেছে ৯ জুলাই ২০২০ তারিখে। কমিশন কর্তৃক ১৪ সেপ্টেম্বর ২০২০ তারিখে যে রিপোর্ট প্রদান করা হয়েছে তাতে বর্তমান সংকটকাল উত্তরণে চার ধরনের চ্যালেঞ্জের কথা বলা হয়েছে যা বাংলাদেশসহ সকল

- ক) মহামারিকে মেডিক্যাল সলিউশন বা নন মেডিক্যাল প্রতিরোধ দ্বারা দমন করা।
- খ) মানবসমাজের দারিদ্রতা, ক্ষুধা বা মানসিক চাপ হ্রাস করা।
- গ) পাবলিক এবং প্রাইভেট সংস্থাসমূহের অর্থনৈতিক পুনর্গঠন করা। ঘ) SDG Goal এর অনুসরণে কাউকেই পেছনে না ফেলে বিশ্ব অর্থনীতিকে পুনর্গঠন করা।

সংকট উত্তরণে আমাদের দেশের সরকার প্রথম থেকেই মহামারি থেকে জনগণকে বাঁচানো– মৃত্যুহার কমিয়ে আনা এবং ব্যাপক সামাজিক বেষ্টনী রচনা করে। বিশেষ করে মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী দেশের সকল সম্মুখযোদ্ধাদের সম্পুক্ত করে নিজে ভিডিও কনফারেন্সে যুক্ত থেকে মতবিনিময় করেছেন, সকল স্তরের জনগণকে স্বাস্থ্য সচেতন করা, সকল কর্তৃপক্ষকে দায়িত্বশীল থাকার নির্দেশনা দিয়েছেন। কর্মহীন হয়ে পড়া দরিদ্র মানুষের সহায়তায় দ্রুত পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করেছেন। সরকারিভাবে ২৪ ঘণ্টা পর পর কোভিড রোগীর সংখ্যা , মৃত্যু , সুস্থতা বা আইসোলেশনে নেয়া. পিপিই বা টেস্টিং কিট এর সরবরাহের ব্যবস্থাসহ সম্পর্কে স্বপ্রণোদিতভাবে মিডিয়াতে প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে। স্বাস্থ্য সেবা পরিস্থিতি, খাদ্য পরিস্থিতি বা অন্যান্য অতি প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্য বা সেবা নিয়ে জনগণের দোরগোড়ায় পৌঁছেছে। এছাড়া আর্থিক এবং ব্যবসায়িক প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে প্রণোদনা প্রদান করে অর্থনীতিকে সচল রাখার ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে। সরকারের এ উদ্যোগ বিভিন্নভাবে প্রশংসিত হয়েছে। গার্মেন্টস সেক্টর ইতোমধ্যেই ঘুরে দাঁড়িয়েছে বলে সংবাদ প্রকাশিত হয়েছে যা বিশেষভাবে দরিদ্র মানুষকে সংকট থেকে উত্তরণের নতুন পথ বাতলে দিয়েছে। অর্থনীতিকেও অনেকাংশে সচল রাখতে সহায়তা করেছে। ঢাকা বিভাগীয় কমিশনার কর্তৃক Open Data Campaign, মাদারীপুর জেলা প্রশাসন কর্তৃক 'জেলা প্রশাসন দর্পণ এবং যশোরে সিংহঝুলি ইউনিয়নের দেয়াল লিখন স্বপ্রণোদিত তথ্য প্রকাশের প্রশংসনীয় উদ্যোগ।

তথ্য অধিকার আইনের ধারা (৯) (৪) অনুযায়ী তথ্য প্রদান পদ্ধতিতে অনুরোধকৃত কোন ব্যক্তির জীবন-মৃত্যু , গ্রেফতার এবং কারাগার হতে মুক্তি সম্বলিত তথ্য ২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে প্রাথমিকভাবে সরবরাহ করার বিধান রয়েছে। ঘূর্ণিঝড়, জলোচ্ছাস বা অন্যকোন প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগের সময় অনেক ক্ষেত্রে দ্রুততম সময়ে এমনকি প্রতি ঘণ্টায় অর্থাৎ সঠিক তথ্য প্রাপ্তির পরমূহূর্তেই জনসাধারণের জ্ঞাতার্থে প্রকাশ করা হয়। বিভিন্ন মিডিয়া এবং সামাজিক যোগাযোগ মাধ্যমে প্রচুর তথ্য আদান-প্রদান করা হচ্ছে। করোনাকালীন সময়ে প্রতিটি মানুষের জীবন ও কর্ম এর সাথে সংশ্লিষ্ট হয়ে পড়ায় মানুষ প্রতি মূহুর্তে তথ্যের জন্য মিডিয়ার দিকে নজর রাখছে। মিডিয়া কর্মীরাও অক্লান্ত পরিশ্রম করে যাচ্ছে সঠিক তথ্য মানুষের কাছে পৌছানোর। তবে যেহেতু বিষয়টির সাথে মানুষের জীবন-মৃত্যুর সম্পর্ক রয়েছে তথ্যের সঠিকতা ও গুণগত মানের দিকে নজর রাখতে হবে তীক্ষভাবে। সংকটের এবছরে অন্যান্য সকল কার্যক্রমের পাশাপাশি তথ্য অধিকার আইনের মাধ্যমে তথ্য প্রাপ্তির আবেদনের সংখ্যা কমে গেলেও এ বছরে সরকার স্বপ্রণোদিত হয়ে ২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে বিভিন্ন তথ্য সরবরাহ করছে, যা মূলত তথ্য অধিকার আইনের ধারা ৯(৪) এরই সফল প্রয়োগ। বিশ্বব্যাংকের ধারণামতে, করোনা পরবর্তী অর্থনীতি পুনর্গঠনে ৫ বছর সময় লেগে যেতে পারে। তবে বাংলাদেশে সরকারি-বেসরকারি, এনজিও এবং মিডিয়াকর্মীদের সম্মিলিত প্রচেষ্টায় সঠিক তথ্য প্রদান করে উন্নয়ন কর্মকাণ্ডে যত বেশি জনসম্পূক্ততা বাড়ানো যাবে অর্থনীতি পুনর্গঠনের সময় ততই কমিয়ে আনা সম্ভব হবে। বিশ্ববাসীও তাদের অভিজ্ঞতালব্ধ তথ্য আদান-প্রদান করে করোনা মহাসংকট থেকে উত্তীর্ণ হয়ে মানবতার বিজয় বয়ে আনবে এই প্রত্যাশা রাখি। 🔲









বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের মত বাংলাদেশেও ২৮ সেপ্টেম্বর 'আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস' পালন করা হচ্ছে জেনে আমি আনন্দিত। বর্তমানে বিশ্বব্যাপী মহামারী কোভিড-১৯ পরিছিতিতে ইউনেন্ধোর অনুসরণে গৃহীত দিবসটির এবারের প্রতিপাদ্য-'তথ্য অধিকার সংকটে হাতিয়ার (Access to Information in Times of Crisis)' অত্যন্ত সমযোপযোগী হয়েছে বলে আমি মনে করি।

তথ্যের অবাধ প্রবাহের মাধ্যমে এ অজানা ভাইরাস মোকাবেলার জন্য শুরু থেকেই সারা দেশের সম্মুখ যোদ্ধাদের সম্পৃক্ত করে আমি ভিডিও কনফারেন্সে যুক্ত থেকে মতবিনিময় করেছি। বিভিন্ন স্তরের জনগণকে স্বাস্থ্য সচেতন করার, সকল কর্তৃপক্ষকে দায়িত্বশীল রাখার প্রয়াস নিয়েছি। ব্যাপক সামাজিক বেষ্টনী রচনা করে, সর্বক্ষেত্রে প্রণোদনামূলক কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ করে দেশের আর্থ-সামাজিক উন্নয়ন সমুন্নত রাখায় ব্রতী হয়েছি।

আমরা জনগণের ক্ষমতায়ন ও সম্ভুষ্টির জন্য 'তথ্য অধিকার আইন. ২০০৯' পাস এবং তথ্য কমিশন গঠন করেছি। ১৯৯৬-২০০১ মেয়াদে আমরাই প্রথম দেশে বেসরকারি স্যাটেলাইট টেলিভিশন চালুর অনুমোদন দেই। বর্তমানে 'বঙ্গবন্ধু স্যাটেলাইট-১' সফলতার সঙ্গে কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা করছে। তথ্যের অবাধ প্রবাহকে আরও বিস্তৃত করতে আমরা সরকারি টেলিভিশনের পাশাপাশি ৪৫টি বেসরকারি টেলিভিশন চ্যানেল . ২৮টি এফএম বেতার কৈন্দ্র এবং ৩২টি কমিউনিটি রেডিও সম্পচারের অনমতি দিয়েছি।

আওয়ামী লীগ সরকার নাগরিক সেবা প্রদানের লক্ষ্যে ৪৬ হাজারেরও বেশি অফিসের তথ্য সম্বলিত বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় তথ্য বাতায়ন চালু করেছে। জেলা শহরগুলোর মধ্যে ৯৯% শহর ব্রডব্যান্ড নেটওয়ার্কের আওতায় এসেছে। এখন ভিডিও কনফারেঙ্গিং এবং জুম অ্যাপসের মাধ্যমে সরাসরি যোগাযোগ স্থাপন করে তথ্য আদান প্রদান করা হচ্ছে। জনগণের তথ্যে অবাধ প্রবেশাধিকার নিশ্চিত করার প্রয়াসে সিটি কর্পোরেশন, পৌরসভা ও ইউনিয়ন পরিষদে ৬৬৮৬ টি ডিজিটাল সেন্টার ছাপন করেছি। ফলে তথ্যসেবা তৃণমূল পর্যায়ে পৌছানো সম্ভব হয়েছে। আমরা বাংলাদেশকে ২০২১ সালের মধ্যে মধ্যম আয়ের ও ২০৪১ সালের আগেই জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের স্বপ্লের সোনার বাংলাদেশ তথা উন্নত-সমৃদ্ধ দেশে পরিণত করব, ইনশাআল্লাহ।

আমি আশা করি, তথ্য অধিকার আইনের আওতায় সুবিধাদি ব্যবহারের মাধ্যমে জনগণের ক্ষমতায়ন ও সম্ভুষ্টি নিশ্চিত হবে। প্রতিটি দেশ তাদের অভিজ্ঞতালদ্ধ তথ্য আদান-প্রদান করে বিশ্বকে করোনা ভাইরাস মুক্ত করবে। আমি 'আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস ২০২০'- এর সার্বিক সাফল্য কামনা করছি।

> জয় বাংলা, জয় বঙ্গবন্ধু বাংলাদেশ চিরজীবী হোক Par IN SIN শেখ হাসিনা







তথ্য অধিকার সম্পর্কে জনসচেতনতা সৃষ্টি এবং তথ্য অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠায় জনগণকে উদ্বন্ধকরণ করার লক্ষ্যে সারা দেশে "তথ্য অধিকার সংকটে হাতিয়ার" এই প্রতিপাদ্যকে সামনে রেখে আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস , ২০২০

সর্বকালের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙ্গালি জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান আজীবন সংগ্রাম করেছেন জন মানুষের অধিকার আদায়ের জন্য। জাতির পিতার পদাঙ্ক অনুসরণ করে বঙ্গবন্ধু কন্যা দেশরত্ন মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা মানুষের সেই অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠায় সর্বদা সচেষ্ট। জনগণের তথ্য অধিকার নিশ্চিতের মাধ্যমে গণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্র ব্যবস্থাকে সুসংহত ও দৃঢ়করণের লক্ষ্যে বর্তমান সরকার ২০০৯ সালে তথ্য অধিকার আইন প্রণয়ন এবং তথ্য কমিশন প্রতিষ্ঠা করে। জনগণের জীবন মানের উন্নয়ন করতে সর্বোপরি উন্নত বাংলাদেশ গড়তে তথ্য অধিকার আইনের সর্বোচ্চ ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করা প্রয়োজন। তথ্য কমিশনের কার্যকর পদক্ষেপের ফলে তথ্যে জনগণের প্রবেশাধিকার বৃদ্ধি পাচেছ। তথ্য অধিকার আইনের ব্যবহার দেশের জনগণকে একটি নতুন সংস্কৃতি চর্চায় অভ্যন্ত করছে।

টেকসই উন্নয়ন সাধনে বাংলাদেশ সরকার বিভিন্ন কার্যক্রম গ্রহণ করেছে। এই কার্যক্রমগুলোকে সামনের দিকে এগিয়ে নেয়া এবং উন্নয়ন কার্যক্রমের সুফল প্রতিটি জনগণের দোরগোড়ায় পৌছুতে প্রয়োজন তথ্যের অবাধ প্রবাহ, তথ্য অধিকার নিশ্চিতকরণ, তথ্য অধিকার আইন, ২০০৯ এর সফল বাস্তবায়ন। তথ্য অধিকার আইন প্রয়োগের মাধ্যমে দেশের কৃষক, কামার, কুমার, জেলে, তাঁতী, ব্যবসায়ী, বেঁদে, বিভিন্ন নূগোষ্ঠী, হিজড়া, শিক্ষক, ডাক্তার, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারসহ সকল শ্রেণী পেশার মানুষ রাষ্ট্রের কার্যক্রম সম্পর্কে জেনে অংশগ্রহণের মাধ্যমে এর সফল ভোগ করছে। এই আইনের মাধ্যমে জনগণের মাঝে সৃষ্ট সচেতনতা জাতীয় উন্নয়নকে তুরান্বিত করছে। রাষ্ট্র টেকসই উন্নয়নের দিকে ধাবিত হচ্ছে, সৃষ্টি হচ্ছে একটি ক্ষুধা ও দারিদ্রামুক্ত বাংলাদেশ।

বিশ্ব আজ নভেল করোনা ভাইরাসের সংক্রমনে গভীর সংকটে। এই সংকটকালীন সময়ে এবং হাজার বছরের শ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙ্গালি জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের জন্মশত বার্ষিকী 'মুজিববর্ষে' তথ্য কমিশন কর্তৃক আয়োজিত আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস, ২০২০ এর সফল উদ্যাপনের মাধ্যমে জনগণ তথ্য অধিকার সম্পর্কে আরো সচেতন হবে। আমি আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস , ২০২০ এর সার্বিক সাফল্য কামনা করছি।

জয় বাংলা, জয় বঙ্গবন্ধু। বাংলাদেশ চিরজীবী হোক।

ডা. মো. মুরাদ হাসান, এমপি







সর্বকালের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙ্গালি জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের জন্মশত বার্ষিকী 'মুজিববর্ষে' "আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস ২০২০" উদ্যাপনের উদ্যোগকে আমি স্বাগত জানাই। এ বছর এ দিবসের প্রতিপাদ্য- "তথ্য অধিকার সংকটে হাতিয়ার"। এ প্রতিপাদ্য তথ্য প্রাপ্তির উৎসাহকে নিঃসন্দেহে তুরান্বিত করবে।

তথ্যের অবাধ প্রবাহ এবং জনগণের তথ্য অধিকার নিশ্চিতকরণের লক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশের মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা তথ্য অধিকার আইন-২০০৯ প্রণয়নের মাধ্যমে তথ্য কমিশন প্রতিষ্ঠা করেছেন। জনগণের ক্ষমতায়নের লক্ষ্যে তথ্য প্রাপ্তির অধিকার নিশ্চিতকরণ, সরকারি-বেসরকারি সংস্থাসমূহের জবাবদিহিতা বৃদ্ধি তথ্য অধিকার আইনের মুখ্য উদ্দেশ্য। জনগণের জীবনমানের উন্নয়ন করতে সর্বোপরি উন্নত বাংলাদেশ গড়তে তথ্য অধিকার আইনের সর্বোচ্চ ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করা প্রয়োজন। তথ্য কমিশনের কার্যকর পদক্ষেপের ফলে তথ্যে জনগণের প্রবেশাধিকার ক্রমশ: বৃদ্ধি পাচেছ। তথ্য অধিকার আইনের ব্যবহার দেশের জনগণকে একটি নতুন সংষ্কৃতি চর্চায় অভ্যন্ত করছে। জনগণের তথ্য প্রাপ্তির স্বাধীনতা নিশ্চয়তায় গৃহীত এই উদ্যোগ দেশে বিদেশে ইতোমধ্যে ব্যাপকভাবে প্রশংসিত হয়েছে।

তথ্য অধিকার আইনের ব্যাপক প্রচার, প্রসার ও বাস্ভবায়নে তথ্য কমিশনকে তথ্য মন্ত্রণালয় সার্বিক সহযোগিতা প্রদান করে আসছে। তথ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের অধীনস্থ বিভিন্ন অধিদপ্তর, দপ্তর বা সংস্থাসমূহ তথ্য অধিকার আইন বাস্তবায়নে বিভিন্ন সভা, সেমিনার, ওয়ার্কশপ ও কর্মসূচি আয়োজনের মাধ্যমে অবদান রাখছে। তথ্যের অবাধ প্রবাহ বিষ্কৃত করতে দেশে বর্তমানে ৩৪টি টেলিভিশন চ্যানেল, ২২টি এফএম রেডিও স্টেশন এবং ১৮টি কমিউনিটি রেডিও সম্প্রচার কার্যক্রম পরিচালিত হচ্ছে। দৈনিক , সাপ্তাহিকসহ বিভিন্ন ধরনের ৩১৯২টি নিবন্ধিত পত্রিকা প্রকাশিত হচ্ছে। সম্প্রতি অনলাইন নিউজ পোর্টাল নিবন্ধনের কাজও শুরু করেছে তথ্য মন্ত্রণালয়।

নভেল করোনা ভাইরাসের সংক্রমনে বিশ্ব আজ গভীর সংকটে। এই সংকটকালীন সময়ে তথ্য অধিকার আইন জনগণ ও সরকারের মধ্যে সেতু বন্ধন হিসেবে কাজ করছে। অবাধ তথ্য প্রবাহ এ সংকটকালে জনগণের সেবা প্রাপ্তিতে সহায়ক ভূমিকা পালন করছে।

আমি আন্তর্জাতিক তথ্য অধিকার দিবস-২০২০ উপলক্ষে তথ্য কমিশন কর্তৃক গৃহীত সকল কর্মসূচির সার্বিক



Swiss voters reject curbs on EU immigration

Swiss voters have overwhelmingly rejected a right-wing party's attempt to scrap a pact allowing the free movement of people from the European Union, according to a projection of results by broadcaster SRF yesterday. The Swiss People's Party (SVP) had called a referendum on the EU agreement - a vote that was seen as an important test of attitudes towards foreigners who make up a quarter of the population. The broadcaster said its projection, based on partial results from Sunday's plebiscite, showed the motion was defeated 63%-37%. The SVP - the biggest party in parliament - has pushed to

take back control of immigration, echoing some of the arguments pro-Brexit politicians used in the run-up to Britain's exit from the EU.

Yemen's warring parties agree largest prisoner swap

Yemen's warring parties have agreed to exchange around 1,000 prisoners, including 15 Saudis, as part of trust-building steps aimed at reviving a stalled peace process, the United Nations and sources said yesterday. The Yemeni government, backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, and the Houthi movement they have been battling for over five years, in late 2018 signed a deal to swap some 15,000 detainees split between both sides

implemented. The two sides will now free 1,081 detainees and prisoners, UN envoy Martin Griffiths said in a joint news briefing with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) after a nearly 10-day meeting of the prisoners' exchange committee held in the Swiss village of Glion above Lake Geneva. Heads of the two sides of the committee hugged at the end of their meeting, with Griffiths telling them: "Well done, well done."

but the pact has been slowly and only partially

SA minister's pay docked over use of military plane



South Africa's president has reprimanded Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula and docked her pay for three months for taking a delegation to Zimbabwe on an air force plane, his office said The opposition Democratic Alliance had accused Mapisa-Nqakula of misusing state resources by letting the group from the ruling African National Congress travel with her to Harare in September.

The presidency said late on Saturday Mapisa-Ngakula had been on an official trip. But her decision to let the delegation - who were travelling to Zimbabwe on unrelated business - join her on the flight had been an "error of judgement". The minister had been given a formal reprimand, a "salary sacrifice" had been imposed on her for three months from Nov. 1 and she would have to make sure the ANC reimbursed the state for the costs of the flight, the presidency added.



US President Donald Trump holds an event to announce his nominee of US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit Judge Amy Coney Barrett to fill the Supreme Court seat left vacant by the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who died on September 18, at the White House in Washington, on Saturday. Trump yesterday said the Senate will "easily" confirm his Supreme Court nominee Barrett before the election, despite furious Democratic opposition to his bid to steer the court rightward for years to come.

POST-POLLS UNREST IN BELARUS

Lukashenko has to go: Macron

AFP, Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday said that Belarus's leader Alexander Lukashenko must step down, after the EU refused to recognise him as the legitimate president of the ex-Soviet country.

"It's clear he has to go," Macron told French weekly the Journal du Dimanche ahead of a trip to EU states Lithuania and Latvia, which border Belarus.

"It is a crisis of power, an authoritarian power that cannot accept the logic of democracy and which is hanging on by force. It is clear that Lukashenko has to go.

Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets in Belarus since August 9 elections which opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya says she won, despite Lukashenko's insistence he took a landslide victory.

The embattled leader has launched a brutal crackdown against the protesters -- drawing condemnation from the West, but support from Moscow.

This week he triggered new demonstrations and fresh Western criticism when he held a secret inauguration for himself for the sixth term.

Macron yesterday said he had been "impressed by the courage of the protesters". More than 90 people -- most of them women -- were arrested on Saturday at opposition rallies, according to one NGO.

EU ministers decided in principle last month to impose sanctions against the regime.

Russia is Lukashenko's biggest financial and diplomatic backer, and President Vladimir Putin has promised Belarus law enforcement backup if needed, as well as a \$1.5-billion loan.

FALLOUT FROM CONTROVERSIAL FARM BILLS

BJP's oldest ally Shiromani Akali Dal quits NDA

India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's) oldest ally in Punjab and at the national level, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) has quit the BJPled National Democratic Alliance (NDA) over the Narendra Modi government's controversial farm Bills.

Akali Dal President Sukhbir Singh Badal announced on Saturday night that his party has decided to quit NDA, just days after his wife Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigned from the Modi cabinet over the law passed by parliament recently.

The highest decision-making body of the SAD at its emergency meeting decided unanimously to pull out of the NDA alliance, he said.

SAD pulled out of the coalition in protest against a new law which critics allege could pave the way for the government to stop buying foodgrain at guaranteed prices and allow private players to step in. The Indian government has maintained that it would continue to buy grains at minimum support price from farmers and that the law would widen the options for farmers to sell their produce where they get a better price.

Akali Dal became the third major NDA constituent to quit the alliance after Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, India's second most important state politically because of the number of Lok Sabha seats there after Uttar Pradesh, and Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh in the last two years.

Akali Dal, ally of BJP for 24 years, had been under mounting pressure from its core support base, the farmers in Punjab, to snap its alliance with BJP ever since the farm legislation was cleared by parliament 11 days ago.

'Second wave arriving faster'

France's top doctor warns as global Covid-19 deaths near 1m

AGENCIES

France will face a months-long coronavirus epidemic that will overwhelm its health system if something does not change, one of the country's top medical figures warned yesterday, as the global death toll inched towards one million.

In more positive news, residents of the Chinese city of Wuhan -- where the virus emerged last year -- reported a hesitant return to normalcy, while the French Open got underway at Roland Garros in Paris "The second wave is arriving faster

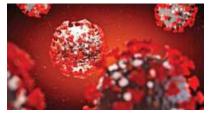
than we thought," Patrick Bouet, head of National Council of the Order of Doctors in France, told the weekly Journal du Dimanche. Fresh restrictions to slow the spread

of the disease in France's worst-hit areas, including the Mediterranean city of Marseille and the Paris region, have run into local resistance.

Bouet told the paper that warnings delivered this week by Health Minister Olivier Veran had not gone far enough.

"He didn't say that in three to four weeks, if nothing changes, France will face a widespread outbreak across its whole territory, for several long autumn and winter months," Bouet said.

France's health service on Saturday recorded 14,412 new cases over the previous 24 hours -- slightly lower than



the record 16,000 registered on both Thursday and Friday.

Despite the number of infections worldwide passing 32 million, more than 10,000 anti-lockdown protesters demonstrated in central London ahead of the re-imposition of restrictions there.

In Spain, hundreds of people protested in Madrid yesterday against

partial lockdown measures imposed on parts of the region, mainly in densely populated low-income neighbourhoods, to curb a surge in

In New York state -- once the epicentre of the US outbreak -- new infections rose for the first time since June to above 1,000 a day.

In India, meanwhile, infections closed in on six million yesterday as Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on people to keep wearing face masks in public. India is expected to take over the US -- which has reported more than seven million cases so far -- as the worsthit country in the next few weeks.

In Australia, Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews said Melbourne residents are free from today to leave their homes for work, exercise, shop for essentials, or provide care after active cases in the state fell below 400 for the first time since June 30. The relaxation of the curfew, imposed August 2, comes after 16 new infections and two deaths were reported yesterday.

Total

Farmers shout slogans as they block railway tracks during a protest against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government following the recent passing of new farm bills in parliament, on the outskirts of Amritsar, yesterday.

DRUGS PROBE

NCB seizes mobile phones of Deepika, Sara, Shraddha

THE STATESMAN/ANN

Indian Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has seized the phones of Deepika Padukone, Sara Ali Khan, and Shraddha Kapoor among others in an escalating drugs probe following the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Deepika Padukone, who was questioned by NCB for nearly six hours by NCB Special Investigation Team in Mumbai on Saturday. Sara Ali Khan and Shraddha Kapoor were also questioned separately for four to five hours by anti drug agency office in Ballard Estate.

Rhea Chakraborty, girlfriend of Sushant who has been arrested, mentioned that Sushant developed the drugs habit while shooting the film 'Kedarnath' in which his co-star was Sara Ali Khan.

US PRESIDENTIAL RACE 2020

Biden likens Trump to Nazi Goebbels

Says ready for 'lies' ahead of first debate; Trump demands drug test of 'sleepy Joe'

US Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said he expects "personal attacks and lies" from Donald Trump in their first televised debate tomorrow, comparing the Republican president to Nazi propaganda chief Joseph

Goebbels. "It is going to be difficult," the former vice president acknowledged in an interview

broadcast Saturday on MSNBC. "My guess is, it's going to be just straight attack. They're going to be mostly personal. That's the only thing he knows how to do,

he said of Trump. The debate Tuesday in Cleveland, Ohio will be the first time the 77-year-old veteran politician has faced the president he has promised to unseat. The men will meet again for two more debates before the November 3 election.

But some of his supporters fear that Biden, who is prone to blunders and

slip-ups, may waver in these televised duels under the rhetorical blows of the Republican billionaire -- who is also prone to blunders and slip-ups, but who is far more aggressive. "He doesn't know how to debate the

facts. He's not that smart," Biden also claimed. "He doesn't know much about foreign policy, he doesn't know much about domestic policy. He doesn't know much about the detail.

As a result, Biden predicted, "it'll be mostly personal attacks and lies; but I think the American people are on to him."

"He's sort of like Goebbels," Biden said. "You say the lie long enough, keep repeating it, repeating it, repeating it, it becomes common knowledge. Meanwhile Trump yesterday demanded

that Biden take a drug test either before or after the pair's first debate. "I will be strongly demanding a Drug Test of Sleepy Joe Biden prior to, or after, the Debate on Tuesday night," Trump tweeted.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Ministry of Finance, Economic Relations Division Japan-3 Branch, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka www.erd.gov.bd

Scholarship for study in Master DegreeProgram in JAPAN

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Applicants' Qualifications:

- · Bangladeshi nationals having a good command of both written and spoken English
- Below 40 years of age as on April 1, 2021 (Born on/after April 2, 1981)
- Should have 2 years of work experience at the time of application. Applications from Female officers are encouraged.

• Completed 16 years education with at least Bachelor's Degree (no Third Division/Class and at least two First Divisions/Classes or equivalent)

http://jds-scholarship.org/

Closing date for Application is 17:00 on 15October 2020

Application to be submitted to: JICE JDS Project Office in Bangladesh

Address: L-261, The Pan Pacific Sonargaon, 107 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh Telephone: (02)5502-8008,912-8008(ext.4261, 4973)(Sunday to Thursday 09:00 to 12:30 and 13:30 to 17:00)

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(De-)Politicising Covid-19 Pandemic? Public Health Perspectives and Lessons Learned

MOHAMMAD WASIM NEWAZ & FARHANA YESMINE JUI

"Please do not politicise this [corona] virus." This statement of WHO (World Health Organization) chief a few months back provokes concern that there is something problematic in politicising Covid-19. So should we not politicise anything, or are there some issues that should never be politicised? The rationale for refraining from 'politicisation' lies in the general understanding of wrongly or meaninglessly converting a particular issue into a matter of debate, and thus leads to the idea of de-politicisation, making political action futile. Since Covid-19, a deadly respiratory disease caused by the 'novel coronavirus', has already affected all of humankind, constituting a global public health emergency, it is obvious that there are united efforts towards fighting the virus without going into any debate.

But while the debate of the origin of the virus is still ongoing, bringing the two great powers USA and China at loggerheads, we can hardly deny the infiltration of political characters that researchers conceptually relate to politicisation. Also, we have witnessed major global powers joining the former to accuse the latter for the spread of the virus across the world. Even in the domestic politics of USA, which has

policy at Johns Hopkins University, through some of his scholarly works, reveals that the policy domain of global health is greatly affected by the role of power and politics. A good number of scholars including professor Shiffman are involved in many of the world's reputed public health research institutions. The political force in global health policy is not only demonstrated by those scholars. Just over two decades ago, an editorial in The Lancet, the world's oldest and best known medical journal, also highlighted the role of politics in public health. But the editorial also acknowledged the difficulties of propounding a broader perspective of public health, as concerns were brought by epidemiologists for broadly determining the burden of disease in populations rather than narrowly focusing on the molecular and genetic causes of diseases in individuals. Importantly, physicians, health care professionals, and others who largely stand outside the policy matters, tend to identify politics as an unnecessary element. They argue that political analysis of public health limits scientific evidence by incorporating political, social and economic factors, driven by values and interests. Thus, those researchers advocate evidencebased public health practice through

supplementary issue of the European Journal of Public Health, contributed by a group of scholars in the field of medicine health, and social sciences, "Politics has a very bad name but it has much to offer if we know how it works." Moreover, social determinants of health (within and outside of the healthcare system), which is a public health concept for improving health and achieving health equality, essentially involve policy responses from a holistic approach. Consequently, collaborative research networks in global health call for evidence-based policymaking to combine scientific evidence with governance principles while relying on the interdisciplinary approaches from sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

The above discussed public health perspectives can provide a rational basis to look into the coronavirus pandemic through a political lens. Ideally, the urge for de-politicising the global pandemic can be backed by a shared consensus for denouncing the political significance of Covid-19. But in light of the recent academic debate, de-politicisation as a political strategy of the neoliberal discourse doesn't make any issue non-political, but less political. In a way de-politicisation is defined by the political analysts of global health as any effort to de-emphasise politics relating to the pandemic, necessitating shifting the focus from governments to public, and then public to individuals.

For a better understanding, we may have a glance into the de-politicised policy for AIDS (caused by the HIV virus) which was the first public health issue to be discussed in UN Security Council, and interestingly, was also debated among researchers over its origin (African or American virus?). As revealed by some studies, many African countries during the first decade (1980s and early 1990s) of the mass outbreak of HIV/AIDS, in line with the international funding agencies, adopted a de-politicised policy relying on the epidemiological concept (as defined in individualistic terms) of identifying risk factors, and shed light on personal attitudes and sexual behaviour in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Many public health researchers later viewed the de-politicised policy as translating the political and economic dimensions of those regions. They also discarded evidence-based experimental trials as the only factor behind most HIV prevention successes found historically.

Much like behaviour change which was a key factor behind the prevention success of HIV/AIDS in many countries, WHO-guided social distancing and other measures relating to individual practices can certainly claim to be effective towards fighting the Covid-19 pandemic in a de-politicised manner. As the political analysts in public health say, as long as the advocates of de-politicisation portray the government as the only political entity (with power expressed as sovereignty), and hence, suggest measures creating a divide between individuals with and without political roles and power, there is always a risk of overlooking some prudential concerns raised under the mantle of politicisation. Especially in today's world, multiple actors (both state and non-state) with varying interests and degrees of power have inevitable and intersecting roles in all corners of health issues. Therefore, de-politicisation of Covid-19 by stripping it of all its political dimensions could obstruct the understanding of the broader aspects of the pandemic

including its past, present, and future. beyond politics and power. At this For a realisation of such concerns, time, it is more pertinent to mention again we may look back at HIV/AIDS that the two largest yearly membership which has already experienced both contributions to WHO (other than the good and bad politics in the last four voluntary contributions) come from decades. The 2016 Political Declaration USA and China with USD116 million on Ending AIDS (by 2030), adopted (24 percent) and USD57 million (12 by UN and welcomed by WHO, clearly percent), respectively. And US President indicates that the global fight against the Donald Trump's decision to withdraw epidemic, which was also considered a funding from WHO in the middle of the pandemic clearly reflects the need global pandemic by the late 20th century, to tackle political crises in order to is resting on politicised choices. In the confront public health challenges of backdrop, we see that the long struggle towards developing a HIV vaccine till Covid-19. today, with continuing promises and While the importance of challenges, has already gone through understanding the political reality of political action and inaction, especially in terms of financing the research, in the discourse analysis of public treatment and prevention programmes.

It is also worthwhile to note how the

continuous debate on drug pricing

and patents, given the interventions

of giant pharmaceutical companies

manufacturing, limited many AIDS

initiatives of WHO during the 1990s

in low and middle-income countries.

research studies in public health have

highlighted the significance of political

will or commitment in simultaneously

to manufacturers for occasional use by

patients for prevention and cure) and

drugs (more profitable to manufacturers

for regular use by patients for treatment

and prevention), even as there is a need

to mediate the gap between the rich and

the poor, as well as the tensions between

globalism and nationalism. The dividing

factor of wealth and identity in shaping

vaccines has been extensively discussed

by some public health researchers in

the book *The Politics of Vaccination*: A

programmes are considered to have

Global History (2017), where vaccine

been political throughout history. One

of the important findings of this book

With the failure of the very recent

experimental trial for HIV vaccine, the

present and future outlook of AIDS

apparently remains interlocked with

the challenges of political economy,

setting aside the scientific obstacles. To

is acknowledging the past failures to

strengthen the vaccine policies.

the production and distribution of

investing in HIV vaccines (less profitable

Consequently, a number of collaborative

(working globally) and national level

the global pandemic is already evident health, politicisation with the motive of 'great power competition' could be counter-productive by undermining global cooperation in the fight against Covid-19. Using the pandemic merely as a matter of geopolitical struggle with flooding conspiracy theories is one of the biggest concerns over politicisation that could even endanger the science of the novel coronavirus. On the other hand, criticising errors and risks of such political processes, and thus putting politics aside, is not equivalent to de-politicising the pandemic in the real sense. To do so, the global health system should be brought out of its inherent political nature. Most difficult is scientists' role in surpassing the greater influence of political leaders in policymaking. It is not unlikely to happen, especially when we observe the domestic responses to Covid-19 under the amicable ties between the scientific community and political leaders in some countries. But in the question of developing global policy (as responses, essentially required globally) for the pandemic, it puzzlingly resonates to the notion of 'de-politicised politics' which is little discussed in the study of core politics. Until and unless such a fantasy of 'politics without politics' becomes a reality, we have to continue fighting Covid-19 in the face of changing political priorities and demands. In that case, collaborative research in global health could be helpful to check and balance the risks or limits of politicisation and de-politicisation by addressing their interplay during the pandemic crisis.

In view of the Lancet's very recent publication, The Political Nature of Medicine (2020), achieving great science requires realising all the human realities, and failing to understand a broader reality equates to a scientific failure. Although the argument does not point to any particular health or medical issue, it endorses the broader perspectives of public health to study both the technical and non-technical aspects of health and to learn lessons from the past. Nevertheless, in any political analysis of the current pandemic within the expansive model of global health, the key challenge is to counter the bad politics to get science right in the policy, more in the form of health governance and justice. Unless otherwise stated, in our opening line, negating politicisation was perhaps meant by the same token of undermining the destructive politics in Covid-19.

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already aspired to take a lead in the global fight, there were reports revealing the distance between the Democrats and the Republicans over their political interpretations of the coronavirus. However, building a nexus between the virus and politics, merely citing the facts above, may not be sufficient to analyse one of the worst health crises in history, when it comes to the question of politicisation or de-politicisation. As Covid-19, with the label of 'pandemic' (an epidemic or disease that has spread over multiple countries or continents), is the most critical challenge in global health today, this writing is rather intended to accumulate global health perspectives that could contribute towards understanding the scope of politicising or de-politicising the pandemic in the real world context.

Dealing with public health issues requires policy responses in the decisionmaking processes. Interestingly, there are many public health researchers who distinctly focus on power and politics. Hence, they often consider the policy level decisions as inherently political, because those involve choices between competing outcomes, values, and interests. Jeremy Shiffman, a distinguished professor of global health

the instrumental use of knowledge and

But framing evidence in a technical and de-politicised way to inform decision-making is not considered enough by the political analysts of public health, who rather urge to transparently and openly engage in debate about such evidence in everyday contexts of practice. As they say, not knowing the politics of public health, the growth of political support and incentives, the increasing lobbies for health services, the political economy of healthcare financing, and the demand for including diverse voices (principle of human rights) would only provide a naïve understanding of the political reality. Importantly, they view politicisation as a means to understand public health issues politically, that includes both political action and inaction for bringing changes through arguments. This could help inquire how different actors in public and private sectors including media and interest groups influence the formulation and implementation of health policies and programmes.

In the present world context, this is increasingly being recognised by the health scientists and public health researchers. As mentioned in a recent

elaborate, studying the gap between political commitment and financing required for ending AIDS by 2030, given the big shift to domestic funding against the worrying trend of bilateral funding (other than that from the United States) and all multilateral funding (other than from the global fund) since 2010, is more about understanding the geopolitics of vaccines versus drugs investment. Therefore, whatever the similarities and differences scientists find in the behaviour of HIV and Covid-19, as long as the ultimate goal for ending both is a cure or a vaccine, lessons from AIDS give an impetus for a careful observation of the ongoing vaccine race for Covid-19. Even if there is success in developing a vaccine in the near or distant future, we should expect the global leaders, researchers, and scientists engaging in a constructive debate for the sake of a fairer global distribution of the vaccine. Although WHO has launched a global initiative to create equitable access to Covid-19 drugs and vaccines (as a global public good), being another politicised UN body, where even the expert-led technical interventions are politically charged, it seems nearly impossible for the world's leading health agency to move its own agenda

8 | The Baily Star EDITORIAL



FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA MONDAY SEPTEMBER 28, 2020, ASHWIN 13, 1427 BS

Rapists of Sylhet's MC college incident must face justice

Culture of impunity for criminals in BCL must end

ORDS are not enough to express our shock and horror at the incident of rape that happened last Friday in the hostel of Sylhet's MC college. Reportedly, on Friday night, six Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists forced a married couple visiting the college campus to the hostel and gang-raped the wife while keeping the husband tied with a rope.

The questions are, how could such a horrible crime happen inside a college hostel? Where were the hostel superintendent and the administration when the incident happened? What emboldened the BCL activists to rape the woman without fearing any repercussions? The answers to these questions, sadly, are also very clear. Although all the accused, except for one, are the former students of the college, they, in fact, have been controlling the hostel for years. And the fact that the prime accused Saifur Rahman used to live in a bungalow designated for the hostel superintendent makes it clear that the hostel superintendent remains only in name but has no control over the institution.

What is the source of power of these BCL men? Reportedly, the accused have backings from influential ruling party leaders. Talking to several present and former BCL activists of the college, our reporter came to know that all the accused are followers of former youth and sports affairs secretary of Sylhet district Awami League. The college authorities are helpless when it comes to dealing with them. There were previous allegations of arson against the BCL activists for which they were never punished, and that only emboldened them to be more ferocious. When police raided the bungalow—where the prime accused used to live—after the incident, they found a pistol, four sharp weapons and a lot of iron rods there.

We are concerned at the way the BCL members have been carrying out all kinds of atrocious activities at educational institutions across the country, including torturing and harassing students, stalking, assaulting and raping women, being involved in extortion, tender grabbing and occupation of hostel, etc., under the shelter of powerful ruling party leaders. The environment of fear that has been created by them in our public university and college campuses prevent the general students or even the administrations to speak up against their crimes. The rape in Sylhet's MC college hostel is just an example of what happens when crimes go unpunished. The principal of the college also pointed out this fact in an interview with *The Daily Star* yesterday.

We have learnt that police have arrested two accused in the case, including the prime suspect Saifur Rahman. We urge them to immediately arrest all the accused in the case and bring them to justice. The college authorities also cannot avoid their responsibility; they should take prompt action against the accused after the committee submits its report. The rapists must face justice no matter how powerful they are.

There are more like MAAR Ltd polluting water bodies

Without administrative commitment rivers will continue to die

report in this paper on Sunday has revealed the poor condition of a canal due to disgorgement of effluent by the Maize Advance Argo Refineries (MAAR) Limited in Habigani which produces starch powder. The factory management and owners have violated the existing rules and even misrepresented facts by claiming they have an effluent plant. But that, reportedly, is not working. The untreated liquid waste is dumped into the canal, conveniently, which ultimately falls into the Sutang River. Needless to say, dumping untreated liquid waste pollutes the water bodies and affects the life of every living creature in and around the canal and the river. The water is unusable, the marine life is all but decimated, the crop fields cannot be irrigated, and poultry and cattle succumb due to the polluted water.

The report, presented as a part of survey by this paper on the occasion of World Rivers Day, informs us that many such factories and industrial establishments dump untreated waste into canals, rivers and other water bodies in the Shahpur area in Habiganj's Madhabpur unazila

Protests and remonstrations of the locals have had little effect. And if, as the DC Habiganj claims, the factory was closed, how come it is functioning? Does the local administration have no way of monitoring such gross violation of their order? And what was the Director of the Sylhet Divisional Office of the Department of Environment doing the last six years, since, according its Director, the MAAR Ltd has been functioning without the environmental clearance certificate since 2014? It is incomprehensible that such a grossly illegal act could have been possible without the Sylhet DOE's knowledge.

MAAR Ltd is not the only factory in the country polluting our rivers and canals, deliberately. We believe that the condition of the Ekhtiarpur canal and the Sutang River represents fairly the state of our rivers and canals all over the country, particularly those that pass through industrial belts. And the performance of the local administration, including the office of the local department of environment has been not only shoddy, but in some cases these offices have been complicit in the environmental pollution. The local administrations must address river pollution, on which the government has laid so much stress. Otherwise, we may end up with dead canals and rivers, and sooner than we think.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION

What should be our resolve this year?

Shamsul Bari

NTERNATIONAL day for universal access to information this year comes at a time when the whole world is reeling from the greatest global crisis since World War II. The Covid-19 pandemic has spared no country over the last six months and shows no signs of abating.

The crisis has wounded the relationship between governments and citizens. People have felt that their governments have not shared the relevant information with them, making it difficult for them to assess the ominous ground realities and their government's responses to them. The importance of proper information sharing between the two sides could not have been brought into sharper focus. People started paying more attention to transparency regimes, like Right to Information (RTI) Acts.

The critical need for governments to keep their citizens informed about their activities holds true at all times; the pandemic has only sharpened our awareness. Transparency is the crux of good governance. International day for universal access to information provides us with an opportunity to reflect on how the law has fared in the country so far and consider measures to do better.

The RTI Act 2009 of Bangladesh has now been in operation for 11 years. The decision to open up all government records, with few exceptions, to public scrutiny, was indeed a revolutionary act by our lawmakers. The law fulfilled the democratic aspirations of the people and a commitment of successive governments. It sparked hope for more transparent and accountable governance, bringing the people and the government closer together to strengthen democracy. The goal of RTI is to help the government to ensure good governance, not to topple it.

In the years that followed, it became apparent that the transition from secretive to transparent governance is not easy. The challenge lay in the objectives of the law itself. To make full use of the law would require the two main protagonists—citizens and the government—to completely change their traditional mindset about governance. While in the old system, government's authority held sway over citizens, the new dispensation recognised *citizens'* ultimate ownership of all powers of the state and thus their authority over government machinery. Few people realised that the

tables were turned.

Such a fundamental change in the concept of governance obviously called for redefining the respective roles of the protagonists. For citizens, who are made the pivot of the system, it meant that they not only have the right to monitor the work of the government but a responsibility, even a duty, to do so. On the other hand, government bodies are required to recognise the ultimate controlling authority of the people over them and, as a corollary, their responsibility to keep them properly informed about their work. The term "information" assumed a special meaning and importance.

power of citizens in democracy!

So how should we highlight the international day for universal access to information? The short answer is, all of us—government and people alike—must resolve to implement the RTI Act, as seamlessly as possible, to promote better governance.

We learn from the annual reports of the Information Commission that on an average around 8,500 RTI requests are filed annually with various public offices in the country. Compared to the annual average of 60 lakh requests in India, the number is very small indeed. It should be the resolve of all concerned to increase the number.



The concept of public information is, of course, inextricably linked to the concept of "public interest". The law gives citizens the right to access public information based on the concept of public interest. It may or may not have anything to do with one's private or personal interest. For example, my interest in accessing all information on whether public fund is being properly spent for the construction of the Padma Bridge is based on my public interest and not personal.

Public authorities must, therefore, appreciate the concept of public information to understand why citizens are given access to them. RTI law links disclosure of information to public good. In fact, the RTI Acts of many countries, though not of Bangladesh, contain a "public interest override" clause, which means that even exempted information may be disclosed if public interest overrides the need for secrecy. Such is the

But the good news is, despite its slow growth, there has been a growing trend in recent years, before the pandemic struck, for citizens to move away from the earlier practice of using the law primarily for personal reasons to using it on governance issues affecting the larger public. The lack of focus on bigger national issues, however, indicate that there is still a long way to go for more mature use of the law to emerge. For this to happen, there is a need to remove the impediments applicants face in using the law.

RTI activists often adduce three main obstacles encountered by users. One, difficulties in the application process itself, which discourage many from using it. Two, non-response or excessive delays in the response from authorities concerned or sometimes threatening telephone calls from them to withdraw requests. These create disappointments

and fear, affecting people's will to pursue the process. And three, unfriendly attitude towards complainants at IC hearings, and the propensity of the commissioners to be more accommodating towards recalcitrant government officials. Many also allege the tendency of the IC to interpret the law restrictively to deny disclosure.

International day for universal access to information provides an opportunity for all the stakeholders to discuss the impediments dispassionately and identify remedies. As the law is meant to serve the interest of the entire nation, there should be no "we" versus "they" in its application. The Covid-19 pandemic has undeniably aroused greater interest in the law among previously disinterested citizens. RTI enthusiast must utilise this positive development to promote collaborative efforts to overcome the impediments and induct them into the system. The views of the High Court should also be sought on legal issues underlying the decisions of the IC. This will help, inter alia, to draw focus on the fundamental principles of the law. The government on its part can help immensely by promoting neutrality of the IC through appropriate messages and ensuring a transparent process of selecting the commissioners. A mechanism to reward public officials for exemplary compliance with the law can also be

The RTI Act provides an opportunity for the government to work hand in hand with the people. At a time when the highest leadership of the government appears to be giving greater attention to governance issues affecting the public, we should expect that the ailments of the RTI regime would receive similar attention. A serious dialogue between the people and the government on the matter is overdue. As the foremost law of the land which only citizens can apply to advance democracy, the government has all the reasons to ensure its successful operation. The systemic change in governance that the law promises can only happen with the full commitment of the government. Let citizen-government cooperation for good governance be the resolve of this year's international day for universal access to information and for all future years to come.

Shamsul Bari is the Chairman of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB).

Challenges of making the Right to Information Act effective

Tahseen Lubaba

IGHT to information is wellrecognised as a significant facet of fundamental freedom of expression. More significantly, accessibility to information on government entities and their functioning facilitates informed decision-making and meaningful public debate. The transparency established through free flow of information is also key to building credibility for public institutions. Based on such premises, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression reiterated that the right to access the information held by public authorities is a fundamental human right that should be brought into effect through comprehensive national legislation

The Right to Information Act 2009 (RTI Act) of Bangladesh has been promulgated in recognition of people's right to information as an inalienable part of the constitutional right to freedom of thought, conscience and speech. Appreciated as a significant step towards ensuring public participation and transparency at the time of its enactment, the effectiveness of the RTI Act has been questioned over the subsequent decade. Studies have pointed to shortcomings in terms of the legal framework as well as extra-legal factors such as the culture of secrecy, fear and red-tapism as reasons behind the slow progress in its implementation.

In order to evaluate whether the RTI Act fulfils international standards, its provisions may be compared with the principles on Freedom of Information legislation endorsed by the 2000 report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression. One of the foremost principles is that of maximum disclosure. This principle implies a presumption that all information held by the public authorities is subject to disclosure and that this presumption may be overcome in limited cases. Furthermore, it puts the onus on the relevant authorities of justifying why a request for information has been denied. The principles also state that a refusal to provide information must meet a three-part test, i.e. the information must be for a legitimate aim provided in law, the disclosure must pose a substantial harm to that aim and the harm must be greater than the public

interest in favour of disclosure.

Section 7 of the RTI Act contains a list of 20 circumstances in which disclosure is not mandatory. Although the section is accompanied by a proviso that prior approval shall be obtained from the Information Commission for refusing information under this section. Studies conducted by the World Bank shows that about 27 percent of information falling under the section was refused. Therefore, the compliance of the RTI framework with the principle of maximum disclosure is dubious. Another significant principle entails that "disclosure takes precedence", which requires that other pieces of legislation must be interpreted in light of

being presented as evidence without the permission of the department head. In the cases of conflict with these laws, the RTI Act 2009 shall prevail. This is a positive aspect of the law; however, the subsequent reference to the Official Secrets Act 1923 in the Digital Security Act has been criticised for undermining the spirit of the RTI Act.

Section 32 of the Digital Security Act states that any person who commits or aids and abets any offence under the Official Secrets Act 1923 by digital means shall be punished with imprisonment up to 14 years and/or fine up to Tk 25 lakh. Whereas the relevance of such outdated, colonial laws is in itself questionable,

been committed or there is a possibility that an offence will be committed. These provisions are not only prone to misuse, they also have a chilling effect on free speech and practically restrict the implementation of the RTI Act.

Moreover, section 31 of the RTI Act provides protection to acts of the authority undertaken in "good faith". The concept of good faith refers to acts done with due care and attention. The elements of due care and attention can only be measured by the subjective satisfaction of the authority. Such subjective satisfaction of the authority based on good faith clause may lead to abusive and discriminatory practices. The inclusion of the good faith clause in a law enacted with the very purpose of holding public authorities accountable is inherently paradoxical.

Apart from the shortcomings of the RTI Act, there exist certain practical challenges in its implementation such as the role adopted by the Information Commissions (IC) and Chief Information Commissions (CIC). Many of the IC and CIC selected in the past have been retired public servants who are reluctant to shift from their existing roles in preserving the culture of secrecy. As a result, they have not been able to foster a pro-citizen climate in the RTI regime. The relatively complex procedure of requesting information and excessive bureaucracy also largely diminishes the efforts of concerned applicants under the Act.

The RTI Survey 2019 has also shown that the concerned authorities are hesitant to impose penalty on the Designated Officer(s). According to the survey, no action was taken in 48 percent cases of non-compliance with the RTI Act.

To sum up, it can be stated that the RTI Act poses both challenges and opportunities for the establishment of transparency and accountability within public bodies. The legal framework needs to be reformed to make it compliant with the international standards. In addressing the extra-legal factors, concerted efforts from different walks of life is necessary. Civil Societies, media and the judiciary can also play an active role in this regard by popularising the RTI Act and upholding the spirit of access to information.

Tahseen Lubaba is a member of the Law Desk at *The Daily Star*.



the obligation to disclose information. The interplay of RTI Act 2009 and other laws, particularly the Official Secrets Act 1923, Digital Security Act 2018 etc. are crucial in determining its effective implementation.

Section 3 of the RTI Act 2009 states that in case of any impediments in other laws, they shall be superseded by the RTI Act. Therefore, some existing laws which uphold state secrets shall be overridden or narrowly applied in order to protect the right to information.

For example, under section 6(2) of the Official Secrets Act 1923, if one allows any other person to possess official documents issued for his use alone, for any purpose which is prejudicial to the safety of the State, they will be committing an offence. Section 123 of the Evidence Act 1872 prevents any "unpublished official records" from

the Digital Security Act adds further validity to the existing culture of secrecy by upholding the 1923 Act. Section 3 of the Digital Security Act 2018 states that the Act supersedes conflicting provisions in other laws except in cases of right to information (in which case, the RTI Act shall prevail). However, several other provisions of the Digital Security Act pose a threat to the proper implementation of the RTI Act.

For example, the sections defining offences of publishing "offensive, false or fear inducing information", collecting or using identity information without permission etc. as well as provisions on defamation and blasphemy have been framed in an extremely broad and vague manner. Furthermore, section 43 allows the law enforcement to arrest, without warrant, any person if they have reason to believe that an offence has

World News Day

Why real news matters amid the twin pandemics of Covid-19 and fake news



from around the world will come together today to mark World News Day, including journalists from Toronto to Taipei, Spain to

This, however, is not an occasion for journalists to pat ourselves on the back for the work we do. Rather, the focus is on how journalists go about reporting on issues that matter to our audiences.

In the face of the Covid-19 outbreak, audiences have been turning to professional journalists like never

They want answers on how to stay safe, as well as how to safeguard their jobs. They need to know the facts. They need help separating fact from fiction, amid the pandemic of fake news that has also gone viral. They are looking to people they can trust to help them join the dots, to make sense of these bewildering times.

At a time when so much has been turned on its head, this much has become clear: Real news matters. The truth matters. Objectivity matters. Balance and fairness matter.

In short, quality journalism matters. These are hallmarks of professional newsrooms. These newsrooms strive to tell the stories that matter to the communities they serve.

Consider these examples. In March, the Brazilian media group 100 Fronteiras told the story of the trauma caused by the sudden closing of the International Friendship Bridge between the towns of Ciudad del Este in Paraguay and Foz do Iguaçu in Brazil.

"Many families had to split up. People who live in Foz, but have relatives on the other side of the bridge and now only see themselves through the cell phone screen.

"Never before in the history of the world has a hug been so desired. Yes, people really only value it after they can't. Now we are feeling it in our skin and it hurts.'

On the other side of the earth, a similar story of separation and loss was playing out. In my hometown, Singapore, the land-bridge popularly called the Causeway that many use to cross into Johor Bahru in Malaysia, also had to be shut down to stem the spread of the virus. Families, workers, businesses and communities, that had been intertwined for decades, were suddenly left bereft of each another.

> At a time when so much has been turned on its head, this much has become clear: Real news matters. The truth matters. Objectivity matters. Balance and fairness matter.



People reading newspapers on the streets in Dhaka, on December 31, 2018.

Their stories were told in the pages of The Straits Times.

In the face of a global pandemic, our common humanity also rang out in stories of courage and hope which many newsrooms recounted. In a special report in February, titled "On the frontlines of the coronavirus", we profiled the doctors, nurses and officers in Singapore who were fighting the virus. Likewise, The Canadian Press traced a patient's harrowing journey from emergency room to Intensive Care Unit and finally to recovery and rehabilitation, highlighting the many people who pitched in to save one man's life in a feature in April.

Across the planet, newsrooms have been bringing these stories to our

INDRANIL MUKHERJEE/AFP

audiences, not only to inform and educate, but also to inspire and uplift communities.

In the process, Covid-19 has reminded us of many things we had taken for granted. It has made plain the importance of good governance, the value of trust in leaders and institutions, and the solace and strength that families and communities provide. It has also highlighted the critical role that a credible and reliable media plays in the health and well-being of our

Ironically, however, the pandemic has also posed an existential threat to many newsrooms. While audiences have surged, revenues and resources have plunged, making it harder for

journalists to keep doing their jobs. World News Day is an opportunity for us to ponder why this matters.

Real News matters if we are to make sense of the bewildering developments around us. Credible journalism is critical if we are to have informed debates about where we might be headed in a post-pandemic world. Newsrooms that are engaged with their readers can help rally communities in a time of wrenching change.

Indeed, as the French author Albert Camus mused in his novel, The Plague, which tells the story of how the inhabitants of a town came to terms with a deadly outbreak: "The strongest desire was, and would be, to behave as if nothing had changed...but, one can't forget everything, however great one's wish to do so; the plague was bound to leave traces, anyhow, in people's hearts."

Wittingly or otherwise, the "traces in people's hearts" that are left post Covid-19 will have to be dealt with, when the pandemic now still raging around the world, eventually, passes.

Societies that remain well served by good news organisations will be better placed to do so.

Professional journalists and newsrooms will be vital in helping communities survey the ravaged landscape around them. They will also be critical for the honest conversations that will be needed to figure out the way forward.

That, put simply, is why the success and sustainability of the media matters—now more so than ever—to us all.

Warren Fernandez is the Editor-in-Chief of The Straits Times, Singapore's leading English language news organisation and President of World

Bangladesh must be in the premier league of a new apparel industry



study International Labour Organisation (ILO) suggests that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic will be deep and long-lasting.

The research argues that global garment supply chains will undergo profound changes as a result of the pandemic. They say the pandemic will speed up current trends which include an increased focus on technological advancement as well as greater supply chain agility. Their report also suggests that we could see a move towards a "two-tier supply chain," where large, cash-rich suppliers race ahead with the use of advanced technologies, while the "race-to-the-bottom" suppliers focus on cost-cutting simply in order to stay

A key point made in the research is that global apparel supply chains will become polarised. The authors say there will likely be a deepening divide between large and professionalised and non-professionalised manufacturers, which will present the industry with two clearly defined diverging paths. On the one hand, some factories are likely to become professionalised and offer more technologically advanced production. As a result, these factories will be able to support increasing demands for transparency, flexibility and agility in production processes and

enhanced social and environmental standards. This development will likely result in closer partnerships between some buyers and manufacturers and possibly in more balanced power dynamics. In other words, manufacturers like this will be better placed to negotiate with buyers.

On the other hand, stretched margins will drive some factories and buyers to focus on solely cost advantage at the expense of other considerations We know about these kinds of suppliers. They are stuck in a race to the bottom which is almost impossible to

Bangladesh, as the second largest garment manufacturing hub in the world, has a decision to make: which side of the fence is it going to be on? Will it be the professional, the leader,

the high tech, high added value side? Or will it re-join the race to the bottom, forever fighting a battle against low wages and feeding off scraps from

The ILO study does suggest that this "two-tier" industry will be seen within countries. So that means that within Bangladesh, we might have laggards and leaders.

While this may be the case, as a country, I believe we have to set out our stall now—our heads of industry have to work with the government to decide how they can ensure that we are all dining at the top table when it comes to apparel manufacture. By that I mean Bangladesh needs to prepare for the new normal by providing brands and retailers with a world class ready-made garment sector, producing



Separate to Covid-19 is the steady unravelling of apparel and textile supply chains in China.

There will certainly be an industry cull, and our RMG sector will probably be smaller moving forward. How much smaller, nobody knows at this stage.

high quality apparel in sustainable conditions—and paying a fair wage to workers.

I truly believe the decisions our industry takes now will define us for the next two decades. Over the past two decades we have become synonymous with low cost clothing, thousands of manufacturers producing the same staple items.

Thinking in terms of the ILO report above, we now have a chance to change that picture and reimagine our industry as a different animal entirely. Now is the time for our industry to double-down on its investment in technology and sustainability and for our government to ensure we have the right kind of graduates entering the sector—people who can lead us into a bold and bright future, the top-tier of

apparel manufacturers globally.

Is this too much to ask? The ILO report makes clear, in tomorrow's apparel supply chains we will be seeing a survival of the fittest. There will certainly be an industry cull, and our RMG sector will probably be smaller moving forward. How much smaller, nobody knows at this stage.

But we sit amidst a period of great change and upheaval. Separate to Covid-19 is the steady unravelling of apparel and textile supply chains in China. The United States has just announced that it intends to ban the import of all cotton and apparel which has links with Xinjiang in North Western China due to concerns over forced and prison labour. It is impossible to overstate how huge this is, and it offers further evidence of the huge shifts we are seeing in the industry.

Brands and retailers are looking for new sourcing partners, as many fear huge fines if their shipments are stopped at the US ports because they are found to contain produce from the vast cotton fields of Xinjiang.

China has always been in the top tier of apparel manufacturer but there is a good chance that brands will be giving the country a wide berth beyond 2020.

Bangladesh should take heed of the ILO's findings about a two-tier industry and decide what type of apparel production hub it wants to be.

More than ever, it's time to think big.

Mostafiz Uddin is the Managing Director of Denim Expert Limited. He is also the Founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel

QUOTABLE Quote



ERICH FROMM (1900-1980)German-born American psychoanalyst and philosopher.

Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 1 Places last 6 Showy parrot 11 Prelude 12 Make amends 13 Strand unit 14 Smoothing tool 15 Foot features 17 Memo letters 18 Go under

20 Breathe loudly

22 Swearing-in 23 Augusta tourney 26 Javelin's kin 28 Gold unit 29 Badges 31 Dude's address 32 Assess 33 Ship's staff

34 Mineral sources 36 Scarlett's home 38 Comic tribute 40 Confiscates 43 Crooked 44 Basketball's Shaquille

46 Full of flavor **DOWN** 1 Pert talk 2 Low digit

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3 TV ads 4 Flynn of film 5 Foot feature 6 Travel aid 7 Falcon's home 8 Simple bike

features

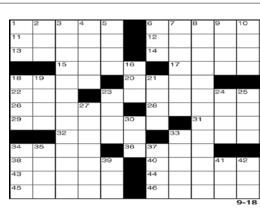
9 Tolstoy heroine 10 Cry 16 Relaxing resort 18 Do clerical work 19 First person 21 Invites 23 Come together 24 Steak choice

27 School groups 30 Big Apple opera house 33 Origami bird 34 Test type 35 "Brooklyn Nine-

25 Hide away

Nine" role 37 Whole range 39 Binary base 41 Chow down 42 Devious

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BEETLE BAILEY





BABY BLUES

ME HAMMI



Over a month later, probe report not turned in

The investigation was launched on August 17 over alleged misappropriation of Tk 8 lakh stipend money

Our Correspondent, Patuakhali

Investigation report has yet to be submitted after more than one month into the launching of an investigation over alleged misappropriation of Tk 8 lakh government stipend money for students of a madrasa in Rangabali upazila.

Guardians of seven students and the land donor of the secondary educational institution Sajirhawla Akbaria Dakhil Madrasa, in Chhotobaishdia union -- made the complaint, in writing, with the upazila nirbahi officer's office on August 16.

In the complaint, they alleged that Maulana Sultanur Rahman, the superintendent; Maulana Abul Kalam, the managing committee chairman; and Kabir Uddin, an assistant teacher of Arabic; of the madrasa have been involved in the embezzlement since

On August 17, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mashfaqur Rahman Anadi Kumar Bahadur,



academic supervisor at secondary education office in the upazila, to investigate into the allegation.

Contacted, Anadi Kumar Bahadur said, he collected statements from aggrieved students and guardians on September 20, when he visited the madrasa, where 98 out of about 400 total students are enrolled under government stipend programmes.

As to when he would submit his report to the UNO, he said "soon".

Zakir Hossain, who donated land for the madrasa, in the written complaint said the government stipend money is disbursed to bKash -a mobile financial service -- account of the guardian of each stipend recipient.

However, the accused individuals,



Protesting unauthorised withdrawal of their stipend money from their accounts, a number of aggrieved students of Sajirhawla Akbaria Dakhil Madrasa, in Chhotobaishdia union of Rangabali upazila, gather at the playground of the institution.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

the guardians of stipend recipients managing committee, said the into handing over their SIM cards, registered with bKash, to the accused. Using the SIM cards, the accused

have been withdrawing the stipend money from the bKash accounts since 2017. Till date, they withdrew more than Tk 8 lakh, out of which, about Tk 5 lakh is stipends for the first six months of this year.

When the guardians found out about the theft and put pressure on the three accused, the latter returned some of the stolen money on August 9 to a handful of locally influential guardians through the local union parishad chairman.

Monir Munshi, guardian of one of the victims, said after the accused returned his SIM card, he checked account transactions of the bKash account and found out that stipend money of Tk 6,360, disbursed for his daughter, was withdrawn from the account when the SIM card was with the accused.

Another guardian, Monir Khan, said before they returned his SIM card, stipend money of his son had also been stolen in a similar fashion.

Abu Hanif Madbar, a former conniving with each other, duped chairman of the institution's

madrasa superintendent, the present managing committee chairman and the Arabic teacher -- all are involved in various irregularities, including misappropriation of stipends given to students of the madrasa.

Contacted, Superintendent Maulana Sultanur Rahman however claimed that they had withdrawn stipend money from accounts of several students under special circumstances due to the Covid-19 and they were in the process of handing the money over to the respective recipients.

Managing committee chairman Maulana Abul Kalam said they were also examining the accusations and, so far, according to evidence, assistant Arabic teacher Kabir Uddin has taken possession of Tk 4 lakh of stipend money of the students.

Assistant Arabic teacher Kabir Uddin could not be reached for his comments as his cell phone was found switched off during repeated calls made by this correspondent.

UNO Mashfaqur Rahman said they would take necessary legal action upon receipt of the investigation

Jamalpur Murder 2 to die, 7 get life term

Our Correspondent, Jamalpur

A court here yesterday sentenced two siblings to death and seven others to life term imprisonment in connection with a case for killing a rickshaw-puller in Islampur upazila in 2007.

The death sentence Bhuttu, then 30, and his elder brother Khalek, then 45, are sons of Budu, while the lifers are Samiul, then 30, Jahijal, then 30, Rashid, then 45, Md Kashi, then 50, Babul, then 25, Fulu Miah, then 30, and Bidyut, then 25. They all hail from Purbo Shashariabari village in Islampur upazila.

The court also fined the death row convicts Tk 50,000 and the lifers Tk 10,000 each.

According to prosecution, Bhuttu and his friends had an altercation with their neighbour Russel over gambling in the area on December 26, 2007.

As a sequel, Bhuttu and his cohorts called Russel out of his house on the night of December 27, 2007, strangled him and dumped his body at a sugarcane field. Civil surgeon warns of stern action

31 clinics and diagnostic centres in Nilphamari failed to apply for license renewal in time.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphaamri

The government is going to take stern action against the authorities of 31 private clinics and diagnostic centres in the district as they failed to apply online for their license renewal in time.

Amid the pandemic, the government took an attempt to regularise activities of private clinics and diagnostic centres by applying online for renewal of license. Health directorate in a directive on August 9 asked all private clinics and diagnostic centers throughout the country to apply online for renewal of licenses by August 23 after gross irregularities were detected in this sector. The government is now struggling to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Civil surgeon (CS) office in Nilphamari revealed that out of total 106 private clinics and diagnostic centres in the district, only 75 have applied for license renewal before the deadline while the rest ignored the

Since the pandemic started in Bangladesh, private clinics and diagnostic centres unofficially stopped their regular services, causing immense sufferings to

In the challenging time, even some private hospitals in the capital and big

cities like Regent Hospital in Dhaka indulge in malpractice to make money taking opportunity of the unusual health situation.

Dr Mujibul Islam Shahin, general secretary of the district unit private practitioner association, said a good number of private clinics and diagnostic centres in Nilphamari are now running illegally as there are no infrastructural facilities in the clinics and centres.

A written complaint was even lodged to CS a few months ago against a private clinic in Domar upazila bringing allegation that a ward boy in absence of a gynecologist conducted seizure operation on a pregnant woman, leading to her death, he added.

Vice President of Nilphamari unit of private clinics and diagnostic centres Golam Mostofa said the government's decision to apply for license renewal is a positive step to regularise health service in private sector.

Contacted, CS Alamgir Kabir said as per higher authority's directive, he was visiting private clinics and diagnostic centres to see their practical condition.

They are going to take stern action against the authorities of 31 private clinics and diagnostic centers in Nilphamari as they ignored the directive of health directorate, he said.



Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA), Bagerhat unit, and Pashur River Waterkeeper jointly organised a human chain programme on the bank of Pashur river in Bagerhat's Mongla upazila yesterday marking the World River Day.

PHOTO COLLECTED

Democrats blast

youngest Supreme Court nominee since conservative Clarence Thomas was 43 in 1991. During the event, Barret pledged to become a justice in the mold of the late staunch conservative Antonin Scalia.

Scalia, who died in 2016, was one of the most influential conservative justices in recent history. Barrett previously served as a clerk for Scalia on the high court and described him as her mentor, citing his "incalculable influence" on her life.

"His judicial philosophy is mine too: a judge must apply the law as written. Judges are

On the court, Scalia voted to curb abortion rights, dissented when the court legalized gay marriage and backed broad gun rights, among other positions.

Barrett, a devout Roman Catholic who earned her law degree and taught at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, was appointed by Trump to the Chicago-based 7th US Circuit Court of Appeals in 2017 and is a favorite of religious conservatives, a key Trump voter bloc.

She also praised Ginsburg, saying the late justice was "a woman of enormous talent and consequence" and mentioned Ginsburg's long friendship with Scalia.

Biden noted that even as Trump's administration is seeking to strike down Obamacare in a case the Supreme Court is due to hear on Nov. 10, Barrett has a "written track record" criticising a pivotal 2012 ruling authored by Chief Justice John Roberts preserving the law formally known as the Affordable Care Act.

Biden, seeking to defeat the Republican president on Nov 3, called on the Senate not to act on the court's vacancy caused by the death of Ginsburg until after the Nov. 3 election, allowing the winner to make the appointment.

"The United States Constitution was designed to give the voters one chance to have their voice heard on who serves on the court. That moment is now and their voice should be heard," Biden said.

Senate Republicans refused to consider President Barack Obama's 2016 Supreme Court

nominee, saving the winner of that year's election should make the pick. Democrats said Barrett would vote to dismantle healthcare during a coronavirus

pandemic that already has killed more than 200,000 Americans. "This nomination threatens the destruction of life-saving protections for 135 million Americans with pre-existing conditions together with every other benefit and protection

of the Affordable Care Act," House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi said. Obamacare has helped millions of Americans obtain medical insurance. Trump wants Barrett confirmed before the election. Republicans hold a 53-47 Senate majority and have committed to moving quickly on confirmation. They cheered Trump's

choice. "President Trump could not have made a better decision," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said.

Senator Lindsey Graham, chairman of the Judiciary Committee that will conduct confirmation hearings, added, "We move forward on this nomination knowing that the president has picked a highly qualified individual who will serve our nation well on the highest court in the land."

Trump critics also have expressed concern that a hasty confirmation process so close to an election risks further eroding the court's reputation as independent.

But Christian conservative and anti-abortion activists, who praised the choice, urged senators to move quickly and warned Democrats not to attack Barrett's religious faith. Abortion rights groups said Barrett's addition to the court could jeopardize the

landmark 1973 ruling that made abortion legal nationwide.

Aid for war-torn

FROM PAGE 12

a democratic framework. 'BANGLADESH FULLY QUALIFIED FOR UN

Australian Foreign Minister Sir Nigel Bowen says today, "We believe that Bangladesh is fully qualified for membership of the United Nations.

Participating in the debate of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Australian foreign minister says they remain hopeful that the Security Council, upon recommendation of the matter might recommend in favour of Bangladesh's application and that the assembly would as a result still be able to admit this new state as full members to the world body during its present

SOURCES: September 29, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

4 of a family

FROM PAGE 12 sleeping in one room at the night heading westwards.

On information,

Shahbaz Mithun Munni, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Parbatipur, Hafijur Rahman Pranik Upazila, chairman of Parbatipur upazila parishad, and high officials of Parbatipur police visited the spot.

UNO Shahnaz Mithun Munni said the villagers were arranging their burial at the village.

Remains

FROM PAGE 12 Pliosaurs reined the region, with their large skull, elongated face, short neck, menacing teeth on a hydrodynamic body and

fin-like limbs. Scientists foun jaw, tooth and limb fragments of the creatures "ecologically similar" to killer whales at two sites in the Loa river basin near the mining city of Calama.

The find helps scientists fill gaps in evolution, said Rodrigo Otero, a University of Chile paleontologist who led the research.

The complete fossil, under excavation since 2017, is likely to measure six to seven metres (19.7 to 23 feet). The skull is around a metre (3.3 feet) long, with teeth each around eight to 10 centimetres (3.1 to 3.9 inches) long, Otero said.

The study was published in the Journal of South American Earth Sciences in early September.

Covid death FROM PAGE 12

The overall positivity rate stood at 18.85 percent.

Bangladesh is currently ranked the 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 the United Kingdom, according to worldometers.info. At least 1,714 Covid-19

patients have recovered in the same 24 hours, bringing the number of recoveries to 2,70,491. The overall recovery rate was 75.31 percent. Of yesterday's 32

deceased, 22 were males and 10 were females. All of them died in hospitals, according to the release. Two were aged between

31 and 40, six between 51 and 60, one was aged between 41 and 50, while the highest 23 were over 60 vears old. One was from Rajshahi

division, two were from Sylhet, four from Khulna, and five from Chattogram, while the highest 20 were from Dhaka division.

Flood situation worsens in two northern

deteriorated yesterday as water level of the Dharla river further increased. The river was flowing 26cm above the danger mark at Shimulbari point of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila and 28cm above the danger level at Dharla bridge point of Kurigram Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

Other rivers in the two districts were also showing rising trends due to incessant rain and the onrushing water from the upstream, said officials of Water Development Board. Over 40,000 families of 120 villages have been affected by the flood. Most of them are residents of low-lying areas and shoals.

Many of them have left their homes and taken shelter on roads, embankments and at flood centres. Aman paddy and vegetables on about 12,000 hectares of land are now submerged by floodwater, according to local agriculture offices.

"The flood-hit people are facing a crisis of food and drinking water. We have to fetch water from far away travelling on boats," said Adu Mial, 65, of Shiberkuti village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

"We are having a food crisis. Children and elderly persons are the worst sufferers," said Nurnahar Begum, 30, of Shimulbari village in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram. [Our correspondents in Lalmonirhat contributed to this report].

Ramna Park reopens after six months

writ petition with the HC seeking its directive on the secretary to the ministry of housing and public works to reopen the Ramna Park in Dhaka in 24 hours so that people can walk and move in the park.

During the hearing on September 17, the HC wanted to know why the authorities concerned are not reopening the park in Dhaka. DAG Noor-Us Sadik on September 24 informed the HC that the government has closed

the park for the safety and security of the people during the Covid-19 pandemic. The authorities will reopen the park if the HC orders doing so, he said. The HC bench on Thursday fixed yesterday to pass the order on the petition.

Citing the writ, Eunus Ali Akond earlier told The Daily Star that the Ramna Park has been launched since the Mughal regime of Emperor Jahangir for peoples' movement. The government has closed the park in March this year in order to contain the spread

Locals have not had the change to take walks or exercise and run in park as it is still closed, even though all offices and streets have already been reopened, he said.

Students go to HC for deferral

design qualifications.

prayed to the HC to direct the authorities concerned of the government to formulate a guideline to run the English medium education in the country.

The HC may hold a hearing on the writ petition any day this week, the lawyer said. Two UK boards -- Cambridge Assessment International Education and Pearson's Edexcel -- arrange O-and A-level exams internationally. British Council Bangladesh administers the exams in the country.

A-level exams under Cambridge are scheduled to start on October 1, and those under Pearson on October 5. Pearson's O-level exams are set to start on November 2 and Cambridge's on November 5.

The government on September 23 given approval to the British Council to administer the exams with some conditions.

Meanwhile, a group of candidates formed a human chain in front of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education office in the capital.

Rawnak Chowdhury, an A-level candidate, said the government should cancel the approval of administering exams taking the coronavirus situation and safety of the students into consideration. English medium students also sought Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's intervention for

the cancellation of the upcoming O-and A-level exams. Faiyaz Mashnoon, an A-level candidate, said that almost all students are tensed and they are not in a position to sit for a board exam.

Some students said that online education was insufficient to prepare for a board exam They said have been continuing their protests on various online platforms. The students formed a human chain in front of the National Press Club on September

20 and 22 to press home their demands. They also held a press conference on September 23, reiterating their demands. British Council Bangladesh in a statement on September 23 said in the upcoming October-November 2020 exams, UK exam boards would base results on students performance in the exams alone and not on any non-exam assessment, except for art and

UK boards in May-June session decided not to stage exams due to the coronavirus pandemic. The results were prepared based on the predicted grades and previous academic records submitted by schoolteachers. English-medium students can sit for these exams either through schools or as private candidates.

Approximately 5,200 students in Bangladesh have registered for the upcoming October-November session of exams, according to the British Council.

Jaswant Singh

FROM PAGE 12

the Indian Army, Singh had a bitter falling out with his party in 2014 when he was denied a Lok Sabha ticket of his choice from Barmer in Rajasthan.

He contested the 2014 general election, which was his last as an independent,

Singh -- considered close to Vajpayee and veteran BJP leader LK Advani was twice expelled from the party; in 2009, the parliamentary board of the BJP expelled him after his book Jinnah - India, Partition, Independence was published.

He rejoined the party after 10 months, but faced a second expulsion in 2014 when he defied party orders and challenged the BJP's decision of not fielding him as a contestant from Barmer. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi condoled his death yesterday, tweeting that Singh served the nation diligently, first as a soldier and later during his long association with politics. "...During Atal Ji's Government, he handled

crucial portfolios and left a strong mark in the worlds of finance, defence and external affairs. Saddened by his demise," the PM wrote. In separate tweets, he

also said true to his nature, Jaswant Singh fought his illness with immense courage for the last six years. "Deeply pained by the

passing away of veteran BJP leader & former Minister, Shri Jaswant Singh ji. He served the nation in several capacities including the charge of Raksha Mantri. He distinguished himself as an effective Minister and Parliamentarian," Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted.

Singh -- a four-time member of the Lok Sabha and elected to the Rajya Sabha five times -- was the external affairs minister Kandahar during the hijacking case, and had escorted Mulana Masood Azhar and two other terrorists in lieu for the release of hostages on board Indian Airlines IC-814 that was hijacked on December 24, 1999.

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE Bangalore v Mumbai Live from 8:00pm

Fulham v Aston Villa Live from 10:45pm Liverpool v Arsenal Live from 1:00am (Tuesday) **STAR SPORTS 2 FRENCH OPEN** Live from 3:00pm





Weightlifter Mabia Akter, who won gold in the 13th South Asian Games last year, is spending time practising at the Bangladesh Weightlifting Federation's gymnasium while PWD Club are practicing volleyball in the premises of the Khulna Stadium as sport is gradually stirring back to life in the country.

Sport set to stir to life by year's end

ANISUR RAHMAN

As the country is gradually stirring back to life amid the threat of the coronavirus, the country's sports fraternity too seems to be preparing to wake up.

Sporting activities in the country had been halted from mid-March until the government lifted the suspension by allowing national federations to start the activities on a small scale in line with health safety guidelines on August 10. Athletes of a few sports - cricket, archery and shooting being the major ones -- then returned to training on a small scale as part of preparation of the national teams

Bangladesh Hockey Federation completed month-long training of junior to resume in mid-October as upcoming Asian Junior Hockey players to practise and also

Championship, while football suspended scheduled training for the national team after the deferral of World Cup Qualifiers.

Taekwondo was ahead of all sports, staging a poomse tournament early this month and the brave initiative has worked as an eye opener for other disciplines and most mainstream sports federations are planning to resume activities in November and December. Some federations have also taken the decision to hold national championships, tournaments and leagues.

The Bangladesh Weightlifting Federation held the 14th Club Cup tournament with the online participation of 14 clubs this month. Each club sent videos of athletes lifting weights and the federation later declared players, which is supposed the winners after assessing the footage. The federation also kept part of preparations for the its gymnasium open for national

clubs to continue training.

"We have decided to start training in 20 districts from October 9 before holding the 26th senior national championship from December 9, though we have already completed the Kata competition for men's senior category online and the junior & cadet kata competitions are still being held virtually," said Bangladesh Karate Federation Vice-president Moazzem Hossain

Bangladesh Wushu Federation general secretary Dulal Hossain said: "We are still observing the coronavirus situation cautiously but our players have been training individually. We are planning to hold the taolu competition in late November and take the final decision within next two weeks."

Bangladesh Athletic Federation has already announced the tentative date for the Junior

provided assistance to different Athletic Championships on Munir, adding that they are November 20-21 at Army Stadium where they also want to stage the tournament before the Premier national athletic championships on January 15-17.

Bangladesh Football Federation has also announced that the new season of the football league will start from December, having been forced to abandon the previous season after only six rounds. However, it also has plans to complete the Women's Football League by

resuming it from November. "Ahead of three proposed tournaments -- South Asian Junior & Cadet table tennis championships in February, Commonwealth Regional Junior & Cadet competition in March and World Women's Table Tennis Championships in March -- we are going to start training for three categories from October 15," said Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation Vice-president Hasan

also planning to hold a ranking Table Tennis League in December.

National volleyball captain Horosit Bishwas said that 10 to 12 players alongisde him had stated training in Khulna as the federation is thinking of staging the premier division league in

Bangladesh Wrestling Federation has however been on the back foot and are not getting positive responses because of the nature of the game, which is a close contact sport

"We have issued a circular for the competitions from October 18 but the majority of teams don't want to participate because it is a game of close contact," said BWF general secretary Tabiur Rahman Paloan. "I think it is not possible before December but everything depends on the situation getting

Is there a plan for domestic cricket?



"Do you know when domestic cricket is going to start again?"-- this is the one question that reporters covering Bangladesh cricket have been asked by domestic cricketers almost every other day over the past month or so. Unfortunately there is no positive reply to the question,

thanks to the lack of initiative from the cricket board.

Although the government lifted nationwide shutdown on May 31, prompting millions to head back to work, there are few professionals who have been unable to resume. Among those professionals, sports people are the

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is desperate to get the national team back to international cricket through the tour of Sri Lanka and the BCB thinktank is working in earnest to make the tour happen, but unfortunately there is no apparent initiative on their part to start domestic

BCB president Nazmul Hassan did announce that the board would focus on starting domestic cricket after rejecting preliminary health protocol by Sri Lanka Cricket for touring the island nation, but there is still no definite planning or discussion being made by the board on how they would resume local cricket.

None of the BCB officials are sure of how they would maintain health protocol and provide a safe environment to resume domestic cricket. The officials were reluctant to make any comment on the issue.

It is true that the coronavirus situation in Bangladesh is still alarming and with the imminent threat of a second wave this winter, it will be a huge challenge for the BCB to tackle stage a return for domestic cricket.

There were talks that the BCB might arrange a tournament involving the national team, the A team and the High-Performance squad with participation of around 50 to 60 cricketers if the Tigers' tour of Sri Lanka eventually got cancelled. However according to sources, BCB is still keen to get the tour going. So what will happen to domestic cricketers if the Bangladesh team eventually tour Sri Lanka?

Even if the BCB organises a tournament with top players, it will not help the remaining 150-something domestic cricketers who would not be able to make it to the tournament and will have to sit idle with uncertainty.

The majority of the clubs of the Dhaka Premier League. which was halted in mid-March after the first round due to the pandemic, have their constraints and financial issues for not being able to resume the league at the moment.

With the uncertainty and financial constraints, life is getting more and more difficult for domestic cricketers and hence the BCB must act quickly to regain their faith.

'It's too cold'

REUTERS



Gone are the queues of spectators and gone is the sun as the French Open kicked off in underwhelming fashion on

Sunday with persistent drizzle and a chill wind sweeping the almost-empty Roland Garros grounds.

Former world No. 1 Victoria Azarenka complained about the playing conditions amid light drizzle and low temperatures during her 6-1, 6-2 first-round victory. The US Open runner-up, who entered

court Suzanne Lenglen wearing a thick pink puffer jacket, and her opponent Danka Kovinic walked off the court after play was suspended with Belarusian Azarenka leading 2-1. "No, it's eight degrees, I live in Florida,

I'm used to hot weather," a furious Azarenka told the supervisor who asked her to wait on court until a decision was made on if the match should continue. Speaking to her opponent from

Montenegro, 10th seed Azarenka, who next faces either Venus Williams or Slovakia's Anna Karolina Schmiedlova, said: "Do you want to wait on court?

"No," Kovinic replied.

"No, it's ridiculous, it's too cold. What's the point? Sitting here like ducks," said Azarenka, who wore a wind jacket on court and said she was worried about sliding on a court made heavier by the persistent drizzle.

The players returned after a delay

of about 50 minutes and Azarenka immediately broke her opponent's serve before wrapping up victory in front of nine spectators.

Azarenka said the interruption should have been better managed.

"I think it's very tricky at the moment to have these conditions. So definitely not going to sit here and complain, but sometimes I think there are smarter ways to handle situations.

"The unfortunate part sometimes with the French Open is that there is no communications with players or players



council," she added.

The French Open is usually played in May-June but this year's tournament was pushed back to late September due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The weather in Paris is therefore colder than normal for the Grand Slam event with the claycourt conditions much heavier and slower than the players are accustomed to.





Reigning Premier League champions Liverpool are left "wanting to strike back" after two defeats to Mikel Arteta's Arsenal, Jurgen Klopp admitted ahead of the two teams' meeting in the league at Anfield tonight. Although the German seemed in a better mood in practice, he is aware of the threat that Arsenal pose and adding to his worries is the possible absence of Thiago Alcantara, whose fitness had reportedly become a concern at the eleventh hour. Arteta, meanwhile, is looking to become the first Arsenal manager to win on a first trip to Anfield.







Zinedine Zidane's (L) Real Madrid saw off a stiff challenge from Real Betis, but they needed a controversial penalty decision from VAR to bag the decisive goal on Saturday. There was no such trouble for Antonio Conte's Inter Milan, who left it late to seal a frantic 4-3 win over Fiorentina. Chelsea's Frank Lampard also benefitted from a controversial, if technically-correct, VAR decision against West Brom.

Comebacks, shocks and VAR: Big bosses survive tough night

AGENCIES



Fans around the world gathered in front of screens as they stepped into another weekend of league football and while there were no crowds, there was no shortage of drama and entertainment for those watching. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, Frank Lampard, Antonio Conte and Zinedine Zidane all had a hard time securing favourable results on

It all kicked off at Brighton, who hosted Manchester United in the Premier League, a game that was incredibly decided by the first goal in Premier League history to have been struck after the final whistle.

Brighton would have felt hard done by with just a point, having hit the woodwork a total of five times, but Neal Maupay was found to have handled the ball inside the box after a VAR review following the final whistle. Bruno Fernandes converted to secure a stunning 3-2 win.

Ole admitted that United had got away with one, joking afterwards: "First of all we have to be thankful Jose [Mourinho] isn't here to measure the goalposts, otherwise we'd have been in trouble.'

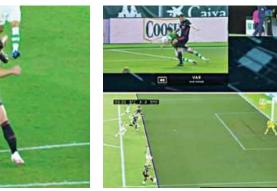
The drama continued at The Hawthorns as West Bromwich



Albion found themselves 3-0 up against Lampard's Chelsea inside 27 minutes. Mason Mount ignited second-half comeback with a thundering effort in the 55th minute before Callum Hudson-Odoi added a second 15 minutes later.

Tammy Abraham tapped home a dramatic equaliser in extra time to salvage a point, although the ball hitting teammate Kai Havertz's arm shortly before the goal caused a furore. The rules, as they are interpreted in the Premier League currently, may be extremely harsh on defenders but they state that a handball will not be called against an attacking player unless it leads directly to a goal or assist.

"What do you want me to do now? Say what I want to say and get fined again?" Slaven Bilic fumed at the final whistle.



In Spain's La Liga, defending champions Real Madrid came away with three points against Real Betis in a five-goal thriller after a controversial penalty went their way following a lengthy review by VAR.

Manuel Pellegrini's side surged to a lead with a two-minute blitz, started by Aissa Mandi in the 35th minute. William Carvalho added the other, after Fede Valverde had

opened the scoring. It took Zidane's men just three minutes of the second half to draw level before Emerson was shown a straight red after a VAR review. VAR would again intervene in Real's favour, giving them what many labelled a 'soft' penalty that Sergio

Ramos buried. "When you are up against Real Madrid and VAR it is too much," Pelligrini said. "When you are playing against Real Madrid and you concede a penalty and get a man sent off because of VAR it is very difficult. But I value how well we played when it was 11 against 11."

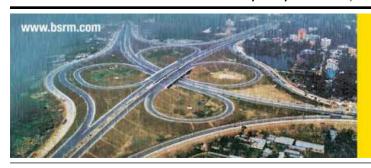
Zidane refused to be drawn in. "There's a referee and it's his job to review the plays. I think what happened today was fair," he said.

At the San Siro, Antonio Conte's Inter Milan had a tough start to their Serie A campaign but edged a 4-3 win against Fiorentina. The lead changed hands constantly, with Inter 1-0 down inside three minutes, 2-1 up after 52 minutes and 3-2 down again after 63 minutes until two quickfire goals, in the 87th and 89th minute from Romelu Lukaku and Danilo D'Ambrosio, gave the hosts a nail-biting win.

On a night when most big teams came away with something to show for their struggles, there was agony in Germany's WWK Arena as Borussia Dortmund fired blanks in a 2-0 defeat to Augsburg.

Dortmund, quietly hoping to

pose a threat to Bayern Munich in the race for the Bundesliga, dominated the match. "I am very disappointed. It is difficult to accept this defeat. We dominated the game completely, had almost 80% possession, but sometimes that does not get you much. We started very well but we weren't precise enough, we played hastily.



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



GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES

World's Largest VRM



Democrats blast Trump's SC pick

Biden calls on Senate to block Barrett's nomination

AGENCIES

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and others in his party on Saturday blasted President Donald Trump's choice of conservative judge Amy Coney Barrett for the Supreme Court, focusing in particular on the threat they said she would pose to healthcare for millions of Americans.

Trump's announcement during a flag-festooned White House Rose Garden ceremony - with

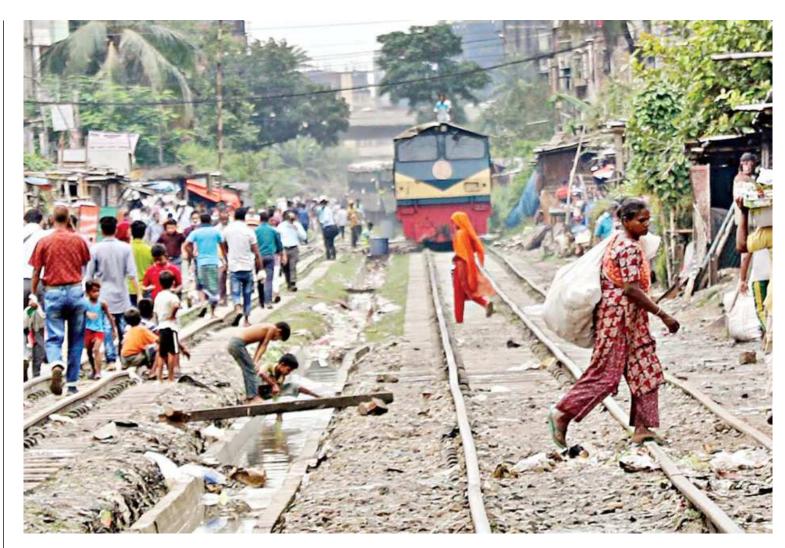
Barrett, 48, by his side and her seven children on hand sets off a scramble by Senate Republicans to confirm her as the president has requested before Election Day in 5-1/2 weeks, when he will be seeking a second term in office.

If confirmed by the Senate to replace liberal icon Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who died at age 87 on Sept. 18, Barrett would become the fifth woman ever to serve on the court and would push its conservative majority to a commanding

Like Trump's two other appointees, Neil Gorsuch in 2017 and Brett Kavanaugh in 2018, Barrett is young enough that she could serve for decades in the lifetime job, leaving a lasting conservative imprint. Barrett is the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

AC Barrett



Mere metres away from an approaching train, two pedestrians crossing the railway track without any apparent concern for their own safety. Such practics are common and can lead to mishaps that could prove fatal. This photo was taken on Saturday in Malibagh.

PRABIR DAS

4 of a family killed as their mud house collapses

Our Correspondent, Dinajpur

Four members of a family died in Dinajpur's Parbatipur upazila as their mud house collapsed on them early yesterday.

The dead are Mohammad Swapan, 35, a rickshaw puller by profession, his wife Sarjana Begum, 27, their two children Abul Hossain, 7, and Hasibur Rahman, 5.

The victims' neighbour Motiur Rahman said it was raining cats and dogs at the night the mud house

collapsed. 5:30am woman started screaming seeing the collapsed house. Locals then rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies around 8:00am.

None could tell at what time the house collapsed as they heard no sound due to

During a visit to the spot, this correspondent found out that there were two rooms at the house. All four members of the family were

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

O, A-LEVEL EXAMS Students go to HC for deferral

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed yesterday with the High Court seeking its order on the government to postpone the upcoming O-and A-level examinations while students continue protests demanding the cancellation of exams amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Tamanna Tabassum, an A-level student, submitted the petition to the HC saving that the student could not take preparations for the examinations as their classes were closed for the last six months due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Besides, many students of O-and A-levels did not receive admit cards for attending the exams, the petition added.

Petitioner's counsel Moniruzzaman Lincon told The Daily Star that his client in the writ petition SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Remains of Jurassic sea predator found in Chile desert



Scientists have unearthed the remains of Jurassic sea predators resembling killer whales in the world's driest desert in Chile.

Pliosaurs were reptiles from about 160 million years ago with a more powerful bite than Tyrannosaurus rex, according to University of Chile researchers. The fossils are the second oldest record of this species in the Southern Hemisphere.

Chile's vast Atacama desert, once largely submerged beneath the Pacific Ocean, is now a moonscape of sand and stone with parts untouched by rain for years.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Ramna Park reopens after six months

To remain open for 5hrs every day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday informed the High Court that it has reopened the Ramna Park in Dhaka, clearing the way for the people to walk and exercise in the park after more than six months.

The park will remain open from 6:00am to 10:00am and from 4:00pm to 5:00pm every day, Deputy Attorney Cer Noor-Us Sadik told the HC during hearing a writ petition filed seeking its order for reopening Ramna

After the hearing, the HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam dropped the writ petition from its hearing list, DAG Noor told The Daily Star yesterday.

On September 8, Supreme Court lawyer Eunus Ali Akond filed the SEE PAGE 10 COL 5 FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Aid for war-torn economy sought

September 28, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU REVIEWS TCB'S ACTIVITIES

Bangladesh Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today holds a meeting of senior officials of Trading Corporation Bangladesh (TCB) at the Gono Bhaban and reviews the activities of the government body. They discuss the problems faced by TCB in importing various essentials goods.

POOR NATIONS NEED SOFT LOAN: TAJUDDIN The new nation of Bangladesh makes its debut at the annual

meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank today with a plea for aid to build its war-torn economy and

warning that the widening gan between rich and poor nations is a threat to world peace and stability. Tajuddin Ahmed, Bangladesh

minister for finance and planning, accuses richer nations of protectionism, of falling short in assistance goals, and of giving aid with conditions. Foreign aid continues to be tied to projects. Some countries lend on such hard terms and for such short periods that their loans are virtually indistinguishable from suppliers' credit granted by individual exporters, he adds. Quoting the recent floating of the pound sterling, he further says that rich nations' balance of payments

problems are seriously affecting the future of poor nations.

Tajuddin says in the meeting that Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest nations, is seeking aid to build a socialist economy within

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Covid death rate goes up by 2.37pc

Shows DGHS data; 32 die, 1,275 test positive in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of deaths from Covid-19 has increased by 2.37 percent than that of the previous week, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services

But the detection of coronavirus cases decreased by 7.30 percent, while the number of tests also dropped by 5.42 percent till yesterday.

10.7 percent.

Thirty-two more people died from coronavirus infection in 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday, according to the press release.

With this, the total number of deaths rose to 5,161, while the death rate stood at 1.44 percent.

Another 1,275 cases were recorded in the meantime, taking the number of people

positivity rate was 11.93 percent -- nearly two percent up from the previous day's

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Jaswant Singh no more

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE

Jaswant Singh, former Indian Union minister in the Ata Bihari

Vajpayee cabinet who held the crucial portfolios of external affairs, defence and finance, died after a prolonged illness yesterday morning. He was 82.

Having joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as one of its early founding members after serving in SEE PAGE 10 COL 8



PRAYER TIMING SEPTEMBER 28

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



A traffic police wades through waist-deep water on a road in Mulatol area of Rangpur city yesterday. Related story on page 3.

KONGKON KARMAKER

infected to 3,59,148, the release added. Against a number of 10,685 tests, the

Flood situation worsens in two northern dists

STAR REPORT

People continued to suffer as flood situation in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram worsened yesterday following incessant rainfall and the onrush of water from the upstream.

Major rivers of the upper Meghna basin in the country's north-eastern region were showing a rising trend and it may remain steady in the next 24 hours, the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said in a bulletin around 9:00am.

"The Ganges river is also showing a rising trend, which may continue for the next 72 hours," it said.

The Brahmaputra river was in a steady state, but its water level may rise in the next 24 hours, while the Jamuna river was showing a downward trend which may remain steady in the next 24 hours.

At least seven rivers across the country were flowing above the danger level, the FFWC bulletin added.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department yesterday forecast that light to moderate rainfall and thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty wind were likely to occur at most places over Rangpur division

Light to moderate rain may occur at many places over Rajshahi, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions as well as at a few places over Dhaka, Khulna, Barishal and Chattogram divisions today, according to the forecast issued around 6:00pm yesterday.

Besides, moderately heavy to very heavy rainfall may occur at isolated places over the northern part of the country today, it added.

In Lalmonirhat and Kurigram, flood situation SEE PAGE 10 COL 5