

**FARM BILLS FALLOUT**

India's ruling BJP's oldest ally  
Shiromani Akali Dal quits NDA  
**SEE PAGE 6**

# The Daily Star



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**"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 knowledge."**  
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.

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## Mahbubey Alam passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent jurist and Attorney General of the republic Advocate Mahbubey Alam is no more. He was 72. 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 night. 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

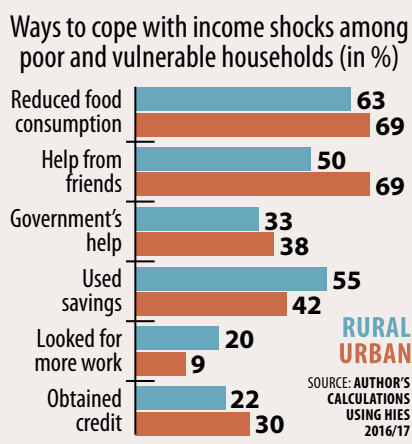
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## 68pc lost jobs in Dhaka and Ctg

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

REJAUJ 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 report. 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

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## 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 yesterday 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

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## 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,

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VOICES RAISED FOR RAPE VICTIMS -- PHOTOS ON PAGE 3



Buses parked right in the middle of a street near the capital's Mohakhali inter-district bus terminal cause traffic congestion on the busy road. The Dhaka North City Corporation has dedicated a part of the road for parking buses, but transport owners and workers keep their vehicles there. Inset, pedestrians try to go between buses there. The photos were taken at 6:30am yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN DISPUTE Heavy fighting tests shaky truce

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

AGENCIES

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 Union. 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 stabilise the situation. France, Germany and the EU swiftly urged an "immediate ceasefire," while Pope Francis prayed for peace. The Armenian defence ministry spokesman, Artsrun Hovhannisyanyan, said intense fighting continued along the Karabakh frontline yesterday afternoon. Azerbaijan said it had captured seven of its Armenian-controlled villages, a claim Yerevan denied. It also claimed to have killed sixteen Armenian separatist fighters.

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## 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.

PHOTO: STAR



## 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 scoop water out.

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 inundated.

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

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



## 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 six-point movement of 1966 and the student movement of 1969, which saw the

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## '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 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 11pm.

"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.

Extra precautions, including two layers of packaging, have made preparing for the series more time-consuming during the pandemic, but response from customers is still staggering.

"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 Instagram.



## Verdict in arms case against Md Shahed today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

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 testing and treatment.

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.

Dhaka Metropolitan 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) Mahub-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.

A race

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 hours.

"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 tested.

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.

TO-LET Super-luxurious, brand new unfurnished apartments at Navana Wedgewood (Plot # 24, Road # 65, Gulshan-2, Dhaka) are to be rented.

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

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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 its area.

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 relocation of dogs.

They prayed to the HC bench of Justice Md Ashfaquul 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 September 17.

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 illegal.

Citing the petition, Barrister Saqeb 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 Eunos Ali Akond as a lawyer for next two weeks for posting derogatory comments about the judiciary 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

FROM PAGE 3 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 Sajeb 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

COURT CORRESPONDENT

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 arguments.

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.

The tribunal recorded statements of

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 Papiia 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 country.

The following morning, Rab raided Papiia'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 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.



At one point on Mohammadpur's Ring Road in the capital, Dhaka was 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.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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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 afternoon. 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.

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:



NEWS IN BRIEF

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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...

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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...

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...

SOURCE: REUTERS



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...

PHOTO: REUTERS

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

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

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 BJP-led 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.

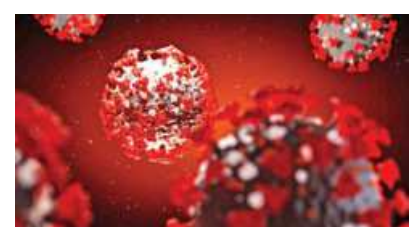
"The second wave is arriving faster than we thought," Patrick Bouet, head of National Council of the Order of Doctors in France, told the weekly Journal du Dimanche.

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 cases.

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 worst-hit 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.



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.

PHOTO: AFP

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'

AFP, Washington

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 Degree Program in JAPAN

Applications for Master degree program are invited from confirmed members of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) cadres, Bangladesh Bank Class-1 officials and Bangladesh Judicial Service (BJS) Officials for JDS 20th Batch under "The Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship by Japanese Grant Aid (JDS) 2020" as below:

General Information about the Scholarship:

- Degree: Master's Degree (One year / Two years courses) at universities in Japan (see below)
Language of Instruction: English
Maximum number of Scholarships: Master's 30 (thirty)
Benefits: JDS covers the cost for full tuition fees, living expenses, air ticket, research, other expenses as per JDS Rules and Guidelines
Expected date of Departure to Japan: August 2021

Areas of Study:

Table with 3 columns: Component (Development Issues), Accepting University / Graduate School, Slot. Lists various programs like Public Administration, Law, Urban Planning, etc.

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 15 October 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)



# (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 evidence-based 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.

For a realisation of such concerns, again we may look back at HIV/AIDS which has already experienced both good and bad politics in the last four decades. The 2016 Political Declaration on Ending AIDS (by 2030), adopted by UN and welcomed by WHO, clearly indicates that the global fight against the epidemic, which was also considered a global pandemic by the late 20th century, is resting on politicised choices. In the backdrop, we see that the long struggle towards developing a HIV vaccine till today, with continuing promises and challenges, has already gone through political action and inaction, especially in terms of financing the research, 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 (working globally) and national level manufacturing, limited many AIDS initiatives of WHO during the 1990s in low and middle-income countries. Consequently, a number of collaborative research studies in public health have highlighted the significance of political will or commitment in simultaneously investing in HIV vaccines (less profitable 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 the production and distribution of vaccines has been extensively discussed by some public health researchers in the book *The Politics of Vaccination: A Global History* (2017), where vaccine programmes are considered to have been political throughout history. One of the important findings of this book is acknowledging the past failures to strengthen the vaccine policies.

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 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

beyond politics and power. At this time, it is more pertinent to mention that the two largest yearly membership contributions to WHO (other than the voluntary contributions) come from USA and China with USD116 million (24 percent) and USD57 million (12 percent), respectively. And US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw funding from WHO in the middle of the pandemic clearly reflects the need to tackle political crises in order to confront public health challenges of Covid-19.

While the importance of understanding the political reality of the global pandemic is already evident in the discourse analysis of public 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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SOURCES: REUTERS

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 decision-making 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 expertise.

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

# What should be our resolve this year?

## The Daily Star

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*

WORDS 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*

A 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 Habiganj 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 upazila.

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 to 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.

SHAMSUL BARI

INTERNATIONAL 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.



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

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.

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 helpful.

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.

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## Challenges of making the Right to Information Act effective

TAHSEEN LUBABA

RIGHT to information is well-recognised 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,



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

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*.



WORLD NEWS DAY

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



WARREN FERNANDEZ

Singapore.

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 before.

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 Iguacu 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.



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

PHOTO: INDRANIL MUKHERJEE/AFP

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

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 societies.

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 Editors Forum.

*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.*

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



RMG NOTES

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

A new study by the 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 afloat.

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 escape.

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 brands?

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 Exchange (BAE). Email: mostafiz@denimexpert.com

QUOTABLE Quote



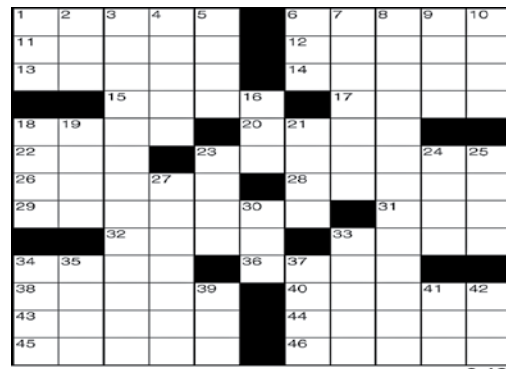
ERICH FROMM (1900-1980)

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 vow
- 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
- 45 Ranch rope
- 46 Full of flavor
- DOWN**
- 1 Pert talk
- 2 Low digit
- 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
- 25 Hide away
- 27 School groups
- 30 Big Apple opera house
- 33 Origami bird
- 34 Test type
- 35 "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" role
- 37 Whole range
- 39 Binary base
- 41 Chow down
- 42 Devious



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



BEETLE BAILEY



BABY BLUES



BY MORT WALKER



BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



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





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. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED/COLLECTED

## 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.

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation completed a month-long training of junior players, which is supposed to resume in mid-October as part of preparations for the upcoming Asian Junior Hockey

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 Cup tournament with the online participation of 14 clubs this month. Each club sent videos of athletes lifting weights and the federation later declared the winners after assessing the footage. The federation also kept its gymnasium open for national players to practise and also

provided assistance to different 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 Sentu.

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

Athletic Championships on November 20-21 at Army Stadium where they also want to stage the 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

Munir, adding that they are also planning to hold a ranking tournament before the Premier Table Tennis League in December.

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

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 Palooan. "I think it is not possible before December but everything depends on the situation getting better."

## Is there a plan for domestic cricket?

MAZHAR UDDIN



"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 foremost.

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 cricket.

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.



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. PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 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 Saturday.

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 Chelsea's Chelsea inside 27 minutes. Mason Mount ignited a 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," Pellegrini 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 WVK 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."



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. PHOTO: COLLECTED



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SHAH CEMENT

# 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.



AC Barrett

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 6-3.

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

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

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# 4 of a family killed as their mud house collapses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Four members of a family died in Dinaipur'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.

Around 5:30am a 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 heavy rain.

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

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# 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 saying that the students 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

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# Remains of Jurassic sea predator found in Chile desert



REUTERS

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.

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# 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 General Noor-Ul Sadik told the HC during hearing a writ petition filed seeking its order for reopening Ramna Park.

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

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

## Aid for war-torn economy sought

September 28, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEM

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 gap 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



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# 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 (DGHS).

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

The recovery rate has also gone down by 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 infected to 3,59,148, the release added.

Against a number of 10,685 tests, the positivity rate was 11.93 percent -- nearly two percent up from the previous day's 10.27 percent.

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# Jaswant Singh no more

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE

Jaswant Singh, former Indian Union minister in the Atal 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

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

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

# 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 today.

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

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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