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"Foul play, dirty behavior, and spitting venom in the name of politics only frighten people. The government is doing this to mislead people."
BNP LEADER NAZRUL ISLAM KHAN



"Be patriotic. It's not about being a tough guy. It's about doing your part."
JOE BIDEN ON IMPORTANCE OF WEARING MASKS AFTER TRUMP TESTS POSITIVE



"No power in the world can stop me from meeting and sharing the pain of the victim's family of Hathras."
RAHUL GANDHI AS OUTRAGE OVER GANGRAPE SIMMERS IN INDIA
PAGE 6



Pay or die

Stories behind 'gunfights' and the human cost of OC Pradeep's 'rule' in Teknaf

ZYMA ISLAM and MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAH

With suspended officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station Pradeep Kumar Das now behind bars over the killing of retired army major Sinha, stories are unearthed about the unwritten law of the upazila town: you pay, you live.

You bargain or you don't pay -- you mysteriously die in a "gunfight" that will happen in the middle of the night at some remote beach.

Yasmin Akhter's husband Hasan Ali was a "source" of the Border Guard Bangladesh -- not only does she proudly admit this, she also calls it "a service to the nation".

As the owner of a fleet of 40 fishing trawlers which he leased to sea-faring fishermen, Hasan was the perfect informant, since he had eyes and ears all over the sea looking out for shipments of yaba coming in from Myanmar.

According to his wife, this was also a quick way to make money since he received a handsome commission from the BGB for every haul. But it was also a quick way to make



Suspended officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station



enemies in a town where Hasan's closest neighbours are all yaba traders.

He got so rich ruining their livelihoods that he could afford to plaster every square inch of the walls and floors of his one-storey home with the fanciest golden-veined ceramic tiles.

Hasan was picked up by Teknaf police on October 27, 2018 from south Jaliyapara where he was mending torn fishing nets, alleged his wife.

"He was picked up at 10:30am. The fishermen saw him being taken away by the police. He had no cases against him, nor was he a listed drug trader."

When Yasmin went looking for him at the police station, she was allegedly told by the then OC Pradeep that she needs to hand over Tk 50 lakh to get her husband released, only being charged with Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

"I said that I can give only Tk 20 lakh. I sold all the gold jewelry I had and met two policemen -- an assistant sub-inspector and a constable -- behind the Eidgah field at

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Boys walking ankle-deep in water on the corridor of Kajlpar Government Primary School in the capital's Jatrabari. The severe and prolonged waterlogging is the result of a dysfunctional drainage system in the area. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

GETTING VACCINES Govt working on a \$550m scheme

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government has undertaken a programme worth \$550 million with an aim to procure and distribute coronavirus vaccines.

The authorities concerned are currently in negotiation with the World Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) for a loan of \$400 million for the programme.

Rest of the amount would be contributed by the government, said officials.

According to a top official of the Ministry of Finance, the ministry officials have been in discussion with the World Bank for a \$200 million loan since August and with the AIIB for another \$200 million since September.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal had talked with AIIB President Jin Liqun over phone about the loan in the last week of September and the AIIB president responded to him positively, he said.

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Pro-govt clerics at Qwami helm

RASHIDUL HASAN

Tensions continue to brew between pro- and anti-government leaders from Hefajat-e-Islam and Qwami madrasas over securing the top posts of the Chattogram-based Islamist group, Qwami Madrasa Education Board (Befaq), and Al-Haiyatul Ullia Lil-Jamiatil Qwamia Bangladesh, which is the highest level of Qwami madrasa education in the country.

The posts fell vacant at the same time with the demise of Shah Ahmad Shafi on September 18.

The two sides have also reportedly engaged in a grave dispute over establishing grip on Hefajat, which came to the fore for its massive rally in the capital's Shapla Chattar on May 5 in 2013, and its stronghold Hathazari madrasa in Chattogram.

When this in the situation, the executive committee of Befaq elected Maulana Mahmudul Hasan, principal of Jatrabari madrasa and khatib of Gulshan Azad Mosque in the capital, as the board's acting chairman yesterday. He defeated his rival candidate Maulana Nur Hossain Kasemi.

As ex officio, Mahmudul would also become the acting chairman of Al-Haiyatul Ullia Lil-Jamiatil Qwamia Bangladesh.

Multiple sources in Hefajat and Befaq said Mahmudul is considered to be a pro-government Islamic cleric, while Kasemi is a top leader in the BNP-led 20-party alliance and also the secretary general of Jomiat-e Ullamae Islam, a component in the alliance.

Yesterday's meeting was held at the head office of Bangladesh Qwami Madrasa Education Board at Kajla, Jatrabari in Dhaka.

Hefajat leaders and several members of the Befaq executive committee told this correspondent that Mahmudul was elected because of government lobbying.

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RAPE AT MC COLLEGE

Three more accused give confessional statements

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Three more people accused in a case filed over the gangrape of a woman at Sylhet's Murari Chand College gave their confessional statements to a district court yesterday.

A team of Shah Poran Police Station, led by Inspector Indranil Bhattacharya, who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, produced the three accused before the Sylhet Metropolitan Magistrate Court around 1:00pm.

The accused are Shah Mahbubur Rahman Roni, Rajon Miah and Ainuddin.

Of the three, Rajon gave his confessional statement before Sylhet Additional Chief Metropolitan

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TRUMP IN HOSPITAL

Election concerns grip White House

Conflicting reports emerge about his condition

AGENCIES

White House officials sought to project an air of business as usual despite President Donald Trump's Covid-19 diagnosis and hospitalisation, but aides privately expressed concern about the presidential election and showed signs of rising worry about the coronavirus.

"The business of government continues," economic adviser Larry Kudlow told reporters after Trump disclosed on Twitter on Friday that he had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Trump flew by helicopter to Walter Reed Medical Center for treatment in the early evening. But staff members said he would continue working from a special suite there and that he had remained engaged in governing throughout the day. He did not transfer power to Vice President Mike Pence.

In an 18-second video recorded inside the White House and released on Twitter, Trump broke his silence, saying he was being hospitalised but "I think I'm doing very well."

"We're going to make sure that things work out," he said, adding that First Lady Melania Trump -- who also contracted the virus -- was "doing very well."

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GRASSROOTS UNITS AL chief riled by inclusion of tainted faces



PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed disappointment after seeing several names of "wrongdoers and infiltrators" were proposed for inclusion in the district, city and upazila committees of the party.

The AL president, also the prime minister, ordered leaders concerned to form committees with tested and dedicated leaders to further strengthen the party at the grassroots.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

SPORT

Salahuddin wins fourth term as BFF president

Kazi Salahuddin was elected president of Bangladesh Football Federation for a fourth consecutive term following a landslide victory at the BFF Elective Congress in Dhaka yesterday.

The 66-year-old former national captain secured 94 votes to beat Badal Roy (40) and Shafiqul Islam Manik (1) at the congress held at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel.

Abdus Salam Murshedy was elected senior vice-president, also for the fourth time, as the Salahuddin-led panel won 15 out of 21 posts in these elections. A total of 135 out of 139 delegates cast their votes.

STORY ON PAGE 11



Some of the workers demolishing the illegal BGMEA building have no gear to save them from falling off the high-rise building. Tragedies at construction sites are all too common because of such utter disregard for safety.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

STOPPING DRUG ABUSE

Govt to set up independent institution

It'll test public transport drivers and people before joining jobs, enrolling for higher edu

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

As a part of intensifying and strengthening narcotics control across the country, the government has taken steps to form an independent institution to carry out dope tests in a structural manner.

The dope tests will be conducted mainly for higher education admissions and for entrance in the job and the transport sectors, with the latter being one of the bigger reasons for the formation of the institute.

The decision was taken at the last meeting of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Home Affairs

It would be formed following the structure of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) and will monitor and ensure dope test in all job sectors and will also take steps to make sure that tests are conducted before admission in any educational institutes for higher degree and again before the final examination of the degree.

The "Bangladesh Drug Testing Institute" will be set up in 19 districts -- Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Tangail, Jashore, Cumilla, Rangamati, Noakhali, Pabna, Bogura, Kushtia, Patuakhali, Dinajpur and Rangpur -- under a project called "Introducing dope test to detect drug addicts (first) phase".

Shamsul Haque Tuku, chairman of the Parliamentary

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,182
New cases in 24hrs



3,67,565
Total cases



5,325
Deaths



2,80,069
Recoveries



1,034,844
Deaths



34,947,207
Total cases

AL chief riled by inclusion

FROM PAGE 1
Names of senior leaders were dropped while people close to local lawmakers and influential local leaders were included in many of the committees, Hasina said, adding that she didn't want the committees to be formed through nepotism, insiders told The Daily Star.

Hasina said these at a meeting of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), the highest decision-making body of the party, at the Gono Bhaban.

According to party insiders, drafts for at least 20 district committees were submitted at the party president's Dhanmondi office earlier.

The people named in the draft included several leaders accused of corruption and repression against women, and personal staff and close relatives of the district committee president and general secretaries, the insiders added.

At yesterday's meeting, Hasina read out some of the drafts and mentioned the names of some "controversial and tainted individuals", said sources.

She also mentioned that some former presidents, general secretaries and vice-presidents of immediate past committees who have no allegations against them and have been dedicated to the party were dropped. She sent back the drafts and asked those to be reformed according to her guidelines.

She also said committees of some upazilas were announced through press releases rather than holding councils, said meeting insiders.

Only 33 leaders out of 81 were present at yesterday's ALCWC meeting, which was held after almost seven months.

ALCWC leaders who are infected with the coronavirus or have any

family members infected with Covid-19 were asked to not attend the meeting. The last ALCWC meeting was held on March 9.

Hasina also asked her party leaders to make the organisations stronger and communicate closely with the general people.

She also asked her party men to be prepared to serve the people as she feared that the Covid-19 situation may worsen during the coming winter, meeting sources said.

The ruling party yesterday formed eight high-powered committees for eight divisions to strengthen the organisational activities of the party.

The AL chief also informed the meeting that 522 leaders and activists of her party died from Covid-19.

In her introductory speech, Hasina said her government has been able to put the coronavirus pandemic under control because different ministries and government organisations, including the health ministry and Directorate General of Health Services, worked sincerely.

"Some people are saying many things regarding the Directorate General of Health Services or health ministry... Whatever I've directed them [to do] on an emergency basis, they have done. They worked properly... That's why we've been able to put coronavirus under control," she said, reports UNB.

She said when directing them to do anything on coronavirus-related issues, she asked that the work be done bypassing government rules as it was urgent to provide medical services to the people.

The prime minister thanked all government organisations, AL and its associated bodies for their coordinated and sincere efforts to help people.

Election concerns grip White House

FROM PAGE 1
Trump is doing "very well" in his hospital, his medics said yesterday, but a source with knowledge of the US president's condition said his vital signs had been worrying, with the next 48 hours critical.

Trump is up and walking, has been fever free for 24 hours and his cough, nasal congestion and fatigue are improving, physician Sean Conley said during the first medical update on his status since the president was admitted to Walter Reed military medical center Friday.

Trump is not receiving extra oxygen, he added, and is "doing very well". "We have monitored his cardiac function, his kidney function, liver function. All of those are normal," another member of the medical team, Sean Dooley said. But a source familiar with the president's health gave a much more worrying assessment. "The president's vitals over the last 24 hours were very concerning and the next 48 hours will be critical in terms of his care," the source said. "We're still not on a clear path to a full recovery."

The White House has not commented on the assessment. Conley was evasive when asked whether Trump had received supplementary oxygen at any point since falling ill, only confirming that he hadn't received any at the hospital or on Thursday -- the day he had his test.

Meanwhile, Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Trump was receiving the anti-viral drug remdesivir following consultation with specialists. The president was "not requiring any supplemental oxygen," she said in a statement late Friday.

Earlier, she said that medical experts recommended Trump work from the presidential offices at Walter Reed "for the next few days."

The hospitalisation indicated an intense effort to make sure the president's reportedly "mild" symptoms do not deteriorate.

The development also highlighted the uncharted waters for the US election on November 3, with Trump -- who is well behind his Democratic opponent Joe Biden in the polls -- having to freeze much of his campaign.

At first, aides gave rosy assessments, with Trump's chief of staff saying the president, 74, had only mild symptoms, was in "good spirits" and feeling "very energetic."

But later Friday White House physician Sean Conley said Trump received a single dose of Regeneron's antibody cocktail, a treatment not yet approved by regulators.

In his 70s and technically obese, the president is in a higher-risk category.

Daniel Griffin, an infectious disease specialist, told AFP Trump had an estimated 20 percent chance of developing severe disease requiring oxygenation.

The president's son Donald Trump Jr told Fox News his father was "obviously taking it very seriously, but he's a fighter."

Trump spoke to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham, McEnany said, and discussed emergency declarations and the coronavirus stimulus package with Chief of Staff Mark Meadows.

"His first question to me this morning was, 'How is the economy doing, how are the stimulus talks going on Capitol Hill?'," Meadows told

reporters outside the White House, adding he had spoken several times to Trump already.

Privately, some Trump advisers worried Trump's illness could cost him the presidential election in just 31 days. "Clearly it changes the dynamic from us being able to travel and show enormous energy and support from the rallies, which has been part of our calculation just like in 2016," said one Trump adviser.

The Trump campaign said all planned events involving the president were either being postponed or going virtual -- starting with the cancellation of a Florida rally Friday, one Saturday in Wisconsin and others in western states like Arizona next week.

Even the second Trump-Biden debate, scheduled for October 15, is now in some doubt.

Rallies are such a key part of the Trump brand that his sudden inability to travel leaves the campaign scrambling to reinvent its strategy. In addition, Trump has made his argument that coronavirus dangers are overblown a central plank of his reelection platform.

Underlining his sudden advantage in the bitter race, Biden, 77, traveled to Grand Rapids, Michigan, going ahead with a previously scheduled campaign stop. He was tested negative for coronavirus, his campaign revealed on Friday.

Biden said he was praying for Trump and his family, and his campaign announced it would take down all negative ads.

However, Biden also reminded voters that he has pushed consistently for taking seriously the coronavirus, which has killed more than 208,000 Americans, unlike his opponent who has mocked the Democrat for his rigorous use of masks. "Be patriotic," Biden told supporters in Michigan through a blue surgical mask. "It's not about being a tough guy. It's about doing your part."

News of Trump's infection came after one of his closest advisers, Hope Hicks, tested positive -- sparking fears of a cluster of cases emanating from the heart of the White House.

Trump met with dozens of people through the week and reportedly went to a fundraiser in New Jersey after it was known that Hicks had contracted the virus.

The White House said it was carrying out contact tracing, while Melania Trump's spokeswoman said the couple's 14-year-old son Barron had tested negative.

Vice President Mike Pence and other senior figures tested negative. The White House said Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett was negative too.

Former White House top aide Kellyanne Conway, however, announced late Friday she had tested positive with "mild" symptoms.

Trump's campaign manager, 42-year-old Bill Stepien, said he had tested positive, US media reported, and was in quarantine with mild symptoms.

As the news rattled global stock markets, leaders including Germany's Angela Merkel, Britain's Boris Johnson, and Russia's Vladimir Putin wished the president and first lady a speedy recovery.

Trump's predecessor Barack Obama noted the US is "in the midst of a big political fight" but set aside the bitter election battle to extend "best wishes" to the first family.



Villagers painting an almost 42-foot long boat, which will be used in a local rowing championship in Bogura's Sariakandi upazila. The competition, to be held on the Bangali river, is a decades-old custom. PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

Pay or die

FROM PAGE 1

7:00pm on October 28, said Yasmin. The amount was not enough and Hasan died in a "gunfight" that very night.

This newspaper reported Pradeep as saying on October 28, 2018: "Police went to Nayapara area after being informed that two groups of drug traffickers were engaged in a gunfight around 4:00am. As the police team reached the scene, the armed gang members began to shoot at them. Officers retaliated and after the exchange of fire ended, police found the bullet-ridden bodies."

Pradeep, now under an Anti-Corruption Commission probe for illegal wealth, had also told this newspaper that Hasan was a "suspected drug dealer".

Hasan left behind two daughters and a son, all under the age of 12.

His wife said, "I saw the news on Facebook the next morning and immediately fell unconscious. He was shot three, on the left shoulder, left hip and stomach."

She went with her sister and father-in-law to retrieve the body.

Thirty-two-year-old Nurul Amin was killed because they fell Tk 10 lakh short, alleged his family members. Also resident in Jaliyapara, Nurul was a Dubai returnee who worked at a local cell phone store. He had no criminal cases against him.

"My son worked for five years in Dubai as a store manager in Al-Khulliah supermarket. He came back in 2015 to get married, and had a child, so I did not let him go back," said his father Shukkur Ahmed, a frail old man in a crisp white panjabi, with generations of doing business in the shutki industry.

The Daily Star spoke to him at his beautiful two-storey family home in Jaliyapara.

"Nurul was picked up on March 15, 2019 from his store around the same time as Maghrib," said his father.

Two police sources acted as a mediator between the family and the police station, he added, claiming, "They asked for Tk 15 lakh and in return, Nurul would be charged with Section 54 and sent to court. That was too much for us to give, so we gave Tk 5 lakh to the dalals on March 18."

Nurul was killed on March 22, 2019. In the report of his death, published by this newspaper the next day, Pradeep admitted that Nurul was detained before his death.

"They [Nurul and another detainee] were interrogated at the police station. Based on their information, police along with them were going to Rajarchhara area to recover firearms and yaba pills around 3:00am yesterday. Sensing law enforcers' presence, some drug peddlers opened fire to snatch the arrestees, forcing them to fire back in self-defence."

The only two casualties of this so-called gunfight were Nurul, and the other detainee, a man named Nur Mohammed.

"Nurul's right eye was bruised black," said his nephew Faruq who saw the body, "and he had two gunshot wounds, one to the chest and one in his stomach."

Faruq took out a photo of the corpse to show to this correspondent; Nurul's father Shukkur who was standing at a distance, ambled over to see what was being shown, unintentionally spotted the photo and the impulsively tall man doubled over, crying frantically -- a stark reminder that these extrajudicial killings were not just faceless numbers, they were heavy personal costs for families.

This unwritten rule of Teknaf town is also why, when Belal was arrested two days before last Eid-ul-Fitr, his father, 60-year-old Nurul Alam, immediately put his trawler up as collateral and paid Tk 2 lakh to the police.

"I met the cops in front of Mathiner Kup [a local landmark] the very next day and gave the money to a sub-inspector and an assistant sub-inspector," claimed Alam.

"I have already lost a son to crossfire, I could not afford to lose another."

They paid and Belal lives, though he is still in jail.

Another son, 23-year-old Kamal, had been picked up by law enforcers on October 22, 2018, and "given the crossfire" on October 29, family members claimed.

"They were bulldozing the homes of yaba dealers at midnight and Kamal was watching... he was picked up from the gate of our home," said Kamal's widow, 20-year-old Rukia Akhter, about the incident two years ago.

Police, however, denied in their official report that Kamal was detained a week earlier before the "crossfire".

On October 29, 2018, OC Pradeep told The Daily Star, "Police went to Nayapara area after being informed that two groups of drug traffickers were engaged in a gunfight around 4:00am. As the police team reached the scene, the armed gang members began to shoot at them. Officers retaliated and after the exchange of fire ended, police found the bullet-ridden bodies."

The family, as well as locals, claimed that neither Kamal nor Belal were listed yaba dealers -- but two of their brothers are.

"My brothers-in-law surrendered after Kamal was killed," said Rukia.

Drug dealers or not, the socio-economic status of the family stands in stark contrast with that of their alleged peers. The family lives right in the middle of Najirpara, a neighbourhood locally famed as "Yaba Para" because of the sheer number of yaba dealers who live there in magnificent mansions.

Talking to these correspondents, Alam, a bone-thin man dressed in a tattered vest and lungi, said, "None of my sons are here to feed me. I catch fish worth Tk 500 every day and that is all we survive on. You can check my pot, we only had daal and rice for lunch."

He hoisted a bundle of fish nets and set off to catch fish to feed his family.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the claims in these cases. However, several other families have recently filed cases against Pradeep and other policemen with similar accounts.

Five cases, copies of which have been obtained by The Daily Star, have been filed against the cops of Teknaf police station since the death of Sinha -- all alleging that their family members were killed because not enough money was handed over.

The first was by Gulcheher, who filed a case with Teknaf Upazila Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court on August 18, accusing 27 police officers of killing her son.

"On July 4, my sons Saddam Hossain and Javed Hossain were detained by a team of police led by Whaikhyang police camp's in-charge Moshir Rahman. They were picked up from the street in a neighbourhood called Maulavibazar," narrated Gulcheher in the first information report (FIR) of her case.

"I went to the police camp to bring them home and was asked for Tk 10 lakh. I bargained for Tk 5 lakh. I handed over Tk 3 lakh on that very day while I sent over the other Tk 2 lakh the next day using their own chosen messenger. Javed was prosecuted and sent to court, but on July 7 at 10:00pm, Saddam was taken to a place close to his home and shot."

The Daily Star interviewed all but one of those who filed these cases.

On August 27, Senowara Begum, 24, filed a case against Pradeep and SI Moshir Rahman among others, for the death of her husband Abdul Jalil.

Jalil was in the custody of Teknaf police for eight months before being found dead following a "gunfight", she alleged in the FIR.

He was arrested at 9:30am on December 3, 2019 from Fuad Al Khatib hospital, she said.

"We looked for him for months. At 7:30pm on March 3, 2020, SI Moshir, OC Pradeep, ASI Arifur Rahman and an informant came to our house, and demanded Tk 10 lakh in exchange for Jalil. I gathered Tk 5 lakh by borrowing money and selling my gold and the above-mentioned cops came to my house again on March 16 to take the money," described Senowara in the FIR.

Months passed again, and her husband did not show up. On June 10, witnesses (named in the case) saw him inside room number 4 of the police station and Senowara rushed to meet Pradeep.

"He agreed to let my husband go, and I kept going there every day hoping he will be freed, up until July 7 when he was killed," she said.

Between 2:00am and 2:45am that night, Jalil was taken to an area called Combo Borchhara and shot at, states her FIR, adding that he was brought alive but wounded to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex.

The health centre referred him to Cox's Bazar, and he died on the way.

Senowara's brother-in-law confirmed the same version of events to this newspaper.

The day after Jalil's death, Pradeep told this newspaper that they had gone to the spot to recover drugs, accompanied by an arrested "drug dealer".

The accomplices of the "dealer" was waiting in ambush resulting in a "gunfight". Two bodies were recovered -- that of the "dealer" and of Jalil.

Essentially, Pradeep claimed that Jalil was in the group lying in ambush to save their comrade.

On August 30, 22-year-old Sultana Rabiya Munni filed a case accusing Pradeep and 34 others of Teknaf police of killing her husband Syed Alam, brother-in-law Nurul Alam, and nephew Abdul Monaf on May 6 this year.

"They were picked up from our house in Rangikhali, Gazipara at 2:00am by

a team led by Pradeep and SI Moshir Rahman. At the time of detention, the two cops asked for Tk 50 lakh which we did not give. They were shot at 4:40am in a paddy field adjacent to our house," she stated, adding that she is now coming forward to file a case because she was threatened with "crossfire" too.

According to media reports, then OC Pradeep said these men were robbers who were killed in a "gunfight" with the cops.

Shahena Akhter also filed a case on September 2 against Pradeep and SI Moshir Rahman alleging that her husband Md Musa Akbar was killed in a "gunfight" because the family only paid Tk 3 lakh instead of the sum of Tk 20 lakh that was demanded of them.

Musa was arrested on March 28 this year at 2:00pm from Ulubonchi. When Shahena went to see Pradeep, he denied that Musa was at the police station.

But two informants approached her saying they were representing SI Moshir and that her husband would be released if they could pay Tk 20 lakh.

Musa was killed the same day at 11:55pm, Shahena narrated in the FIR, when they were unable to pay in full.

On September 2, Hafez Ahmed filed a case alleging that his sharecropper brother Shahab Uddin was picked up from their residence on April 17, 2019, at noon, by Pradeep and SI Dipak Biswas, and killed in a "gunfight".

"At the time of arrest, SI Dipak and his informant Aminul Haque told me to bring Tk 5 lakh to the police station, or be ready to conduct my brother's funeral. I pawned all the gold jewelry in the house for Tk 50,000 and went to the police station to meet SI Dipak, but he asked me to hand over the money to Aminul. Aminul accepted the money but informed me the next day that the entire Tk 5 lakh would be needed," described Hafez in the FIR.

When he could not arrange the money over the next two days, Shahab was killed in a "gunfight" between two groups of drug dealers" on April 20, 2019 -- as said by the police in official report.

The Daily Star was unable to locate or reach the policemen named by victims' families for comment. Other than suspended OC Pradeep, who is in jail, the policemen in question have been transferred from their posts, and their phone numbers too have changed.

On September 25, The Daily Star reported that 1,487 policemen -- ranging from constables to inspectors -- had been transferred from Cox's Bazar by police administration, the largest such reshuffle in district police in recent history.

Police sources told The Daily Star that the reshuffle was actually part of a "correction campaign" by police in the aftermath of the killing of Sinha Md Rashed Khan. The subsequent outcry led to increased scrutiny of "gunfights", and "shootouts" by police in the district.

Asked about the allegations regarding "gunfights" in Teknaf, Deputy Inspector General, Chattogram Range, Md Anwar Hossain, said, "The court has initiated an investigation into the cases filed and is seeking information from the relevant police station. When the Teknaf police station submits a report providing information, further action can be taken."

Asked why the police officers named in these cases are not being arrested, "We cannot take any action until these steps are completed and the court gives further direction."

NO MONEY, NO OPTION

While some well-off families were able to pay for their family members to live, albeit in jail, what happens when you are too poor to pay?

Anowara was never even given the choice to pay for her husband Abdur Rahman's life.

She lives in a shanty on the side of the road, poverty etched all over her walls. In the middle of a storm, she sat outside it, breaking a mountain of bricks into chips -- she would get Tk 600 if she could finish the pile before the day was out.

A construction worker by profession, Abdur Rahman and his brother-in-law Abdul Kader were picked up from their respective homes on June 25, 2019 at midnight by Pradeep and his team in civil dress, informed Anowara.

"They killed them that night at 2:00am on Marine Drive, near Moheshkhalipara," she claimed.

Anowara found the body at the morgue the next day, shot on the left shoulder, chest, and stomach.

Then OC Pradeep told the media that they were killed in a "gunfight" which happened when police raided that spot to catch "traffickers".

There was no dillydallying, no negotiations -- it was all over within two hours of their alleged arrest.

Even in the lawless land of extrajudicial killings, it is the poorest who are the most deprived.

Nepal PM's advisers test positive for Covid-19

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Three advisers to Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli yesterday said they had tested positive for Covid-19, which has claimed the lives of 528 people in the country.

Oli's press, political and foreign affairs advisers told Reuters they had been infected and were isolating themselves.

An assistant working for Oli also tested positive, they added.

Oli has previously tested negative, but had yet to take a test after his associates tested positive, press adviser Surya Thapa said.

"The prime minister has been exercising extreme caution while meeting with people," Thapa told Reuters.

Govt working

FROM PAGE 1

The government strongly believes that the World Bank will provide them with the loan, he added.

International news agency Reuters, in its report on Wednesday, mentioned that World Bank President David Malpass said on Tuesday that he sought board approval for a \$12 billion coronavirus vaccine financing plan to help poor and developing countries secure a sufficient share of vaccine doses when they become available in the coming months.

He said the board was expected to consider the plan in early October.

Global competition for early coronavirus vaccine doses is already fierce, months ahead of any approvals, as wealthy countries move to secure supplies.

Malpass said the World Bank plan aimed to put poor and middle-income countries, where the virus is spreading most rapidly, on the same footing as richer countries by ensuring financing to secure supplies and a system for distribution, which will encourage drug makers to meet their demand.

Without early doses that can bring outbreaks under control, many of these countries risk economic disaster that would push hundreds of millions of people back into poverty.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on September 26 asked the world community to treat the Covid-19 vaccine as a "global public good" and urged the United Nations to ensure its timely availability to all countries at the same time.

The PM, while addressing the general debate at the 75th United Nations General Assembly, virtually said that her government announced 21 stimulus packages, worth \$13.25 billion which is equivalent to 4.03 percent of the total GDP, aiming to minimise the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hasina on September 10, told the parliament that the government is ready to procure Covid-19 vaccine from the country where it will be developed first.

On August 27, Bangladesh approved the final or phase-3 human trial of a prospective Covid-19 vaccine by China's private Sinovac Biotech Ltd, which appeared to be a forerunner in a global race for developing inoculates against coronavirus.

Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, while visiting Dhaka in August, said New Delhi would make its potential Covid-19 vaccine available for Bangladesh on priority basis once it was produced in partnership with its developer Oxford University.

Three more accused

FROM PAGE 1

Magistrate Ziadur Rahman. Metropolitan magistrates Saifur Rahman and Sharmin Khanom Nila recorded statements of Ainuddin and Roni.

On September 29, the three accused were placed on a five-day remand in the case.

Jyotirmoy Sarker, additional deputy commissioner (media) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, said, "With these three, confessional statements of six accused have been recorded in the court and the remaining two accused will be produced before the court tomorrow [Sunday]."

A day before, three of the other named accused in the case made statements under section 164 before a Sylhet court. They are Saifur Rahman, Rabiul Islam, and Arjun Lasker.

Meanwhile, DNA samples of two other accused in the case -- Tarekul Islam Tarek and Mahfuzur Rahman Masum -- were collected at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

On September 25, a group of youth raped a woman at a hostel of MC College after forcefully taking the victim and her husband there.

The husband of the victim filed the case on the same night with Shah Poran Police Station accusing Saifur Rahman, 28

Govt can't protect our mothers, sisters from rape: BNP

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Nazrul Islam Khan yesterday alleged that people are getting scared of politics due to "wrongdoings" and "spitting venom" by the government in the name of politics.

"Foul play, dirty behaviour and spitting venom in the name of politics only frighten people about politics. The government is doing this to mislead people," he said.

Nazrul made the remarks while speaking at a human chain being held by Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal in front of BNP's Nayapaltn central office protesting a "false propaganda" against party founder Ziaur Rahman.

He said the ruling party top leaders have long been conducting a "false" campaign and spreading "lies" against Zia and his family members, but people do not believe them. "So, there's no point of making such evil efforts to malign Zia and his family."

Nazrul, a BNP standing committee member, voiced deep concern over the growing incidents of rape and violence against women.

Referring to the statistics of Ain o Salish

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Within three weeks after it was last dug for underground electrical and water works, Sylhet's Chowhatta-Zindabazar road is being dug into again. City corporation sources said contractors for previous projects did not dig it properly, and the new round of digging is a rectification of their faulty delivery. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

HOUSEHOLD WORK

Millennial men not holding up their end

NILIMA JAHAN

When 32-year-old Shabib Rahman (not his real name) got married in 2015, it came as a relief for him. From cleaning his room to arranging daily meals, everyday things he had to do for his six years of living alone in Dhaka he was now relieved of.

Shabib never really enjoyed this household work, holding the stereotypical idea that these are "women's work".

This is not an anomaly. When this correspondent interviewed 50 men, all millennials aged between 18-34, she found out that this is in fact the predominant male attitude towards household work or unpaid care work.

The interviews were held through social media and over telephone, to explore the experience of men's participation in unpaid care and domestic work.

No fewer than 48 of the 50 millennial men said they feel that men should do a fair share of household chores.

However, when asked how many hours they spent doing it, half of them reported spending less than an hour in household and care work, while the other half said they spend around one to three hours in domestic chores.

When asked how frequently they cook, more than two-thirds of the respondents said they usually don't cook, while seven participants said they sometimes cook on weekends. When it comes to washing clothes, only one-third say they do it, that too only on weekends.

The responses were similar when it came to childcare and taking care of the elderly.

Some of the participants are not foreign to this kind of work. As students, former students, service holders, and current and former migrant workers, they have habituated with this kind of work at some point of their lives.

However, it was found that they do not pay these work any attention

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Three-way collision in Cumilla kills 2

Youth dies as bus hit him in capital's Elephant Road

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed and at least five others were injured in a three-way bus, truck, and microbus collision at Korpai of Chandina on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway yesterday morning.

The accident occurred as a Feni-bound Star Line bus hit a HiAce microbus from the rear. The micro bus then collided with a truck from behind. The force of the collision killed two microbus passengers on the spot, reports our Cumilla correspondent.

Safayet Hossain, officer-in-charge of Mainamati Crossing Highway Police Station, said, "Highway police and a team of fire brigade rescued the injured passengers and recovered the bodies and sent them to Cumilla Medical College hospital."

The identities of the deceased could not be confirmed till the filing of this report.

According to locals, the microbus was so badly damaged that fire brigade personnel had to use cutting machines to open its door and rescue the passengers, who remained stuck inside.

When the rescue operation was being carried out, vehicular movement on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway remained restricted.

Meanwhile, a youth was killed after a bus hit him in Dhaka's New Elephant Road area early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Delwar Hossain (30), a restaurant employee, hailing from Chandpur.

A speeding bus hit him while he was crossing the road near Bata Signal point, on his way to his work, around 6am. Critically injured, he was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, said Rashedul Islam, a sub-inspector of New Market Police Station.

Police are trying to identify the bus that fled after the accident, he said.

The body was sent to morgue for autopsy.

CORRUPTION IN HEALTH SECTOR

Jubo Maitree demands removal of health minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Activists of Bangladesh Jubo Maitree yesterday formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club to press home their nine-point demand, including removal of the health minister.

Speakers at the programme said corruption was going hand in hand with Covid-19 and a tyranny of syndicates has become visible in all sectors of the country. If the reins of corruption and syndicates are not pulled now, danger is imminent.

They also said rape, violence against women have become a daily occurrence and culture of teen gangs have emerged in society. These need to be stopped immediately, otherwise social unrest will intensify and the consequences will be terrible, they added.

Leaders of the youth wing of left-leaning Workers Party of Bangladesh said the health minister cannot deny his responsibility for the corruption in health sector and he should be removed from his post for his failure.

Other demands of the group include increasing number of coronavirus testing and ensuring free-of-cost vaccine for all, introducing unemployment allowance and rationing for those who became jobless during the pandemic, bringing all those involved with the corruption in health sector under trial, caution money and interest-free loan for young farmers and small entrepreneurs, and reducing call rates, and data charge of mobile operators and prices of android phones to half.

RAPE CHARGES AGAINST RAJSHAHI PRIEST

Settlement was attempted 'to prevent scandal'

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Before Pradeep Gregory, a priest in Rajshahi, was arrested on rape charges, religious and community leaders tried to settle the matter in an arbitration, promising to take responsibility of the girl and her family members in exchange for their silence.

Pradeep was arrested around 11:45pm on September 29 from Rajshahi Catholic Diocese in Umorpur area of the city on charges of confining a 15-year-old indigenous girl to a church for three days and raping her, said Additional Superintendent of Police ATM Mynul Islam of Rab-5.

After the incident came to light, leaders of the Rajshahi diocese attempted an out-of-court settlement even though another such attempt by them had gone very wrong 10 years ago.

In February 2011, Serafina Mardi, a gang-rape victim, set herself on fire, protesting the settlement forced on her by community leaders and a catholic church in Godagari upazila. At that time, the church's priest was also arrested.

In the recent incident, the Tanore girl's brother filed a case with Tanore Police Station on September 29, accusing Gregory for raping his sister by confining her to his residence inside the church in the upazila.

Rapid Action Battalion arrested the priest the same night.

The girl's brother told The Daily Star that priests from Rajshahi diocese went to the

church to sit in an arbitration on September 28 after locals discovered the girl at the priest's residence inside the church.

The seventh-grader had been missing for three days. The church authorities also refused to return the girl, her brother alleged.

Leaders of indigenous Mahle community were also present in the arbitration, he said, adding that they promised to take their responsibility if they kept mum.

Cases of rape and repression on children and women are non-compoundable and mandatory to be settled in court by laws of the land, Samina Begum, coordinator of Rajshahi chapter of BLAST, an NGO often dealing with such cases, said.

"Settling rape cases outside court is an offence. Those responsible or involved in such activities can be treated as abettors," she said.

The girl's brother also mentioned about the arbitration in his first information report (FIR) filed with Tanore Police Station, said Additional SP Mahmudul Hasan.

"We are investigating the case. Police will take legal action if anyone is found involved in abetting the perpetrator," he added.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rajshahi Diocese Bishop Gervas Rozario admitted he sent three senior priests -- Paul Gomes, William Murmu and Emanuel Rozario -- to the Tanore church to look into the matter.

He said they were unaware of the non-compoundable crime of rape at that time.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Nine Mizdah attack survivors among 164 Libya returnees: IOM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nine survivors of the gruesome Mizdah attack in May were among 164 Bangladeshis who were repatriated in a chartered flight from war-torn Libya this week, International Organisation for Migration said yesterday.

Also on the flight were over 100 other vulnerable migrants, including 39 with medical conditions, IOM said in a statement.

The flight carrying a total of 164 Bangladeshis landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Wednesday.

The UN migration agency's medical escorts travelled with the migrants and upon arrival, health teams were on site to coordinate healthcare for migrants who will undergo quarantine at government facilities.

Eligible migrants will receive reintegration support once they have completed their government-mandated quarantine period. Follow-up care is particularly important for migrants that experienced physical and psychological trauma while stranded in Libya, IOM said.

In May this year, 30 migrants including 26 from Bangladesh were shot and killed in a smuggling warehouse in Mizdah, near the city of Gharyan, southwest of Tripoli.

The deadly attack also left 11 migrants critically injured, who IOM and partners have supported in subsequent months.

Giorgi Gigauri, chief of mission of IOM Bangladesh, said Covid-19 has exacerbated the vulnerabilities of migrant workers across the world and that they were working to overcome movement and other

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Cloud kitchen: a recipe for growth in food business?

MANNAN MASHHUR ZARIF, Lifestyle Desk

When the coronavirus pandemic hit Bangladesh early in March, most industries got up and on their toes. Fearing bankruptcy, they scratched their heads and looked for a way out. This was no different for the restaurateurs of Dhaka. However, despite the disastrous setbacks of the pandemic's early days, their business remains one of the most thriving sectors in the city.

One of the keys to this has been the switch to an online-focus in doing business. With social distancing making dine-in options unsuitable, restaurateurs have moved towards more financially viable options to help sell their dishes. Of them, many business strategies have shown promise, but none more so than the concept of cloud kitchens. This not only offers hope, but as the last few months have shown, it's also a recipe for growth!

THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF THE BUSINESS

Cloud kitchen, focused on food delivery rather than dine-in services, is nothing new as a concept, but its popularity has been unprecedented since the coronavirus unsettled the conventional food industry.

Compared to brick-and-mortar restaurants, virtual kitchens are much cheaper to set up. While starting a restaurant in Dhaka can be a million-taka affair, the prospect of setting up a virtual kitchen remains within five figures. There is no need to go for prime locations, and no need for extravagant interior decor. Promotion is done through social



Focused on food delivery rather than dine-in services, cloud kitchens have seen a steep rise in popularity since the coronavirus pandemic confined everyone into their homes and turned the conventional food industry on its head.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

media, word of mouth, and reviews in various food related groups are enough for most businesses to sustain.

The operating costs involve only that of hiring a chef and perhaps, a helping hand.

Tanzia Zaman (34) is a full time teacher. But in between taking online classes, she now focuses on running her new business, 137 Dessert Club. Focusing solely on baked food, she operates from the comfort of her home kitchen.

"Although this has been a dream for a while, my teaching commitments never allowed me to venture out. The pandemic provided me an opportunity, and I decided to start a few months ago. So far, the prospects seem promising," said Zaman.

She is not alone in this. Many like her have recently rolled out their "ghost kitchens", a viable business idea, given the current circumstances.

"Mezban On The Go" is a pet project of Natasha Chowdhury, and like many others, she too, relies on

social media for taking orders.

"We have a Facebook page and whoever wants to order can do so through messenger. There is also a hotline number," she told The Daily Star.

"We take 1-2 days to deliver, depending on the item and the quantity of order. Since we have just started the business, demands are not too high, but it seems things will pick up soon."

While most other virtual kitchens offer a wide range of foods, Chowdhury has decided to keep the menu small in order to focus on quality.

"We cook our mejbani beef in an authentic style. We use wood to make fire, and cook in a traditional mejbani pot. In the whole process, we ensure that strict hygiene standards are maintained," she said.

"We strongly believe that our virtual kitchen will be a success, and hopefully, we will start corporate catering as soon as we can," she

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

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Settlement was

FROM PAGE 3
“The senior priests reported to me that they found faults in both the parties (the girl and accused priest). The girl was bothering the priest, saying that she wanted to stay with him,” he said, adding that the diocese authorities promised to take care of the girl and her family as she expressed fear that her family might not accept her after the incident. “Also, we wanted to prevent scandals about the church,” he said.

However, Paul Gomes, one of the priests sent by the diocese to look into the matter, said they had sufficient facts to consider that the girl was “exploited”.

She had been missing for three days and Priest Gregory had not reported it to anyone even after he knew her location inside his residence, he said.

“We recommended highest punishment for the priest [Gregory] for tainting the holy image of the church,” he said, admitting that they did not inform the matter to police.

He also admitted that they had promised the girl’s family “safety and security” during the arbitration and did not inform police to “protect” the girl.

The accused priest was sent to Rajshahi Catholic Diocese and his title -- priest -- was withdrawn temporarily, said Bishop Rozario.

Among others, community leaders Michael Hembrom, Mohesh Murmu and Kamel Mardi were also present in the arbitration, the girl’s brother said.

Talking to reporters, Kamel Mardi on September 29 also said they tried to resolve the issue within themselves for the benefit of all. He did not elaborate any further.

When asked, the girl’s brother said, “During the meeting, I felt cornered as if it was my sister’s fault. I knew we won’t get justice. So, I decided to report the incident.”

After the meeting, the priests from Rajshahi took Gregory with them to the city as if they wanted to save him since locals were getting angry over the incident, he said.

Rakibul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Tanore Police Station, said they are waiting for the medical reports from Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where the girl was sent for tests.

He said she also gave a statement before a Rajshahi court in this regard.



Frigates sail side by side on Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh and India are holding a “Coordinated Petrol” and 3-day “Bongosagor” naval exercise in the Bay, which began yesterday. The drill aims to develop interoperability and joint operational skills through the conduct of a broad spectrum of maritime activities and operations, said an ISPR press release.

PHOTO: ISPR

Woman stabbed to death at home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was stabbed to death at home in Dhaka’s Kamrangirchar area Friday night.

The victim was identified as Selina Begum (35), wife of SM Obaidullah.

Officer-in-Charge of Kamrangirchar Police Station Mostafizur Rahman said they primarily came to know that two youths entered the four-storey building around 8:30pm.

After they left the house, the woman was found with stab injuries and was

rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

The OC said there was a tenant on the ground floor of the house, who shifted to another house a couple of days ago but they left some belongings there.

The youths entered the house to take away the belongings, the OC said, quoting the victim’s family members.

“We have started our investigation and will be able to give details

afterwards,” he added.

Selina’s brother Moniruzzaman said Obaidullah married Selina after his first wife, elder sister of the victim, died nine months back due to illness.

A feud was going on between the couple and children of Obaidullah and his first wife. Selina also received death threat from them, he alleged.

Obaidullah demanded fair probe and immediate arrest of the killers.

The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Govt can’t

FROM PAGE 3
Kendra, he said over a thousand women were subjected to rape over the last nine months.

“This government neither can protect our mothers and sisters from rape nor can save the country’s resources from plunder. The share market, the Bangladesh Bank and other banks are looted while thousands of crores of taka are being siphoned off to Swiss banks. Women and children are being abused and bodies are lying on the roads. This is the scenario of the country,” the BNP leader bemoaned.

He said the ruling party leaders should be ashamed of the “misdeeds” done by their fellow party people. “Rein in your party men first, and apologise to people.”

Nazrul urged the government to stop the “false campaign” involving Zia with “Indemnity Ordinance” since he had no link to it.

Speaking at the programme, party senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said the current government is accustomed to staging dramas over various issues to confuse people. “When the prime minister talks about development, people say

it’s not development, it’s a drama. When the prime minister cries instantly for some reasons, people think it’s a drama. When the prime minister makes a promise, people think it’s a drama.”

He said the government now made a drama styled “Indemnity by some infamous people: distorting history”, to undermine Zia with a smear campaign against him.

The BNP leader said the leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League are indulging in the incidents of rape and harassment of women across the county.

Cloud kitchen

FROM PAGE 3
said with conviction. On top of this, “Mezban On The Go” hopes to start a physical presence as soon as possible.

The fact that there is small overhead cost involved in taking online orders, Dhaka has seen a boom in opening of cloud kitchens. Without any costly investment, the menu can be altered on demand, and promotions are possible without costing a fortune in branding, as advertising in social media is cheap.

“The fact that F-businesses operate outside the tax net is an added boon to the virtual restaurant business. Had there been tax implications, it may not have been possible for us to start a kitchen amid the pandemic,” said another cloud kitchen owner requesting anonymity.

OTHER SIDE OF THE SPECTRUM
Starting a virtual kitchen can be as simple as starting a Facebook page, but building and maintaining one can be challenging.

Sanzida Hassan started her own catering service a couple of years ago. “I was known for my cooking skills and that was my only tool. Like many others, I made the mistake in believing that it is enough. I decided to start the business and use word of mouth for promotion. Although the initial response was positive, attending to even the fewest orders I received every week seemed like an overwhelming task. I was forced to close my kitchen within a short time.”

While she admitted the ongoing pandemic gave her reasons to consider

reopening the business, Hassan is pleased that she ultimately refrained from doing so.

“A few of my relatives have started their cloud kitchen in the last few months. I have tried to dissuade them, but to no avail. Some of them find it difficult to answer to every customer inquiry. For every order you receive, at least two to three people will request for the menu and ask questions. It is not as easy as it seems if one is operating alone,” she added.

PROBABLE PITFALLS
Reema Islam, food enthusiast and a specialist on its heritage and cultural aspect, observed that although on the surface the whole concept of virtual kitchens seem godsend, it is not without its own share of problems.

“The food business has always been one of the most risky ones. Taking it online doesn’t make much of a difference,” she said.

As the whole endeavor rests on online promotions and word of mouth, one bad dish, a few bad reviews, and the whole business stands a chance of collapsing.

“Maintaining standards is crucial, but difficult all the time. Filling orders seem lucrative because as you do well, your customer base will grow, meaning you need to expand. Unless you are prepared, it can never be easy,” she added.

Reema Islam is also apprehensive about the sustainability of naïve startups. “For now, we have many players in the market so it is all diverse, but

this too might mean too many people trying out this new fad and might prove to be a flash in the pan -- here today gone tomorrow!”

There was a time when “take away” or online orders served as a side venture for established eateries, adding to the revenue generated. In the time of the new normal, Zaman and Chowdhury believe that cloud kitchens are promising enough to ensure a profit and make it a viable business. That is why they started in the first place!

According to Reema Islam, one of the contributing factors of the soaring popularity of cloud kitchens is that they provide contactless service. However, this means that the need for maintaining a logistic support system is important. Hygiene is also more important now than ever before.

“Chefs should prepare food wearing masks and gloves; hands sanitised every time a dish is prepared. There is a need for utmost care while using utensils for meat, poultry, cheese, vegetables, etc.”

“These are of course in addition to the normal health measures like not re-using frying oil,” she said.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is highly unlikely that people can contract Covid-19 from food or food packaging. In addition, most budding entrepreneurs are making the most of the situation. Although the day seems far away, the coronavirus pandemic will end, but before that, there seems to be no end to the rising number of cloud kitchens in Dhaka.

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Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
College Education Development Project (CEDP)
College Name: Jashore Govt. Mohila College
College Address: Karbala Road, Jashore

Invitation for Tenders

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Education.
2	Agency	University Grants Commission/National University.
3	Procuring entity name	Principal, Jashore Govt. Mohila College, Jashore.
4	Procuring entity code	N/A.
5	Procuring entity district	Jashore.
6	Invitation for	Works.
7	Invitation Ref No.	CEDP/JGMC/W-01/1094.
8	Date	04/10/2020.

KEY INFORMATION

9	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (National).
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FUNDING INFORMATION

10	Budget and source of funds	Development Budget (Government & IDA Credit).
11	Development partners	International Development Association (IDA), World Bank.

PARTICULAR INFORMATION

12	Project code	224017200.
13	Project name	College Education Development Project (CEDP).
14	Tender package No.	W-01.
15	Tender package name	Renovation and Refurbishment of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, auditorium, conference hall and seminar rooms, office rooms, wash room, female common room and breastfeeding zone at Jashore Govt. Mohila College, Jashore.
16	Tender publication date	04.10.2020.
17	Tender last selling date	21.10.2020.
18	Tender closing date and time	22.10.2020, 12:00pm.
19	Tender opening date and time	22.10.2020, 12:45pm.
20	Name & address of the office	Jashore Govt. Mohila College, Karbala Road, Jashore.
21	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional)	Will not be held.

INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

22	Eligibility of tenderer	1. The tenderer shall have a minimum 03 (three) years of general experience in the construction works as prime contractor. 2. The tenderer shall have satisfactory completion of building refurbishment/construction activities of minimum BDT 3,000,000 (thirty lac) only under maximum 01 contract in the last 03 years. 3. The required average annual construction turnover shall be greater than BDT 4,000,000 (forty lac) only over the last 03 years. 4. The minimum amount of liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the tenderer shall be BDT 3,000,000 (thirty lac) only. 5. Other qualification mentioned in tender document.
23	Brief description of goods or works	Tiles work, Thai glass, washroom fittings, Ceiling Plaster, Electrical Work.
24	Brief description of related services	Related service shall be in accordance with Section 4: Particular Conditions of Contract, Section 6: Bill of Quantities.
25	Tender document price	BDT 1,500.00 (one thousand five hundred).

Tender name	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time in months
Renovation and Refurbishment of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, auditorium, conference hall and seminar rooms, office rooms, wash room, female common room and breastfeeding zone.	Jashore Govt. Mohila College, Karbala Road, Jashore.	100,000.00	6 months

27	Name of official inviting tender	Professor Dr. Md. Ahsan Habib.
28	Designation of official inviting tender	Principal and IDGM.
29	Address of official inviting tender	Jashore Govt. Mohila College, Karbala Road, Jashore.
30	Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel: 0421-65645.
31	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.	

Professor Dr. Md. Ahsan Habib
Principal
Jashore Govt. Mohila College, Jashore

IUB to host webinar on Bay of Bengal

CITY DESK

The first round of a webinar series by the Bengal Institute Project at the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) is set to take place this Tuesday, says a press release.

Titled “Regional importance of the Bay of Bengal for Bangladesh and its landlocked and littoral neighbors”, the webinar will be broadcast live through digital platforms of the Daily Star and Prothom Alo along with IUB’s Facebook page.

Mashfee Binte Shams, additional foreign Secretary (East) at foreign ministry, will present the keynote paper at the programme.

Ambassador Rensje Teerink, head of the European Union Delegation to Bangladesh, and Sonam Tobden Rabgye, former ambassador of Bhutan to Bangladesh will attend the programme as special guests.

Nine Mizdah

FROM PAGE 3
restrictions to access vulnerable migrants who are stranded and in need of support. “We are working closely with the government, in particular the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment, to ensure migrants’ access to health services, shelter, food, consular services, and for the most vulnerable -- flights home,” said Giorgi.

Millennial men

FROM PAGE 3
once they have a woman taking care of them, whether it’s their mothers or wives.

Somewhat paradoxically, almost all of the respondents said they believed that men should perform household chores. Asked why they don’t practice what they believed in, they provided some specific reasons behind their reluctance.

Unpaid care work, for the participants, are “boring”, “time-consuming”, “not men’s job”, and more. One said, “Since men work outside the home for long hours, they don’t get enough time to perform household works.”

This is contrary to reports that state even working women have to undertake more domestic care work than men.

A number of respondents pointed out the traditional stereotypical gender roles, which directs women to stay inside the home, rear children, take care of the elderly family members and do household chores.

“In our childhood, even if we tried to help our mother in domestic works, we were told not to. Even these days, when someone is seen doing household chores, others make a mockery out of it -- tagging him ‘uxorious’. This discourages many of us,” said Mutasim Billah, a banker.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said, “Due to this deep-rooted patriarchy, even if a man identifies as being progressive, they can’t accept from heart that housework is their responsibility as well.”

In order to redefine gender roles, she highlighted the importance of redefining masculinity.

Since 2011, ActionAid Bangladesh has been flagging the issue of unpaid care work. Farah Kabir, the organisation’s country director, believes that as long as care work is not celebrated, these old and conventional attitudes and perceptions will remain.

Currently, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has no programme or initiative to address the agenda of redistributing unpaid care works and ensuring men’s participation. However, Dr Abul Hossain, project director of Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women, said, “I feel the necessity of a separate programme to distinguish the role of men and women in the family and establish a division of labour at home.”

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CULVERT CONSTRUCTION

Bill cleared but work still incomplete

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The contractor concerned has withdrawn the final bill but construction work of a culvert in front of the circuit house in Habiganj municipality still remains incomplete, which is a gross violation of public procurement policy.

An official of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in Habiganj said they cleared the bill after discussing with the district administration.

According to the law, the dues will be paid upon completion of work.

During a visit to the area recently, this correspondent found that the construction work was going on.

According to the sources at RHD, as there is no proper drainage system, Habiganj Sadar Hospital, local police station, police superintendent office, zilla parishad office and circuit house get submerged in water just after a little rain in the town.

To resolve the problem, the Roads and Highway Department in the district decided to build a cross-culvert in front of the circuit house

in the town. In February this year, construction firm Md Enamul Haque Pvt. Ltd from Dhaka got the work order of around Tk 43 lakh 50 thousand for construction of the culvert. RHD set a deadline of June 25 this year to complete the construction work.

Interesting thing is that the bill was cleared on June 26 but 40 percent work still remains incomplete, said the sources.

Saddam Mia, a resident of Hospital area, said commuters on the important road have been experiencing untold sufferings due to slow progress of the culvert work.

Shiddek Mia, 45, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver in the area, said they face immense problem while crossing the area.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, Habiganj unit, most of the areas in Habiganj town are submerged under rainwater during monsoon. To overcome the situation, the authorities concerned have taken this project.

But the construction work is too slow and the road has now become hazardous for all, he said,

adding that in this situation, drivers also charge extra three times fare.

There have also been allegation of substandard equipment being used in the construction work, said the environmental activist.

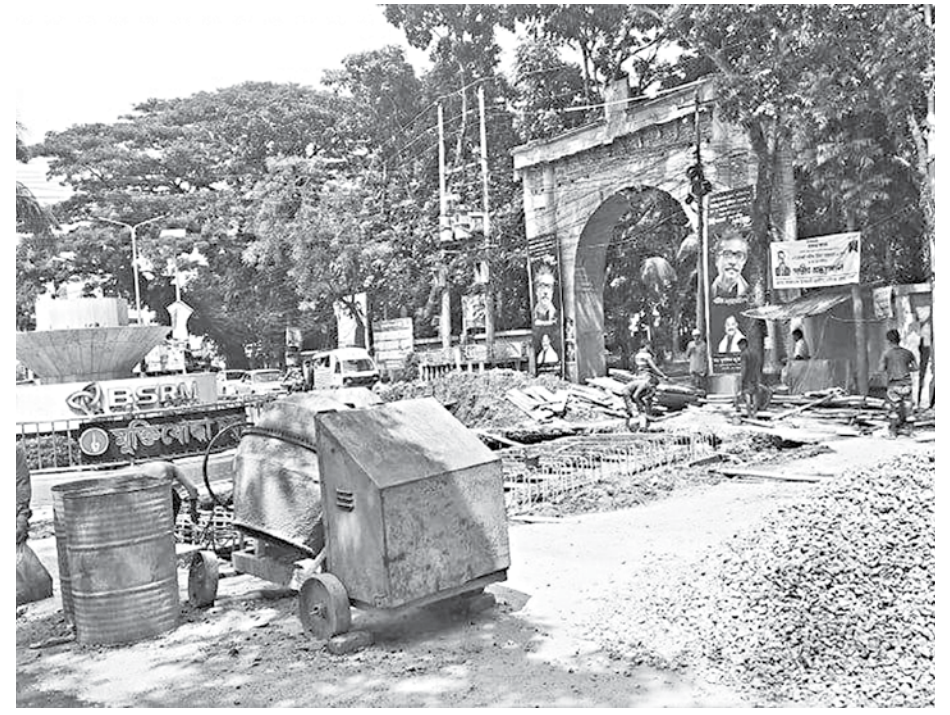
Shamim Ahmed, another resident of Hospital area, said the construction work of the culvert was going on for the last few months. Delay in the construction work mounts sufferings on thousands of townspeople.

Contractor Zahirul Islam Ruhel said construction work of the culvert was being delayed due to coronavirus outbreak. The work would be completed very soon.

Contacted, Mizanur Rahman Mizan, mayor of Habiganj municipality, said "I don't know anything about withdrawal of the bill."

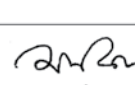
Habiganj RHD Executive Engineer Md Sajib Ahmed said the bill was cleared after discussing with the district administration.

Deputy Commissioner Md Kamrul Islam said the issue of withdrawal of the final bill is an internal matter of the Roads and Highways Department.



The bill has been cleared but construction work of a culvert in front of the circuit house in Habiganj town still remains incomplete, causing immense sufferings to commuters.

PHOTO: STAR

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh		
Health Services Division Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka www.hsd.gov.bd		
Invitation for Tender		
Sl. No.		
1.	Ministry	: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
2.	Division	: Health Services Division.
3.	Agency	: Health Services Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
4.	Procuring entity name	: Health Services Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
5.	Procuring entity code	: Not used at present.
6.	Procuring entity district	: Dhaka.
7.	Invitation for	: Tender.
8.	Invitation Ref. No.	: 45.00.0000.138.78.001.20.827
9.	Date	: 01/10/2020.
KEY INFORMATION		
10.	Procurement method	: Open Tendering Method (OTM)- Local.
FUNDING INFORMATION		
11.	Budget and source of funds	: Revenue/GOB.
12.	Development partner (if applicable)	: Not applicable.
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
13.	Project/programme code (if applicable)	: Not applicable.
14.	Project/programme name (if applicable)	: Not applicable.
15.	Tender package No.	: Tender For (1) Stationery (Package-1); (2) Toner of Printer, Photocopy and Fax Machine (Package-2); (3) Laptop, Computer and Printer (Package-3).
16.	Tender package name	: Packages-1 Stationery Packages-2 and Toner of Printer, Photocopy and Fax Machine Packages-3 Laptop, Computer and Printer
17.	Invitation for Tender Ref. No.	: 45.00.0000.138.78.001.20.827
18.	Tender publication date	: 04/10/2020
19.	Tender last selling date	: 25/10/2020
20.	Tender closing date and time	: 27/10/2020, 01:00pm.
21.	Tender opening date and time	: 27/10/2020, 02:30pm.
22.	Name & address of the office(s)	: Address(s)
23.	Selling tender document (principal)	: Deputy Secretary, Administration-2 Branch.
24.	Office	: Room # 220, Building # 3 (2nd Floor), Health Services Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000.
25.	Selling tender document (others)	: Do.
26.	Receiving tender document	: Do.
27.	Opening tender document	: Do.
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER		
28.	Eligibility of tenderer	: The tenderer shall have at least 2 (two) years' relevant experience with- i. Trade licence ii. TIN certificate of least validity financial year 2019-2020. iii. Income tax certificate. iv. VAT registration certificate. v. Bank solvency certificate. vi. Undertaking of not being blacklisted in any government/autonomous department.
29.	Brief description of goods	: Packages-1 Stationery Packages-2 and Toner of Printer, Photocopy and Fax Machine Packages-3 Laptop, Computer and Printer
30.	Brief description of related service	: Related services.
31.	Tender document price for each package	: Tk 1,000.00
32.	Tender security	: Packages-1 Tk 50,000.00 Packages-2 and Tk 30,000.00 Packages-3 Tk 30,000.00
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
33.	Name of official inviting tender	: Jakia Pervin.
34.	Designation of official inviting tender	: Deputy Secretary (Administration-2).
35.	Address of official inviting tender	: Room # 220, Building # 3 (2nd Floor), Health Services Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000.
36.	Contact details of official inviting tender	: +8802-9540721
37.	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.	
 01.10.2020 Jakia Pervin Deputy Secretary (Administration-2) Health Services Division Ministry of Health and Family Welfare		

GD-1571

ONION PRODUCTION

DAE in north launches programme aiming self sufficiency

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Rangpur region has launched an intensive programme in five northern districts to boost onion production in the upcoming season.

The programme is aimed at ultimately attaining self sufficiency in onion production in the country, according to DAE officials in Rangpur.

The programme is in response to the recent surge in prices of onion, a popular cooking ingredient in the country, following a ban on its export, imposed by India, they also said.

Rafiqul Islam, sub assistant agriculture officer of DAE in Rangpur, said in districts of Rangpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari, the DAE has set a target for producing 1.5 lakh tonnes of onion on 9,470 hectares of land this year, as opposed to 67.6 thousand tonnes produced on 6,142 hectares of land last year.

Moreover, aside from providing assistance in cultivating traditional onion seed varieties including Taherpuri and Faridpuri, the DAE is

also distributing newer high-yielding varieties such as Bari-6, Bari-3 and Bari-1.

Many non-governmental organisations are also distributing imported high breed varieties of onion seeds, he added.

"Since we no longer can be dependent on imports [of onion], we have launched a massive program to inspire farmers in cultivating the newly introduced summer variety of onion along with the traditional winter varieties," said Mesbahur Rahman, a DAE horticulture specialist for Rangpur region.

A good number of farmers in the region responded well and they have cultivated the summer variety for the first time this year.

Through the cultivation of the summer and winter varieties, the annual onion production is likely to double -- a step toward reaching self sufficiency in its production, he added.

Farmer Bodiuzzaman, from Kursha village in Taraganj upazila of Rangpur, predominantly grows onion among other crops.

He said he made Tk 40 thousand against the production cost of only Tk 10 thousand last year, when he reaped a harvest of 1.34 tonnes of onion from one bigha of land.

Another seasoned onion grower, Khirod Roy, from Bhabaniganj village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila, said onion farmers often suffer losses due to fall in onion prices in March and April, the months when the produce is harvested. "The government should ban import of onion during the harvest period to ensure stability of onion prices at the market."

Mohammad Moniruzzaman, additional director (Rangpur region) of DAE, said around 25 to 30 percent of onion gets rotten due to failure of following proper preservation techniques at farmers' end.

In order to prevent the wastage, the DAE is planning on launching a project, under which they would train farmers on how to make specialised onion storage facilities at their own houses, using available resources.

"We will arrange motivational and training programmes as well as provide technology and quality seeds to encourage farmers in cultivating profitable crops, particularly onion. This way, we will achieve self sufficiency in onion production, like we already did in the case of rice and meat production," he also said.



Workers tend to an onion field in Kisamoter Char area of Dimla upazila in Nilphamari.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Free medical camp at Tangail PTC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A free medical camp was organized at Police Training Centre (PTC) in Mohera area of the town yesterday.

Tangail PTC arranged the day-long medical camp, maintaining social distance, where nearly 500 poor and distressed patients from Mohera and its adjacent areas took free advices from doctors and received free medicines as well.

Dr Sheikh Mohammad Monirul Islam, a senior physician at Rajarbagh Central Police Hospital in Dhaka, and Dr Chand Sultana, Dr Aisha Siddika, Dr Kabir Uddin from the Health Directorate, and DR Safia Akter, medical officer at Tangail PTC provided necessary advices to the patients.

Additional Superintendent of Police (administration) at Tangail PTC Sheikh Razibul Hasan said they will organize such medical camp once in every month.

Worker electrocuted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A construction worker died from electrocution and four other co-workers sustained injuries while working at an under construction site of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Bhandaria upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Shariful Islam Babu, 30, was son of Mansur Ali of Asim village in Mymensingh's Fulbaria upazila. Injured Delwar, 34, Nayon, 24, Masud, 18, and Motaleb, 32, took treatment at Bhandaria Upazila Health Complex.

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US President Donald Trump disembarks from the Marine One helicopter followed by White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows as he arrives at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center after the White House announced that he "will be working from the presidential offices at Walter Reed for the next few days" after testing positive for the coronavirus disease, in Bethesda, Maryland, US, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Anyone can get it'

Shocked Trump supporters remain loyal after US president's Covid-19 diagnosis

REUTERS

As Americans digested the news on Friday that President Donald Trump had tested positive for the novel coronavirus, some of his backers expressed surprise that he hadn't been safe from infection and said their support for him was not diminished.

"It was shocking," said Maranda Joseph, 43, of Warren, Ohio, who has 12 Trump flags in her front yard festooned with skeletons and other Halloween decorations. "To see he has it wakes you up a bit. Anyone can get it, even the president."

Trump has played down the risks of the virus and Covid-19 disease that has killed more than 207,000 Americans, drawing criticism for his erratic messaging and recent resumption of campaign rallies where his supporters often are crowded together and don't wear masks.

Joseph, a homemaker, said she thinks more people should wear masks at future Trump rallies, though she added that she would attend one herself once Trump recovers.

Some in Warren expressed skepticism that Trump even has the virus, citing Ohio Governor Mike DeWine's positive test earlier this year before he tested negative later the same day.

"There's so many false positives out there. Has Trump had a second test yet?" asked Sharon Tice, 70, who sells Trump T-shirts and other memorabilia. "But if he does have it, it could influence the way he



sees things."

The White House said Trump was being moved into a special suite at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, for the next few days as a precautionary measure.

Some Republicans said the diagnosis could actually help the president.

"Trump will prove to the American people that you can survive Covid," said Cathy Lukasko, auxiliary chair of the Trumbull County, Ohio, Republican Party.

In Bangor, Pennsylvania, Trump supporter Jack Cooper, a 70-year-old retired electrician, said the president was paying the price for underestimating the virus's dangers.

"He's getting a taste of his own medicine," said Cooper, who lives in a crucial swing district. "He was fooling around without a mask in big crowds. It's like bringing a pit bull into a big crowd — something is gonna happen."

Even so, Cooper said it would not stop him for voting for Trump again.

Modi opens tunnel route to tense China border

AFP, New Delhi

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday opened a Himalayan tunnel that will drastically reduce the time needed to rush troops to the country's remote Chinese border as tensions grow between the Asian neighbours.

The tunnel traverses India's northern Himachal Pradesh state and lies on one of two main routes for troops headed to border areas in Ladakh.

Twenty Indian and an unspecified number of Chinese troops were killed in June during a deadly clash in Ladakh, which shares a disputed boundary with China's restive Xinjiang and Tibet regions.

The two nuclear-armed countries have since rushed tens of thousands of additional troops and weapons to the area, and have been locked in a tense stand-off for months.

The \$400-million, nine-kilometre (six miles) tunnel will cut the journey by about 50 kilometres (30 miles) and four hours, enabling travellers to bypass a tricky route across a landslide-prone Himalayan pass.

The tunnel, at an altitude of more than 3,000 metres (10,000 feet), has been hailed as a feat of engineering.

The project is part of New Delhi's push to catch up with Chinese infrastructure development on the other side of the border. In the last six years, Modi's government has expedited several frontier projects including roads, bridges and high-altitude airstrips.

"We have put our entire energy in developing our border infrastructure. The country hasn't seen roads, bridges and tunnels built at this scale," the prime minister said after inaugurating the tunnel. "Besides locals, this (infrastructure) will also hugely benefit the men and women in our army," Modi added.

New Delhi hopes such projects will promote tourism and spur economic activity.

India's Border Roads Organisation, which implements most of these strategic projects, says it has built more in the last four years than in the previous decade.

It's not about being a 'tough guy'

Says Biden on masks as he hits campaign trail after testing negative for coronavirus

REUTERS, Grand Rapids

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said on Friday that President Donald Trump's coronavirus diagnosis shows the importance of taking the pandemic seriously, telling Americans that wearing masks is more important than being a "tough guy."

Biden's remarks as he campaigned in the battleground state of Michigan hours after testing negative twice for the virus, served as an implicit criticism of the Republican president. Trump has played down the deadline of the virus for months, frequently eschews masks and has held campaign rallies of thousands with little social distancing.

Trump's illness put even greater attention on the novel coronavirus pandemic a little more than four weeks before the Nov. 3 election. The president was experiencing mild symptoms and will be off the trail indefinitely.

At a union hall in Grand Rapids, Biden said he and his wife, Jill Biden, were praying that Trump and the first lady, Melania Trump, had a swift and full recovery. He delivered the entire speech while wearing a blue medical mask, a departure from prior events where he typically took off his mask before speaking.



"This is not a matter of politics," Biden said. "It's a bracing reminder to all of us that we have to take this virus seriously. It's not going away automatically."

Biden urged all Americans to follow scientific guidelines, including wearing masks, washing hands frequently and staying 6 feet (1.83 m) apart. Health officials, including the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Robert Redfield, have said masks are a crucial tool for slowing the spread of the virus.

"Be patriotic," Biden said. "It's not about being a tough guy. It's about doing your part."

During Tuesday's chaotic presidential debate, Trump mocked Biden for wearing a mask at his

events, even when he is far away from other people.

Trump's diagnosis is likely to reinforce Biden's message about the president's failed response to the disease, which has killed more than 207,000 people in the United States, and undermine Trump's argument that the end of the pandemic is in sight. Opinion polls show voters trust Biden more than Trump to handle the pandemic.

"It's hard to say 'it's under control' when you fall victim to it," said Democratic strategist Chris Kofinis. "If we are talking about the pandemic for the next four weeks, Donald Trump loses."

As Biden's motorcade traveled through Grand Rapids, dozens of supporters stood along the road waving placards. One woman held a small American flag and a cardboard sign that read, "Masks work."

The Biden campaign is temporarily taking down ads criticizing Trump for his handling of the coronavirus after his diagnosis, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Biden leads Trump in national opinion polls, although surveys in the battleground states that will decide the contest show a closer race. A Reuters/Ipsos poll last month showed Biden leading Trump by 5 percentage points among likely voters in Michigan.

NEWS IN BRIEF

California wildfires threaten towns, wineries

California fire crews deploying water-dropping helicopters made a defensive stand on Friday against flames raging in the foothills of the Napa Valley wine region as forecasts called for a return of dangerous high winds and hot weather this weekend. More than 2,500 firefighters were battling the Glass Fire, which broke out last Sunday near the resort community of Calistoga, some 75 miles (120 km) north of San Francisco, and has already destroyed 248 homes or other structures. Roughly 52,000 residents were under evacuation orders at least through the weekend, with the fire at only 5% containment, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire. The National Weather Service issued red flag warnings for high winds over the next two days.

Russian journalist dies after setting herself on fire

A Russian journalist died on Friday after setting herself on fire in front of the local branch of the interior ministry in the city of Nizhny Novgorod, a day after her apartment was searched by police, her news outlet said. Prior to her self-immolation, Irina Slavina wrote on her Facebook page: "I ask you to blame the Russian Federation for my death." She said they seized notebooks, her laptop and other electronics, as well as her daughter's laptop and her husband's mobile phone. She worked as editor-in-chief at Koza Press, a small local news outlet that advertised itself as having "no censorship, no orders from above". Russia's Investigative Committee said it was opening a preliminary inquiry after a woman self-immolated in Nizhny Novgorod, a city of 1.3 million around 400 km (250 miles) east of Moscow. It did not name Slavina in its statement.

15 killed in east Afghanistan car bomb attack

At least 15 people were killed and more than 30 others wounded in a car bomb attack that targeted a government building in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, officials said. The explosion occurred at an administrative building that also housed some military facilities in the Ghani Khel district of Nangarhar province, the governor's spokesman Attaullah Khogyani told AFP. "The car bomb detonated at the entrance of the district headquarters building. Several armed attackers tried to enter the building after the attack but were killed by security forces," he said. Provincial police spokesman Farid Khan confirmed the details. He said most of the victims were Afghan security force members but several civilians were also among the dead. No one had so far claimed responsibility for the attack but Khan blamed the Taliban.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

OUTRAGE OVER GANGRAPE IN INDIA

Rahul, Priyanka meet victim's family in UP

AGENCIES

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra yesterday met the family of the 20-year-old Dalit woman whose gang rape and murder last month in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras has sparked outrage across India and triggered days of protests.

The visit, involving a dramatic standoff with cops at the Delhi-UP border, was the Congress leaders' second attempt - the first, on Thursday, ended in a tussle with cops who refused to let Gandhi pass, citing orders banning large gatherings amid coronavirus concerns, and shoved him to the ground in the chaos that followed.

A similarly dramatic face-off seemed in store yesterday as Gandhi set off from Delhi at around 2.30pm in a silver Toyota Innova that Gandhi Vadra was driving. Their convoy consisted of around 30 Congress MPs, including Shashi Tharoor. Hathras is around 200 km from Delhi.

"No power in the world can stop me from meeting and sharing the pain of the victim's family of Hathras," he said before leaving, while she told news agency ANI: "If not this time, then we will try again."

After skirmishes with police at the Noida-Delhi border, the UP government allowed Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and two others - KC Venugopal and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury - to cross.

Furious protests against the police and the government have been staged across the country, including one in national capital Delhi on Friday, where CM Arvind Kejriwal made an appearance and demanded that the four accused be executed. The Allahabad High Court has taken notice of the case and has summoned top officials of the government and police to appear before it on October 12. Five senior police officers have been suspended over their handling of the investigation.

Heavy fighting rages over Karabakh

Peace push appears to be failing amid fears of wider conflict

AFP, Stepanakert

Armenian and Azerbaijani forces were engaged in fierce clashes yesterday as fighting over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region intensified after its main city came under heavy shelling.

The leader of the breakaway province said he was heading to the front and that the "final battle" for the region had begun, seven days after new fighting erupted in the decades-old dispute.

Armenia's defence ministry said Karabakh's separatist forces had repelled a "massive attack" by Azerbaijan in one area of the frontline and had launched a counter-offensive. "Heavy fighting is ongoing on other flanks," defence ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanyan said.

Azerbaijan's defence ministry said its forces had "captured new footholds" and that the Armenians had "suffered serious losses in manpower and military hardware". Both sides have been accused of



hitting civilian areas, with Azerbaijan saying yesterday that Armenian artillery had shelled 19 of its settlements overnight.

The Armenian side has reported 158 military deaths and said 14 civilians have been killed. Azerbaijan has reported 19 civilian deaths but has not confirmed any fatalities among its troops.

Russia, the United States and France -- whose leaders co-chair a mediation group that has failed to bring about a political resolution to the conflict --



Rahul Gandhi, leader of India's main opposition Congress party, addresses his party workers at Delhi-Noida border during a protest after the death of a rape victim, in Noida, India, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT CASE

AIIMS report rules out murder theories: sources

NDTV ONLINE

Bollywood Actor Sushant Singh Rajput was not murdered and it is a case of suicide, a team of doctors from Delhi's AIIMS has said in its opinion to CBI, sources have told NDTV, dismissing the theories of poisoning and strangling floated by the actor's family and their lawyer.

The 34-year-old movie star was found dead on June 14 in his Mumbai apartment.

Though the Mumbai police, based on the autopsy, called it a suicide, wild speculation and campaigns of justice on social media and allegations from Sushant Singh Rajput's family raised doubts that became a part of an overall CBI investigation.

Sources said the AIIMS Panel has completed the examination and closed the file after giving conclusive medico-legal opinion in this case and the CBI is corroborating the report with their investigation.

The CBI is likely to continue its probe into "abatement to suicide", the charge that was originally listed by the Bihar Police, sources said. They also said the AIIMS panel has concurred with the opinion of the Mumbai hospital that carried out the autopsy. The Mumbai hospital's autopsy had found "asphyxia due to hanging" as the cause of death.

The CBI investigation began after the family filed a case accusing the actor's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty of mentally harassing him, medicating him, exploiting him for money and playing a role in his death.

Dengue outbreak: where do we stand?

DR ZUBAIR KHALED HUQ

An outbreak is a sudden occurrence of something unwelcome, such as disease. Dengue is a viral infection transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. Dengue fever is marked by an onset of sudden high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, and pain in muscles and joints. Some may also have a rash and varying degree of bleeding from various parts of the body including nose, mouth and gums or skin bruising.

Symptomatic illness can vary from dengue fever to the more serious dengue haemorrhagic fever. Dengue haemorrhagic fever is a more severe form, seen only in a small proportion of those infected. Dengue shock syndrome is a dangerous complication of dengue infection and is associated with high mortality. Severe dengue occurs as a result of secondary infection with a different virus serotype.

Dengue and other mosquito-borne diseases like malaria, Zika virus, chikungunya, yellow fever, among others spread mostly during the monsoon and post-monsoon seasons.

People facing any of the symptoms must rush to a doctor and get the necessary tests done and follow what they are prescribed by the doctor. One should also take adequate rest and increase the intake of liquid. Always keep dengue infected patients covered with mosquito net to prevent spread. Use of mosquito net to protect uninfected persons, if possible, in the daytime.



Rapid and unplanned urbanisation, living conditions for the urban poor and lack of sanitation are all contributing to a surge in numbers of people catching vector-borne diseases. Various awareness drives and campaigns must be carried out on different platforms and health systems are being strengthened to deal with the rising numbers of dengue patients. This year, the dengue fever outbreak may become alarming in Bangladesh where there is panic all over due to COVID-19. While the dengue season generally peaks from May, the density of mosquitoes in the capital has increased manifold compared to last year when the country witnessed the worst dengue outbreak in history.

The primary preventative measure to reduce dengue infections is the control of mosquito populations. The transmission of dengue requires mosquitoes as vectors. One practical and recommended environmental management strategy is to eliminate unnecessary container habitats that collect water such as plastic jars, bottles, cans, tires, and buckets in which mosquito can lay their eggs. When container habitats are removed and water storage containers are covered to prevent mosquitoes from getting inside them, mosquitoes have fewer opportunities to lay eggs and cannot develop through their life stages.

Source reduction can be effective when performed regularly, especially when members of a community are mobilised and educated about vector control. Environmental management initiatives can also include major changes in a community, such as installing water systems with direct connections to residences and replacing wells and other water storage containers, which can be mosquito breeding habitats. Smaller-scale environmental changes can also be effective. For example, mosquito populations can be reduced when all members of a community clear blocked gutters and street drains and keep their yards free of containers with standing water.

In Bangladesh, last year's dengue outbreak was unprecedented. But we have to understand that there is no alternative but to raise awareness in destroying the breeding grounds for mosquitoes to bring the dengue menace to an end.

Climate change and changing patterns of rainfall, humidity is leading to longer breeding spells for the mosquitoes and diminishing disease incubation time. This is leading dengue epidemics to become much more unpredictable in terms of when and where they occur, and their scale, overwhelming our already COVID-19 burdened health system.

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DID YOU KNOW?



Fasting shows no weight-loss benefit over standard meals

Fasting for two thirds of the day does not lead to greater weight loss than eating meals throughout the day, according to a randomised trial in JAMA Internal Medicine.

Roughly 100 overweight or obese adults were assigned to time-restricted eating or consistent meal timing. In the time-restricted group, participants were advised to eat as needed from 12 p.m. until 8 p.m., and then fast for 16 hours until 12 p.m. the next day. In the consistent-meals group, participants were told to eat three structured meals across the day, with snacks as needed. There were no recommendations about caloric intake or physical activity.

At 12 weeks, mean weight loss did not differ significantly between the groups (0.94 kg with time-restricted eating and 0.68 kg with consistent meals). Most secondary outcomes, including changes in fat mass, lipids, and fasting glucose, also did not differ significantly between the groups. Of note, the time-restricted group lost more appendicular lean mass than the consistent-meals group.

The researchers conclude that the findings "do not support the efficacy of [time-restricted eating] for weight loss."

HEALTH bulletin



Radiotherapy following prostate cancer surgery can safely be avoided for many men

Most men receiving surgery for localised and locally advanced prostate cancer can have radiotherapy safely removed from their initial treatment, according to a systematic review and meta-analysis published in The Lancet.

The authors recommend that patients should be closely followed after surgery for treating localised and locally advanced prostate cancer. If the cancer shows early signs of coming back, men should be offered radiotherapy. They say that changing treatment policy in this way may offer the opportunity to spare many men radiotherapy and its associated side effects.

Dr Claire Vale, who led a systematic review and meta-analysis, from the MRC Clinical Trials Unit at University College London, UK, said: "Our findings suggest that following surgery, patients whose cancer is confined to the prostate, or has spread only to nearby tissues or organs, can safely be spared routine post-operative radiotherapy and its associated side effects. Radiotherapy need only be given to men if they show early signs that the cancer may be returning."

Loss of smell to be recognised globally as a symptom of COVID-19

STAR HEALTH DESK

Four out of five people experiencing the recent loss of smell and/or taste tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies—and of those who tested positive, 40 percent did not have cough or fever, reports a new study in PLOS Medicine by Prof. Rachel Batterham at University College London and colleagues.

COVID-19 can cause loss of taste and smell, but the prevalence of COVID-19 antibodies in people reporting these symptoms is unknown, and the significance of loss of smell and/or taste as a predictor of COVID-19 is not well understood. To estimate the seroprevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies in people with acute loss of their sense of smell and/or taste, researchers enrolled 590 people self-reporting a loss of taste/smell in the previous month. Following verification of symptoms via a telemedicine consultation, 567 participants with smell and/or taste loss underwent a SARS-CoV-2 antibodies test.

78% had SARS-CoV-2 antibodies, and participants with loss of smell were almost 3 times more likely to have SARS-CoV-2 antibodies compared to those with loss of taste, suggesting that a loss of smell is a highly specific symptom of COVID-19. Of the 78% of participants testing positive for antibodies, 40% had neither cough nor fever. While the study had limitations, such as the self-reporting of smell/taste changes

and the lack of a control group, the researchers believe the evidence indicates that loss of smell should be taken into greater consideration in COVID-19 public health measures such as testing, case isolation, and treatment strategies.

These findings also have significant implications for policy makers globally, as most countries do not currently recommend self-isolation and testing based on acute loss of smell/taste. This study suggests that an over-reliance on cough and fever as the main symptoms of COVID-19 may be flawed and that loss of smell needs to be urgently recognised globally as a key symptom of COVID-19.

Prof Rachel Batterham, who led the study, said "Early self-recognition of COVID-19 symptoms by the members of the public, together with rapid self-isolation and PCR testing are vital in order to limit spread of the disease. Currently, most countries around the world do not recognise sudden loss of smell as a symptom of COVID-19."

Our findings suggest that people who notice a loss in their ability to smell every day house-hold odors such as garlic, coffee and perfumes should self-isolate and seek PCR testing. Loss of sense of smell needs to be recognised globally by policy makers as a key symptom of COVID-19."



Evercare Hospital Dhaka celebrates World Heart Day

STAR HEALTH REPORT

The Paediatric Cardiology Department of Evercare Hospital Dhaka celebrated the "World Heart Day 2020" by continuing low-cost packages for underprivileged children with congenital heart diseases such as Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA), Atrial Septal Defect (ASD), and Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD).

Dr Tahera Nazrin, Clinical & Interventional Paediatric Cardiologist, Akhter Jamil Ahmed, General Manager, Business Development, Dr Azmeri and other doctors and staffs were present at the occasion with children having heart diseases.

The treatment is undertaken with state-of-the-art modern technology without any surgical procedure. During this COVID-19 pandemic time Dr Tahera counselled parents regarding personal hygiene and prevention of the corona virus.



Rumors and Misconceptions Unveiled

Can COVID – 19 be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates?

- The COVID- 19 virus can be transmitted in any climate, including areas with hot and humid weather.

The best and most effective way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by maintaining physical distance of at least 1 metre from others and frequently cleaning your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or washing them with soap and water.

By doing this you eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth and nose.

Can cold weather kill the new corona virus?

- There is no reason to believe that cold weather can kill the new corona virus or other diseases.

The normal human body temperature remains around 36.5 to 37 °C, regardless of the external temperature or weather.

Public awareness by:



In Search of Excellence

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY OCTOBER 4, 2020, ASHWIN 19, 1427 BS

Harargoj Reserve Forest being leased out for tea plantation!

Correct the land records, save the forest from destruction

WHILE we have been continuously writing in this newspaper about the urgent need to save our forests from land grabbers—big companies and other local powerful quarters, and environmentalists have been trying to make the government, people and all concerned aware about the disastrous impacts of forest destruction, unfortunately, forest grabbing has been going on unabated. A report in this daily on October 3 has revealed how a part of a reserve forest in Sylhet's Moulvibazar is in the process of being leased out to a private company for tea plantation.

In 1921, 12,019 acres of unsurveyed forestland in Sylhet district of Colonial Assam was declared the "Harargoj Reserve Forest" and the Forest Department has been protecting the forest for almost a century. The 2,174.35 acres of land in the middle of the reserve forest became a disputed land between the local Forest Department and administration after a digital land survey in 2013 recorded the part of the forest as "khas land" and classified as "hilllock", meaning that this land can be leased. Although the forest department filed a case with the Land Survey Tribunal against this wrong classification of the land, the case has not been disposed of yet.

In the meantime, several tea companies were vying for getting a lease of the land and one leading tea producer managed to get the green signal from the PMO with the condition of case disposal. According to forest officials and green activists, the local offices concerned have misled the highest office regarding giving the lease to the company. Such a lease would eventually lead to the destruction of the whole reserve forest. Therefore, we think the government should move away from such a decision.

It is the constitutional duty of the government to save this forest. And not only this particular forest, the government should also give priority to saving all our remaining forests. We have only 11.2 percent forest area left in the country (according to an ADB report in 2016) which is much less than what we need for a proper ecological balance. We cannot afford to lose any more.

US President testing positive is another crisis for the US

What will happen to the upcoming elections?

US President Trump and the First Lady testing Covid-19 positive is a crisis that Americans least expected just about a month away from Election Day. After months of practically underplaying the seriousness of the pandemic causing unnecessary confusion among the American public and contributing to a phenomenal 200,000 deaths, the president, who has often refused to wear a mask in public and even mocked his rival Joe Biden for wearing one, has now himself been infected by the virus. This may have significant implications for the upcoming elections and for the US's national security.

At this point it is not clear how serious the president's symptoms are and whether they may become more severe in the coming days. But his sudden illness is having a jittery effect in the already devastated economy and on the public, especially Trump supporters who may now have to rethink their defiance of all the safety guidelines put out by the CDC and the constant rejection of the scientific analysis of the virus. In terms of the elections a great deal of uncertainty looms ahead.

For one thing the president's intense campaigning and visits to various key states will have to come to a halt while the Democratic candidate's campaign may pick up giving Biden an advantage. At the polls Biden has enjoyed a lead over Trump and this may continue as more people become disenchanted with Trump's poor handling of the pandemic that has led to him, his wife and his staffers becoming infected.

But there is also the question of whether the election schedule will have to be changed if the health of the president deteriorates. That would create even more complications as early voting has already begun. Would those votes be counted? If the president recovers quickly which would be a relief to all no matter which side of the political fence, the other issue would be the acceptance of election results by Trump and his supporters if Biden wins. President Trump has continuously implied the possibility of voter fraud, discrediting mail-in-voting which have always been an acceptable method and also more popular with Democrats especially at this time. Now, even his own supporters may opt for this method seeing that the president has contracted the infection after disregarding basic safety guidelines of wearing a mask and social distancing. So if that happens, will Trump and his supporters continue to cast doubt on mail-in-votes and ultimately the legitimacy of the results?

Democrats themselves will be in a dilemma regarding the tone of their campaign now which would have originally included harsher criticism of Trump. Now that public sympathy will tilt towards Trump, Democrats may have to restrain themselves from being overly aggressive in their attacks.

Future debates between the presidential candidates has also become quite uncertain. At this point the fate of the elections seem to rely on the health of the American President. In a country plagued by intense polarisation, deteriorating race relations and the devastating health and economic effects of the pandemic, having its president ill just before elections will push it further into uncertainty. For the sake of the US democracy, of which free and fair elections is a vital component, President Trump's quick recovery is necessary.

How to rein in "wilful defaulters" and eradicate the curse of non-performing loans



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

Bank, Sonali/Hallmark, Janata, Prime, and a motley of other shady characters including some leading industrialists of the country.

However, the wounds created by the non-performing loans (NPL) fester—they not only affect the health of the economy but also have a crippling effect on legitimate loan-seekers. It is now high time for all stakeholders to get on the case of the loan defaulters in a serious manner and stop extending a lifeline to them for the umpteenth time and neuter the spread of this cancer on our body economic.

Bangladesh Bank (BB) has over time flip-flopped on NPLs and recently announced a moratorium on loan payments until September 30, 2020 which implied that such borrowers will not be in default. Now that it's October it is believed that this moratorium will be extended.

"It is a temporary relief—the negative situation will come back in a very dreadful way," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute. As a long-term solution, a number of policy measures is in order. First of all, corporate governance should be strengthened and careful due diligence followed in lending decisions by banks. Secondly, in line with the Chapter 11 protocol followed in the USA, the existing Bankruptcy Act, 1997 of Bangladesh, a legal framework for dealing with NPLs should be enforced. Thirdly, there has to be rigorous enforcement of the present banking rules and regulations including the stipulation of secured collaterals to mitigate the risks associated with loans. Finally, authorities could also consider establishing a national asset management corporation (AMC) like the Republic of Korea's KAMCO or Malaysia's Danaharta to take over NPLs from ailing banks.

Study after study conducted around the globe with multi-country data show that NPL administration is a policy gone awry and creates and fosters a situation known as "moral hazards". In economics, moral hazard occurs when an entity has an incentive to increase its exposure to risk because it does not bear the full costs of that risk. For example, when a

business is aware that its loans will be written off or its default will not result in any consequences, it may take on higher risk or decide not to repay loans if it knows that the government or others will pay the associated costs. In the language of economics, the cost-benefit ratio of complying (i.e. paying back the loan) is higher than the cost-benefit ratio of non-compliance.

Every business owner and policymaker I have spoken with on this matter is unanimous about the environment that "forgiveness of loans" has created. Let it be said that the problem of "wilful defaulters" is not limited to Bangladesh but is a phenomenon that is prevalent in many countries. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh there is no specific law for legal action against wilful defaulters.

I looked up the protocols followed in other countries to characterise or classify defaulters. Since India is coming to terms with a high NPL ratio comparable to

In Bangladesh, on the other hand, from 2011 to 2019, there has been a steady rise in the volume of NPL and, according to the latest estimate, classified loans had crossed the one trillion mark by March 2019 and has been hovering near 10 percent.

We have witnessed some positive developments recently. As of December 2019, loans disbursed by the banks stood at over Tk 10.11 trillion, and the amount of default loan was Tk 943.31 billion, or 9.32 percent of the total credit, down from 10.30 from the previous year. However, the 41 private banks together had defaulted loans amounting to Tk 44,174 crore, up 16 percent from a year earlier.

The World Bank tracks country level governance using scales for corruption, regulator quality, government effectiveness and rule of law. Newly collected data on non-performing loan (NPL) in more than 190 countries over 27 years clearly supports the proposition that

added, "If these businesses are allowed to get rescheduling facility again, it will be 'illegal'."

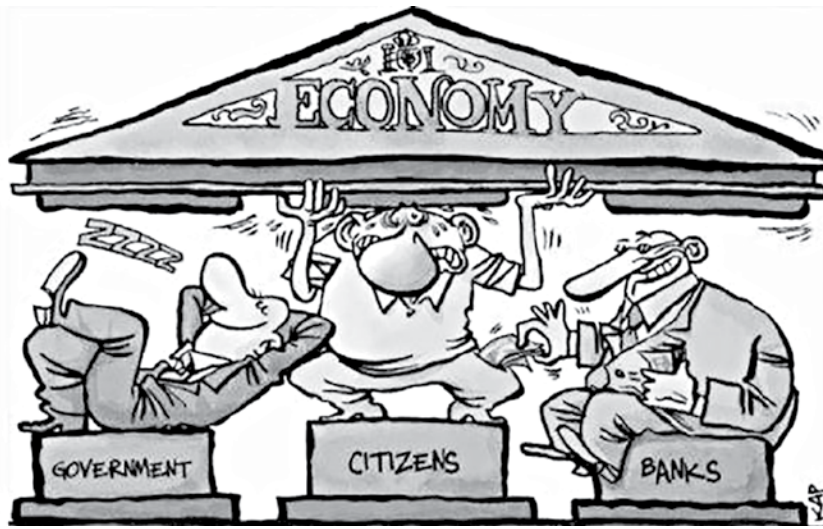
In an innovative study in Italy, researchers analysed the empirical frequency with which borrowers delay repayment to their lenders. It reveals that firms choose to delay payment to some banks depending on the latter's health. This selective delay occurs more where legal enforcement of collateral recovery is slow. "Poor enforcement encourages borrowers not to pay when the value of their bank relationship comes into doubt. Selective delays occur even by firms able to pay all lenders. Credit losses in Italy have thus been worsened by the combination of weak banks and weak legal enforcement."

Japan faced a situation very similar to Bangladesh and an investigation on the widespread practice of banks that lent to otherwise insolvent firms documents the prevalence of "forbearance lending and show its distorting effects on healthy firms that were competing with the impaired firms."

The impact of the culture of default, rescheduling, and forbearance is crippling to the growth of the economy and healthy practices. According to an earlier World Bank study, bribes collected by bank officials in case of project loans were sometimes linked with local-level project officers. In case of commercial loans, the bankers not only collected bribes amounting to "1.0 percent to 5.0 percent" of the loan amount but also received occasional gifts, hospitality, or entertainment from clients which is still quite rampant in the state-controlled banks. Working capital loans involved a payment of 1.0 percent to 5.0 percent of the credit to bank managers, employees and trade union leaders. A Transparency International, Bangladesh study points out that 73.5 percent of the respondent households agreed that it was almost impossible to get credit from banks without bribe or influence.

What are the options for Bangladesh? One does not have to look far, but to consider the recommendations made by a six-member committee formed in early 2019 comprising of the Ministry of Finance and BB, which include the formation of an AMC in the private sector, creation of a secondary market for NPLs, setting up a separate data warehouse for NPLs under the existing facilities of the Credit Information Bureau of BB, and a tax rebate facility for traders of the default loans that remain under consideration.

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Bangladesh, I looked up the approach taken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to flag "wilful defaulters". These are: ability to pay, misallocation, diversion of funds, and sale of collaterals.

Interestingly all the four yardsticks apply to the defaulters in Bangladesh. In many other countries including the USA, some of the above actions by a borrower would be considered "money laundering", which is a criminal offence. In the case of Bangladesh, borrowers are known to transfer the borrowed money to accounts overseas.

For purposes of comparison, in the USA, during the last two decades, the average value of NPL as a percentage of all bank loans was 2.56 percent with a minimum of 0.91 percent in 2018 and a maximum of 4.96 percent in 2009. The latest value from 2018 is 0.91 percent.

growing wilful defaults are significantly impacted by the low quality of country-level governance.

Wilful defaulters are a unique breed who borrow and forget to return the item. Economists are increasingly zeroing in on the defaulters to identify their characteristics using sophisticated tools, including econometric modelling and publicly available data. Studies done in the USA, Italy, and India reveal that that wilful default is a borrower's deliberate exploitation of weak governance structure prevailing in the country.

Given the generous policy support afforded to delinquent borrowers in the past, many good borrowers are tempted to default, said Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, a former deputy governor of the central bank. He urged the BB to crack down on habitual defaulters with fervour, and

RTI requests and the reality on the ground

BIPOB KARMAKAR and SREEDHAM KARMAKAR

AS activists, we have filed RTI request to almost all kinds of offices, from union parishad, the lowest level of administration, to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the highest level of administration. Here are some examples of how the various government offices responded to these applications.

Let's start with the PMO. Any Indian can know the details of their PM's foreign trips online. But there is no such mechanism in Bangladesh. In 2017 we filed an RTI request to know how many people travelled with the PM during her annual visits to the UN office in New York, during 2010-2015, how many of them had office order to serve the duty, how many of them had no office order, those who had no office orders, their short bios and expenses incurred in each tour. The response was documents containing unnecessary information with nothing on the office orders, expenses, and the identities of companions who were not on duty (See decision 03/2017).

Some applicants sought information from Bipular Union Parishad. They didn't receive information and that's why they filed complaints repeatedly. But the information commission asked for the applicants' police verification and after receiving police verification, issued a decision where they declared that the applicant had received the information sought (See decision 254/2017 and 132/2018).

We had sought monthly meeting minutes of the information commission (IC) from the year 2018 till date. IC wrote that some decisions had been given saying that the applicants had received information although they hadn't. We filed an RTI application to IC to know on what basis they wrote the decision that the applicant got the information and asked for a copy. The IC could not respond to these queries.

Article 9(4) says, "Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1) and (2), if a request made under sub-section (1) of section 8 is relating to the life and death, arrest and release from jail of any person, the officer-in-charge shall provide preliminary information thereof within 24 (twenty-four) hours." On many occasions and TV talk shows, commissioners were asked by journalists and others in how many cases they

helped to retrieve information for the victim's family within 24 hours. They completely denied that anyone had filed such complaint to them. But we had filed this complaint and didn't get information in time under this section (See decision 91/2018).

We asked a question to a commissioner if any authority doesn't provide any information within 24 hours, what can a citizen do. They replied that they had to wait for 20 days, then file an appeal and wait for another 10 days, then complain to the IC. On the contrary, CIC of Nepal had informed us that they have called both parties immediately after 24 hours of receiving such complaints.

There are other problems to filing RTI complaints. The first is that the name and designation of the designated officer (DOs) is not available. If DOs name is not written properly, the IC rejects the application. Although IC's website contains name and designation of DOs, in 95 percent cases the officer named in the website is not in the stated position. After 10 years of the RTI Act there are still some organisations that do not have a DO, but according to the Act, a DO has to be recruited within 60 days. Our highest judicial authority, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, has no DO. No citizen or practitioner can file RTI to get information from there. When someone approached the IC to know the name of the DO of Supreme Court, they gave the name of a person who had already retired.

Another hurdle is knowing when a hearing is to take place. Previously, an applicant would get a call from the IC the day before the hearing. This call would help the person filing the request in case a summons letter was somehow missed. But that is no longer the case (See decision 45/2019). If the applicant is absent, the IC dismisses the case. In 2018, half the cases were dismissed on the ground that the applicant was absent. On the day of the hearing, defaulted DOs are entertained as guests, whereas commissioners reprimand applicants and ask unnecessary and irrelevant questions.

So far, only 15-20 decisions have been written with proper reasoning as per compliance with RTI Act 2009. From 2018, not a single decision has been found which has been written and explained as per legal terms of the RTI Act 2009. In certain cases, commissioners have directed DO to supply information within 10-15 days but wrote in their

decisions that the applicant has already received information. They have also written in the decision that the applicant has said that they have received the information.

There are problems with the recruitment of commissioners also. All commissioners are supposed to be recruited as prescribed by a committee which was formed under article 14(1) of the Act. But the selection process is not transparent. Article 15(5) says, "Subject to the provisions of this section, the Chief Information Commissioner and the Information Commissioners shall be appointed from amongst the persons with broad knowledge and experience in law, justice, journalism, education, science, technology, information, social service, management, or public administration." To ensure the quality of each candidate as per the act, we don't know what type of steps the selection committee had taken to appoint candidates.

According to complaint no 93/2013, IC had imposed punishment on the applicant instead of DO. According to complaint no 132/2018, the commission had issued police inquiry against the applicant. According to complaint no 60/2016, the commission had asked the applicant the reason for seeking information. Although there is no such provision in RTI Act to conduct hearing in presence of only one party—the applicant, IC did this for a couple of years. After filing a writ petition (WP), single party hearing was challenged in high court and has now stopped.

The legal term "sub-judice" is wrongly explained. The Farooq commission termed a lawyer's letter as sub-judice. According to 7(k) "any matter pending before any court of law and which has been expressly forbidden to be published by any court of law or tribunal or the disclosure of which may constitute contempt of court". The words "forbidden to be published by any court" are very important. According to WP 9380/2014, high court had directed stay order on some information on the 29th BCS. But now if any BCS examinee seek any information for other BCS exams, PSC refer to this WP and the information is denied. When an examinee approaches IC, they reject it on "sub-judice" ground.

A few years back, IBA of Dhaka University took an exam of already recruited upazila election commission officers. Single digit officers proved

themselves fit for their position out of more than 100. Only those who passed survived, others had to quit. An open book written exam may be taken before recruiting commissioners.

An idle CIC and activist

Shailesh Gandhi was an Indian former CIC who had taken a salary of one rupee. He had recruited some students from various fields as interns and they sat in the hearing room with laptops. Thus he spent his remaining salary as remuneration to interns. At the time of hearing, students wrote decisions simultaneously. When the hearing ended, Mr Gandhi had requested both parties to wait for 20 mins in the waiting room. During this time, he scrutinised the decision, signed it and handed it over to both parties.

After retirement, he filed RTI requests, attended training sessions for interested citizens and writes on loopholes regularly in social and mainstream media. We had asked for information to IC whether any former commissioners file any RTI, and if so, to provide us a copy. They replied negatively.

Unfortunately, we have neither found such a CIC nor active activist in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, IC is unable to retrieve information from organisations like PSC, Buet, UGC, Bar council, Thana, NHRC, railways and many more. Although the commission has enough power to take action both by compensating DOs, by giving reparation to deprived complainants, and recommending punishments for errant DOs, they do nothing. IC approves time petition for DOs multiple times, but rejects the same for applicants. IC is impartial to fine fourth class DOs, they don't take action against DOs whose designation is higher.

In Sri Lanka, There is no provision to fine a DO. But when a DO cannot supply information on a citizen's request, it must be published in the mainstream media and that DO is termed as a "corrupt" officer. In India and Sri Lanka, mainstream media publish the news on RTI with great importance. In 2018, on the eve of RTI day, editors organisation "Sampadak Parishad" in a meeting, had promised to allocate a page and publish the news on RTI regularly. So far that has not materialised either.

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Power and influence cannot save rapists

Our leaders must send this message out loud and clear!



SHILPROVA TASNEM

ON the first day of this month, a class 4 student of a madrasa in Teknaf was forced into a classroom by one of her teachers and raped. The child

managed to go home to her mother, but fainted from blood loss right after, and is still receiving treatment at hospital. The accused teacher was arrested on the same night.

On September 30, six rapists entered a house in Savar and gang raped a housewife. According to the rape survivor, one of these men had been stalking her for some time before the attack occurred. So far, three out of the six rapists have been arrested.

On September 29, a 22-year-old domestic worker from Cumilla was taken by her employer to a Dhaka residence, where she was allegedly raped by a member of the ruling party's student wing. While her employer discussed the payment for "selling" her body to this man (she was apparently bargaining for Tk 10,000), the rape survivor escaped and filed a case at Mirpur police station, after which both of the accused were arrested.

One could go on and on, but even a cursory glance at media reports makes one thing extremely clear—sexual violence against women is an everyday occurrence in Bangladesh, and these are only the reported incidents. According to Ain O Salish Kendra, 975 cases of rape have been reported so far this year, with 208 of them being gang rapes.

Of these, the gang rape of a woman in a hostel of Murari Chand (MC) College in Sylhet, while her husband was kept hostage, has been at the centre of a media storm since the attack occurred on September 25. The reason behind the continued focus on this specific case is not just the gruesome

and abhorrent nature of the crime, but the identity of the perpetrators—all of the accused are alleged to be activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).

Media reports have now shed plenty of light on the activities of the accused and how they used the hostel as their "den", despite only one of the suspects being a student of the college and a legal resident of the hostel. Weapons have been recovered from one of the rooms, and reports have emerged of College and hostel authorities who turned a blind eye to these anti-social activities. Present and former BCL leaders and activists have testified to a split between the two main factions of BCL in the area, leading to a steady stream of clashes and a shift towards thuggery in certain groups. One local BCL activist, under the condition of anonymity, told reporters that, "the group [accused of raping] often engaged in extortion and harassed women on campus."

This perhaps strikes at the very core of the epidemic of sexual violence that has spread across our nation—it is high time we stop ignoring the fact that these hundreds of cases are often perpetrated by those who are able to act with impunity, confident of escaping the consequences of their actions either because of their own "power", or their proximity to those who have it. If you can brazenly continue to sexually harass women on a college campus and get away with it, what is stopping you from taking it further and raping them? If you have "powerful" friends who will help cover up your tracks—as was the case of the UP chairman in Mahalchhari upazila in Khagrachhari, who prevented an underage indigenous rape survivor's family from taking legal action, took the law into his own hands and fined the rapist a measly Tk 10,000 instead for violating a child—then what is stopping you from repeating these violent acts? If you're confident that you are strong and your victim is "weak", not just physically but in terms of economic and social capital; and that

the authorities in charge of maintaining the rule of law are either complacent or suggestible, then what is the limit to the laws you think you are allowed to break? And finally, once you figure out the laws of the land do not apply to you and you can abuse your power in the most monstrous of ways—by violating another human being's body without facing any consequences—then who will answer for creating monsters

activists from across the country have made public statements condemning violence against women.

However, as well-meaning as these condemnations may be, they are not enough. If women in this country are to be convinced that this show of support is more than just knee-jerk reactions, BCL units across the country should investigate every one of their own members and activists who have

against women and children result in a conviction, according to a 2019 report by the Women and Children Repression Prevention tribunal from five districts.

If the statistics from the aforementioned report are anything to go by now, that means that at most, only 30 of this year's 975 rape survivors (so far) will get justice for being on the receiving end of the worst kind of violence. Will the survivor of the gang at MC College be one of these "fortunate" 30? Will the handling of this case set a precedent for all those responsible for ensuring justice for rape survivors? And most importantly, will the authorities send a loud and clear message to all potential rapists across the country on how no amount of power can ever allow abuse and misuse to this extent?

Bangladesh is a country that was borne out of horrific sexual violence perpetrated by the Pakistani military forces. Yet Bangladesh's response to this violence was one of the most profound moments of humanity in our national history—these women were acknowledged as *Birangana* and later as freedom fighters, and when Bangabandhu found that many of the survivors of sexual violence were being cast out by their neighbours and families, he famously said, "Put down my name as their father's name if anyone asks after their family background, and write their address as Dhanmondi 32. How will I ever repay the sacrifices that my daughters have made during the Liberation War?"

The Father of the Nation treated rape survivors with the honour and dignity they deserved. It doesn't matter how quickly we become a middle-income nation or how high our remittances and export earnings are—we will never be the country he dreamed of if sexual violence continues to be an everyday occurrence in Bangladesh.

Shilprova Tasneem is a member of the editorial team at *The Daily Star*. Her Twitter handle is @shilprovatasnem



According to Ain O Salish Kendra, 975 cases of rape have been reported so far this year, with 208 of them being gang rapes.

like you?

The current status of the MC College rape investigation shows that a little political will goes a long way. Let us not forget that it was a former organising secretary of BCL's Sylhet unit who eventually came to the couple's rescue and alerted the police to the crime that had occurred. The home minister vowed that none of those involved in the rape "will be spared" and despite initial hiccups in arresting the perpetrators—which included allegations that a certain group of local leaders were trying to help them evade the police—all are now in custody. Local ruling party leaders have conveniently distanced themselves from these men, and BCL leaders and

such allegations against them. We must remember that in a society as conservative as ours, it is no easy feat for women to come forward with their stories of abuse. The case of 19 year old Nusrat Jahan Rafi, who was burned to death after speaking out against her abuser, shows just how vulnerable even the strongest survivors can be.

An extremely grim silver lining (if we can call it that) to this hideous status quo is that more of these crimes are now being reported to the police and more importantly, steps are being taken by the security forces to arrest the culprits. However, that does not change the fact that conviction rates are shamefully low—only three percent of cases relating to violence

The grave implications of another Trump presidency

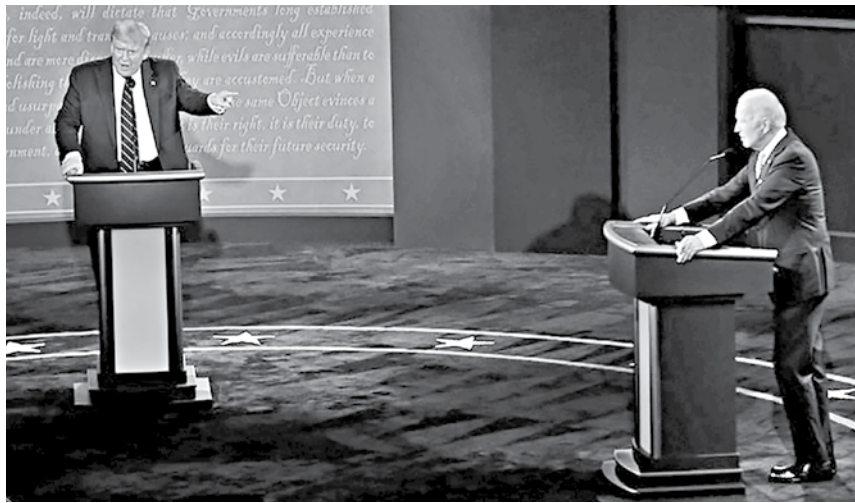
ABDUL HANNAN

IF the recently concluded presidential debate is of any indication, the consequences of electing president Trump for a second term is a foregone conclusion—an irreparable damage to democracy. Trump was predictably belligerent and combative, interrupting Joe Biden time after time, despite the appeals of moderator Chris Wallace for restraint. He was more interested in mud-slinging Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden, than he was answering questions on national issues like healthcare, economy and the ravages of the coronavirus. He refused to pledge that he will accept the election result even if he lost. He spoke of unfounded vote rigging and fraud by mail-in-voting.

It is not mail-in-voting but Trump himself who is a threat to a free and fair election. The debate foreshadows consequences of his win—a repeat performance of his first term with more vengeance.

His domestic policy was an unmitigated disaster, scarred by his flip-flopping and meddling in administrative rules and regulations, democratic practices and conventions. He destroyed and dismantled democratic institutions riding roughshod with the congress, judiciary and the media. He subverted democracy by running the administration using his presidential executive orders and side-lining congress and abridging the constitution.

Under Trump, the White House has been mired in chaos. He treated the White House as a revolving door for constant arrivals and quick and disgraceful exits of his advisors and



US President Donald Trump and Democratic Presidential candidate Joe Biden during the first presidential debate in Cleveland, Ohio, September 29, 2020.

PHOTO: AFP

top administrators. He did away with his communications staff, Sean Spicer, Sarah Sanders and Anthony Scaramucci in quick succession. The list of the fallen, fired or resigned is long and never ending, exceeding 37 including heavyweights like Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defence James Mattis, National Security advisors HR McMaster, John Bolton and Michael Flynn, Chief of Staff John Kelly, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, strategist Steve Bannon, et al. Bob Woodward in his book "Rage" Quotes James Mattis as having described Trump as "dangerous" and "unfit".

The economy under Trump is in tatters because of his inept handling of the coronavirus crisis. Twenty million people have been thrown out of employment, homes and are without food on the table. Two hundred

thousand manufacturing jobs have been wiped out, the stock market is in a state of constant turmoil, shocks and shudders. Tax cuts were only for the rich and wealthy, trade deficit is at an all-time high, budget deficit has reached three trillion dollars. Economic growth is not about data only but about people at the end of the day.

Trump's foreign policy (if any), inconsistent and lopsided as it was, based on his instincts and impulses rather than strategy or principles, was a fiasco. His brand of "unilateralism, his mantra of "America first" denouncing multilateralism, shredded America's international relations. His extreme protectionist policy sent shockwaves towards America's trading partners. He alienated America's traditional allies in the west when he imposed tariffs on USD 7.5 billion worth of EU goods,

showed contempt for NATO and made disparaging remarks about French President Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He pulled out of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. Yet, the climate crisis in America continues to worsen. Hurricanes and rising temperatures are more frequent than ever. The west coast is in flames. He abandoned the Iran Nuclear deal, clinched by five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany and EU. He withdrew disdainfully from the World Health Organization, UNESCO, UNFPA and UN Human Rights Council. He downsized the State Department.

There is increasing international concern over Trump's Iran and China obsession, which may turn into a major military confrontation, even a nuclear war, wittingly or unwittingly. His three meetings with Supreme Leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-Un, failed and was motivated more by his political ambition—to add to his credentials as an achiever in peace-making, rather than by larger national interests.

Trump muzzled the press. He scoffed at the media as being the "enemy of the people", claiming that they and others were dishing out what he described as "fake news, hoax and witch hunts". He only valued "alternative facts". Many claim Trump is a compulsive liar. His own elder sister, Maryanne Trump, a retired federal judge, said that he lies. His niece Mary Trump in her book "Too much and never enough" said that he cheated on his college admission tests. Former secretary of state Colin Powell said that he lies all the time. He lied to people when he played down the severity of the threat of the coronavirus, describing it as just like any other

flu which will disappear soon. He continued to hold campaign rallies without precautionary measures. The result is the needless loss of more than 200,000 American lives, the highest anywhere. He abdicated his leadership when it was most needed.

Despite his bizarre and dismal record, chances of Trump succeeding cannot be underestimated because of his mastery and skill over electioneering strategy and craftsmanship. His propaganda offensive is his base. Also, Trump's campaign slogan "Make America great again" appeals to extreme nationalists who have racial and anti-immigrant bias. Besides, the flawed policy of electing American presidents through the electoral college system, rather than the universally accepted popular votes, may be a determining factor in his favour—as happened in the 2016 election.

Joe Biden's campaign, in stark contrast to Trump's, is timid and faltering as he is strictly adhering to health rules by wearing masks and social distancing and addressing his audiences through virtual media. Besides, he is no match for Trump in disseminating disinformation.

Yet, Americans would be playing a risky game if they choose to elect President Trump for a second term with his proven track record of being incompetent and disruptive, unprincipled and intemperate. But Americans deserve better. They deserve reincarnation of the values of honesty and integrity, truth and justice, decency, dignity and honour in the high office of the hallowed majesty of American Presidency.

Abdul Hannan is a former diplomat.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

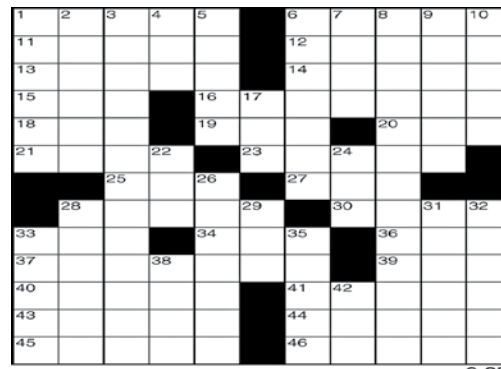


OCTOBER 4, 1957
Sputnik 1 launched by USSR

On this day in 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite, which orbited Earth until 1958, inaugurated the space age, and heightened Cold War competition between the USSR and the US.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Messing on TV
 - 6 Winter gliders
 - 11 Franc replacers
 - 12 True
 - 13 Small nails
 - 14 "Hello" singer
 - 15 Gun, as a motor
 - 16 Parsons of film
 - 18 Mamie's mate
 - 19 Young one
 - 20 Put away
 - 21 Joined the choir
 - 23 Yertle's creator
 - 25 Long, long time
 - 27 Hosp. workers
 - 28 Feel faint
 - 30 Gloss targets
 - 33 Despondent
 - 34 Brick carrier
- DOWN**
- 1 Wreckage
 - 2 Cry of discovery
 - 3 Aldous Huxley novel
 - 4 Retina part
 - 5 Useful skill
 - 6 Like louvers
 - 7 Ore source
 - 8 Aldous Huxley novel
 - 9 Cowboys' home
 - 10 Winter weather
 - 17 Urgent call
 - 22 Sticky stuff
 - 24 Online address
 - 26 Bad racetrack choice
 - 28 Raid
 - 29 Neither follower
 - 31 Like quilts
 - 32 Goes 80
 - 33 Rosters
 - 35 Train stop
 - 38 Network junction
 - 42 John, in Jersey

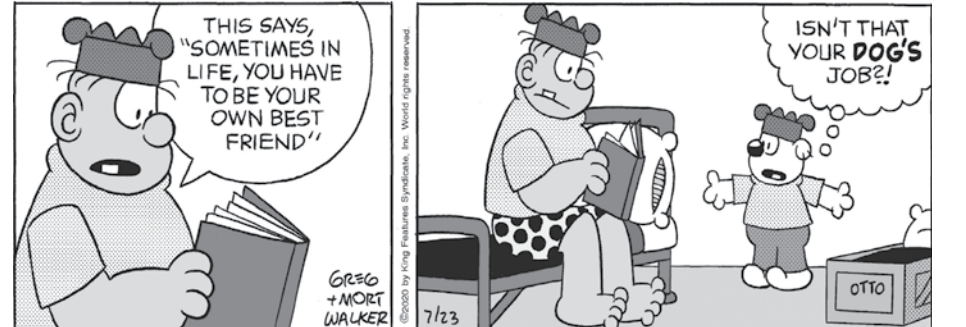


YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



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

China won't

FROM PAGE 12
a half acres of khas land -- one and a half acre for cultivation and one acre for homestead -- to landless peasants. Peasants receiving these khas lands would have to till their land through agriculture cooperative system. The government is determined to bring about revolutionary land reform in the country, adds the minister.

Sources: October 5, 1972 issues of Daily Observer, Dainik Ittefaq and Dainik Bangla.

Flood

FROM PAGE 12
for the next few days," he said.

The official, however, said he was not sure about how long this trend would continue.

Due to the swelling of the Jamuna river, the water level in the Fulzore, Karatoa and other small rivers in the district was also on the rise, Rafiqul added.

Sirajganj is seeing fourth round of flooding this year, with the latest floods hitting the district four days ago.

According to the agriculture department, flooding has so far damaged Ropa Amon paddy on 3,406 hectares, black gram on 931 hectares, winter vegetable on 234 hectares, ground nut on 80 hectares, and green chili on 68 hectares in the district.

Abdur Rahim, district relief and rehabilitation officer, said most of the low-lying areas of Sirajganj Sadar, Kazipur, Belkuchi, Shahzadpur and Chowhali upazilas have gone under.

Five out of nine upazilas of the district have been hit by floods so far.

20 more die

FROM PAGE 12
Among the 20 newly deceased, 17 were males and three were females. All of them died in hospitals, according to the press release.

One of them was aged below 10 years, three were aged between 41 and 50, six between 51 and 60 and the highest 10 were above 60.

One each was from Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions, three were from Rangpur and Chattogram, and the highest 12 were from Dhaka division.

So far, more than half of all deceased were from Dhaka division.

As of yesterday, a total of 2,667 patients were undergoing treatment in general beds and 286 were in ICU beds in Covid-19 dedicated hospitals across the country.

Man 'murdered'

FROM PAGE 12
The eight are Fatullah Model Police Station Sub-Inspector Mizanur Rahman, Detective Branch SI Mizanur Rahman, SI Safiqur Rahman, SI Ashraf Islam, Inspector Mohammad Afzal Hossain Talukder, Narayanganj Criminal Investigation Department SI Ziauddin Ujjal and two other senior officers.

Police had submitted the charge sheet in the case against six accused on December 18 last year.

According to the charge sheet, Mamun's maternal cousin Taslima called him out of his house and proposed to marry him. As he refused the proposal, the accused made him unconscious by letting him drink soft drinks mixed with a sedative and took him to an unknown place.

However, Taslima denied the allegation and said Mamun went missing after she had denied to accept his proposal to develop a relationship with him.

India's

FROM PAGE 12
At the same time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is pressing ahead with opening up Asia's third-largest economy even as virus cases surge.

A strict lockdown imposed in March not only failed to stop the spread of the virus but also caused misery for millions of people suddenly left jobless.

In the last quarter, the Indian economy -- which even before the pandemic was struggling -- shrank 24 percent, one of the steepest drops of any major economy.

International commercial flights remain suspended although limited services, many to allow citizens to return to their home countries, have been operating.

Trains, metros, domestic flights, markets and restaurants have already reopened or resumed service, with some restrictions.

On Wednesday, the government said that all schools could re-open along with cinemas and swimming pools, subject to certain conditions.

Uttar Pradesh state, home to 200 million people, is allowing religious events from October 15, clearing the way for major gatherings in India's upcoming festive season.

The state of Bihar will allow its 70 million voters to cast ballots in upcoming elections, one of the biggest to take place worldwide since the pandemic began.

Dildar Singh Rana, 57, said the hospitality industry that he works in has seen "destruction" and has no choice but to open up despite the health risks.

"The virus is on the rampage... But we fear losing out to rivals with deep pockets so we have to venture out and start our business," he told AFP.



This general view shows a partially submerged truck in the River Vesubie at Roquebilliere, south-eastern France, yesterday. One person died and authorities listed some 20 as missing after heavy storms lashed southern France and northern Italy with hundreds of aid workers deployed to villages cut off by the deluge.

PHOTO: AFP

Million years on rock record

FROM PAGE 12
As the rocks are exposed to the surface, and Jaflong as a whole has become vulnerable due to uncontrolled extraction of stones, geologists and environments have been calling for protection of these precious resources.

An initiative to establish the country's first geological museum at the site was also planned years ago. But the progress is slow as the authorities are yet to finish acquisition of land which is under threat of grabbing and illegal mineral extraction.

Dr Syed Humayun Akhter, geology professor at Dhaka University, said, "In 2009, when I was the chairman of the department, I urged the then secretary of the Energy and Mineral Resources Division to protect the geo-heritage and establish a geological museum there."

He added, "The geo-resource visible near the river was exposed millions of years ago, when the Indian plate collided with the Eurasian plate. It has been a research ground for students of geology and natural science, even for the petroleum and mining industry experts. Such geo-heritage should not be destroyed by any means but must be protected."

After Dr Humayun's letter, the Energy and Mineral Resources Division instructed the Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB) to take necessary steps in this regard.

A committee led by the then director general Dr Nehal Uddin was formed with Dr Humayun and officials from different government wings as its members.

The committee in its report in May 2010 recommended protecting the geo-heritage and establishing a geological museum there, said Md Nuruddin Sarker, director (geology) of GSB.

"In the first phase, we are acquiring 10 acres of land and will start the acquiring process of the rest of the land later. The committees formed regarding the museum will start working for a detailed project after the land acquiring is completed," he

added.
In 2015, Jaflong, in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila, was declared an ecologically critical area by the Department of Environment.

Later in January 2017, the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources declared 22.59 acres of land -- where the Eocene Sylhet Limestone is exposed -- as geological heritage.

That 10 acres of land to be acquired for the museum is within the geo-heritage site.

Recently, a group of businessmen put up a signboard on the land declared as geo-heritage, claiming the High Court gave them permission to extract mineral resources from the site.

A total of 78.27 acres of land, which includes 6.58 acres from the geo-heritage, was leased to Jalalabad Lime Manufacturers and Trading Association and Bulbul Brothers decades ago and the lease was cancelled by the government in 1991.

They filed a writ petition in 2009 against the cancellation and the HC ruled in their favour. But in 2015, the verdict was scrapped following an appeal by the state.

They recently filed another writ and put up a signboard.

In a memorandum last month, the then then director general of Bureau of Mineral Development Md Zafar Ullah, stated the importance of the land and asked the solicitor of the Law and Justice Division of the government to take necessary steps to appeal against the writ petition.

Advocate Shah Shaheda Akhter, regional coordinator for Sylhet of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela), said, "In the recent writ, the traders hid information like the area is an ecologically critical area and it is a geological heritage site. They also hid the writ of 2009 and the judgment.

"Moreover, the court only served show-cause notices upon government offices to know the reason for cancelling the lease but did not give them permission to extract resources. Yet, they put up the signboard

illegally."

Contacted, Afsar Uddin, managing director of Jalalabad Lime Manufacturers and Trading Association, said, "We have our claim over 78.27 acres in Jaflong and only a small part of it is in the land designated for the museum. Moreover, that's not even the part they are going to acquire."

"We didn't hide anything and it's the responsibility of the authorities concerned to tell the court whether it is an ECA or geological heritage."

"Following our writ," he said, "the court ordered a status quo and we've taken possession of the land. If the authority thinks to protect the land, they can legally do so and if they want to acquire it, they can still acquire it from us legally."

Md Aslam Uddin, additional deputy commissioner (revenue) of Sylhet, said, "We've only a few steps of formalities to be completed to acquire the land for [the museum] and will settle any legal claims or objections accordingly soon."

Dr Syed Humayun Akhter said, "If we could successfully present the geological history of Bangladesh with proper 3D modelling in the museum, it will be a splendid work. As thousands of people come to visit Jaflong, they will get a sight of our geological heritage along with the nature."

"Watching such rare geo-heritage in the open and learning about how our land was formed millions of years ago, young students will be interested in natural science and that might eventually create some natural scientists someday."

Dr Moha Sher Ali, director general (additional charge), Geological Survey of Bangladesh, said, "Considering the importance of the geo-heritage, the initiative of establishing the geological museum was taken and now it is progressing fast. We've urged the district administration several times to complete the land acquiring process fast so that we can take further steps."

Weinstein charged with six new sex crimes counts in LA

AFP, Los Angeles

Disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein, who has already been convicted of sex crimes in New York, was charged Friday in Los Angeles with six new counts over the alleged rapes of two women.

The first incident took place sometime between "September 2004 and September 2005 where Weinstein allegedly raped a woman at a hotel in Beverly Hills," said the office of LA County District Attorney Jackie Lacey.

The 68-year-old Weinstein "also is accused of raping another woman on two separate occasions in November 2009 and November 2010 at a hotel in Beverly Hills," Lacey's office said.

The statement does not name the victims or offer any other details about the circumstances.

These six new charges come in addition to others he is already facing. In total, Weinstein is accused in Los Angeles of either rape or sexual assault of five women.

If convicted, he faces up to 140 years in prison.

Weinstein is already serving a 23-

year sentence after being convicted in New York in February of a criminal sexual act in the first degree and rape in the third degree.

That verdict was a landmark moment for the #MeToo global reckoning against men abusing positions of power.

Nearly 90 women, including Angelina Jolie and Salma Hayek, have come forward alleging 40 years of vile predatory behavior by the Oscar-winning producer of "Shakespeare in Love" and numerous other critically acclaimed and box office hits.

Weinstein has steadfastly denied all charges against him in both New York and California, saying all of the sexual encounters in question were consensual.

"I am thankful to the first women who reported these crimes and whose courage have given strength to others to come forward," Lacey said in a statement.

"The willingness of these latest victims to testify against a powerful man gives us the additional evidence we need to build a compelling criminal case."

Hubble finds Supernova

FROM PAGE 12
core becomes hot enough to start a nuclear fusion reaction, turning it into a planet-sized atomic bomb.

The force of this reaction tears the star apart, and in this instance the energy unleashed was the equivalent of the radiance of five billion suns, NASA says.

This particular supernova, classified as SN 2018gv, was spotted in the spiral galaxy NGC 2525 in mid-January 2018 by amateur astronomer Koichi Itagaki.

By February, it was being recorded by the Hubble telescope to help scientists track the expansion rate of the universe.

In the time-lapse, scientists could see the supernova appearing as a brightly shining star near the edge of the galaxy. It quickly becomes the brightest object in the galaxy, before fading from sight.

"No Earthly fireworks display can compete with this supernova, captured in its fading glory by the Hubble Space Telescope," said Adam Riess of the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) and Johns Hopkins

University in a statement.
Supernovae of this kind all peak at the same brightness, and as such are known as "standard candles."

This is because they act as "cosmic tape measures," NASA says. With information about the brightness of the supernova as constant, astronomers can calculate the distances of their host galaxies.

This allows the scientists to measure the expansion rate of the universe.

In May, the Hubble Space Telescope reached its 30th birthday. Its first photo was of the binary star HD96755 from its wide field camera, captured in black and white.

In August, the telescope captured its first observation of a total lunar eclipse - the first time that a total lunar eclipse has been captured from a space telescope, and also the first time one has been studied in ultraviolet wavelengths.

Scientists hope they can use this data to examine exoplanets, giving us a better understanding in the search for alien life and interstellar travel.

Mother-in-law says

FROM PAGE 12
Rana and his wife Akila moved in with Delowara in her house in Katnarpara area of Bogura town five years ago as the latter's health deteriorated, read the complaint filed by Delowara, widow of local businessman Sheikh Sharif Uddin.

Rana and Akila also supervised the businesses owned by the family.
Delowara was the managing director while her five daughters Akila, Mahbuba Sharif Sultana, Nadia Sharif Sultana, Kaniz Fatema, and Touhida Sharif Sultana were directors of Sharif Biri Factory, Sharif CNG Limited, Sharif CNG Limited-2, and Delowara-Sheikh Sharif Supermarket Limited.

Delowara alleged that between June 2015 and September 21 this year, Rana and Akila forced her to sign on cheques, legal papers, fixed deposit receipts and other papers and eventually took away Tk 100 crore.

She also Alleged that her daughter and son-in-law stole important papers and cheque books from her drawers and threatened to shoot her dead if she told informed anyone about their activities.

Delowara's other son-in-law, Maffazzal Hossain Ranju, said, "The police have asked for evidence and bank papers. We are providing those."

Contacted, Rana said, "My mother-in-law is making false allegations because her other daughters and their husbands are making her do these things."

He added: "There are many household staff at my mother-in-law's house. Could I have threatened her in front of so many people?"

The allegation that Rana and his wife took over the businesses was also false, he said.

Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Bogura Police Station, said, "After a primary investigation, we will take legal actions."

Pro-govt clerics

FROM PAGE 1
One member, who participated in the meeting, said Mahmudul got support from 63 members while Kasemi from 55 members of the Befaq committee.

"I have information that different agencies phoned the executive committee members asking them to support Mahmudul. People from the agencies threatened to file false cases against those who would not listen to them," the member said, wishing not to be named.

This member, who is a principal of a madrasa in the capital's Mohammadpur area, claimed that he too received such a phone call.

Amid pressure from the anti-government group, Kasemi was made senior vice-chairman of Befaq, said sources in the meeting.

Several lakh students study at Qwami madrasas across the country and different political forces use them to materialise their goals, according to political analysts.

Meanwhile, talking to this correspondent, Abul Kasem Kasemi, a Hefajat leader from Dhaka city, claimed top police officials called the Befaq executive committee members asking them to lend support to Mahmudul.

In another development, Mahfuzul Haq, principal of Jameya Rahmania Madrasa in city's Mohammadpur, was elected secretary-general of Befaq.

Beside, the posts of senior vice-chairman and secretary general fell vacant after Maulana Abdul Quddus, principal of Faridabad Madrasa at city's Sutrapur, resigned from the posts all of a sudden.

Asked, Mahfuzul said he made the decision because of health reasons.

But sources at Befaq said he was forced to resign after allegation of corruption surfaced against him.

The Daily Star could not get his comment on the issue.

The chairman, senior co-chairman

and the secretary general of Befaq would carry out their responsibility until Befaq council is held. The next council is scheduled to be take place after two and a half years.

Asked about the rivalry between pro- and anti-government leaders over establishing control over Hefajat and Hathazari, several of the leaders said both the sides remain active.

"But as the Awami League is in power for a long time and they have somehow managed to control Hefajat after its failed movement in 2013, those against the government seem to be the weaker side here," said Hefajat Joint Secretary General Maulana Zafurullah said.

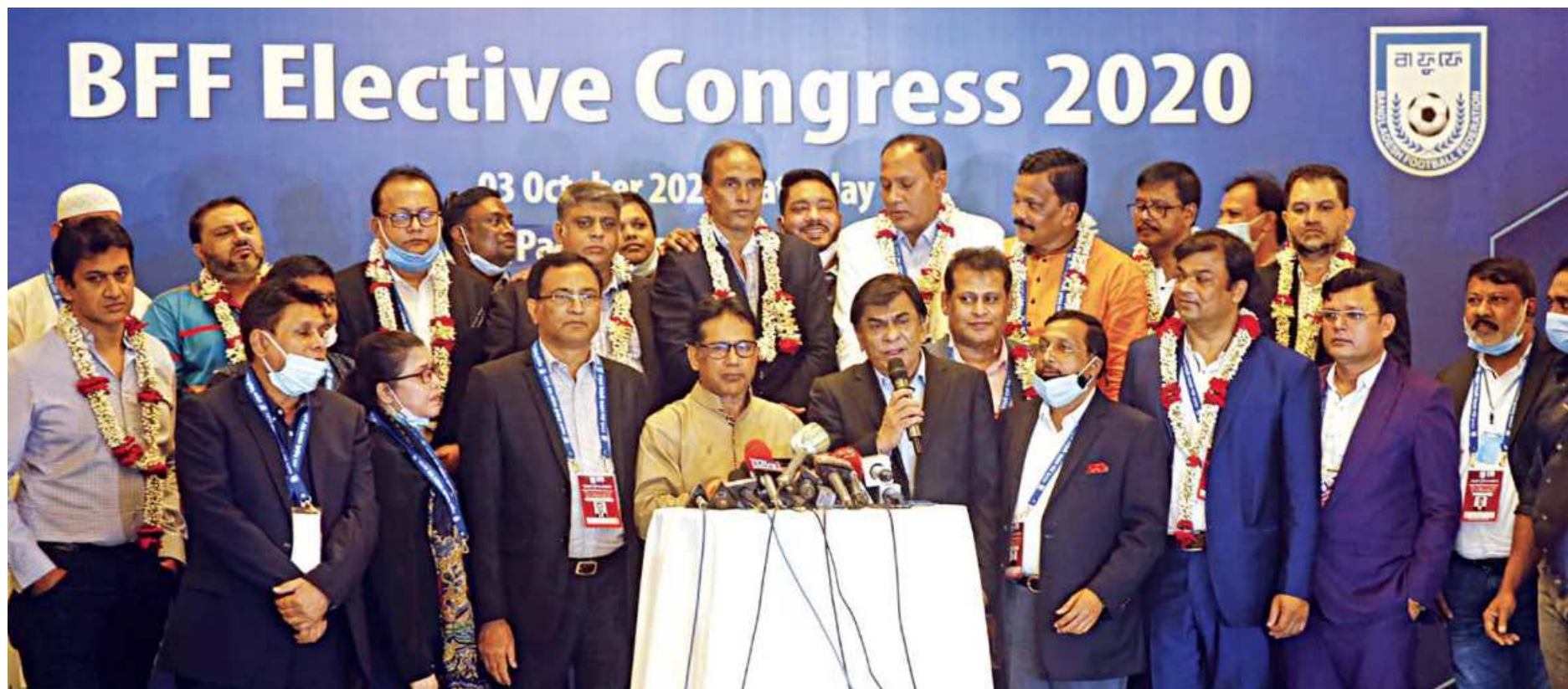
Hefajat Secretary General Junaid Babunagari is reportedly leading the anti-government group in Hefajat and Hathazari madrasa, while Ahmad Shafi's son Anas Madani is reportedly heading the pro-government group.
Shafi, who often drew controversy for opposing women's empowerment and education, passed away, on September 18, a day after he resigned as the director general of Hathazari madrasa. He was 103.

He was forced to quit the post he had held since 1986 following an unprecedented student unrest at the madrasa.

The unrest was fuelled by Babunagari and several others who were not on good terms with Shafi since he leaned towards the AL after the failed 2013 movement, said Hefajat sources.

Shafi's son Anas Madani, who reportedly has good relations with the AL government, was also removed from the post of assistant director of the madrasa on Wednesday night.

At present the Hathazari madrasa, the largest Qwami madrasa in the country is run by a three-member interim body.



BFF Elective Congress 2020

A peaceful AGM that belied the discontent underneath

ANISUR RAHMAN



The annual general meeting is a forum where delegates capitalise on the opportunity to reflect on the obstacles and achievements of the past year, and to voice their opinions on decisions that will affect the direction of the sport.

But yesterday, on the day of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) elections, the BFF's AGM at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel was marked by a distinct lack of voices questioning or opposing the decisions of the past year.

The scenes were in stark contrast to the chaotic ones during the 2016 elections as a calm and quite environment prevailed in the 2020 AGM yesterday. This time around the elective congress saw a peaceful end, with only a couple of councillors asking the incumbent committee why the federation did not come forward to help destitute footballers and stakeholders during the pandemic.

Another requested the AGM to provide voting rights to all clubs involved in the lower division leagues. Although there have been a lot of questions and criticism from different quarters over the declining state of the country's football, the forum apparently was not interested to shine a spotlight on such a crucial issue.

"I never saw such a peaceful AGM before. We have done good work in the past and everyone supported us and 98 percent of delegates were cheerful," said incumbent executive committee member Harunur Rashid.

Bashundhara Kings president and vice-president candidate Imrul Hasan said, "I have participated in two BFF AGMs, including this one, and it was a disciplined meeting compared to the last one. The delegates were excited and in a festive mood and the AGM ended and in a peaceful way."

"The AGM passed everything the incumbent committee presented before us because the election is on everyone's mind. There were a lot of things to ask about but no one raised questions, worrying about how voters would take it ahead of the polls. That's why everyone was silent at the AGM," said Mymensingh Divisional FA president and vice-president candidate Abdullah Fuad Redwan.

"The annual general meeting was held in a quiet and calm environment unlike the previous ones which was always held in a chaotic way. This time around, all decided not to raise voices because we have to meet each other at the end of the day," said Nilphamari FA president, former national captain and incumbent executive member Arif Hossain Moon, who is now competing against Salahuddin's panel.

However, former national footballer Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury was not happy about how the AGM was conducted. "BFF can't build a gymnasium in 12 years citing financial constraints but they are well capable of holding the AGM lavishly and keeping all delegates in such an expensive hotel. It is not possible to develop football with such mentality," said Gaffar.

There were whispers in the hotel regarding one panel's disbursement of money to buy some delegates to ensure their triumph, but Brothers Union manager and member candidate Amer Khan said he had no idea about it.

"I have no idea about it or I haven't heard such a thing," said Amer. "If they come into football spending money, let them come into football. I want to welcome them and hope they will continue spending money for the development of football."

In the end, many felt that this kind of silence was not good for any organisation. "You know, nobody wanted to be singled out by raising their voice, so you have to understand the reality," said a delegate who preferred not to be named.

Landslide victory for Salahuddin & Co

BFF POLLS RESULT 2020

PRESIDENT (POST: 1)

Candidates (3):
Kazi Salahuddin (Vote: 94),
Badal Roy (Vote: 40),
Shafiqul Islam Manik (Vote: 1)

SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT (POST: 1)

Candidates (2):

Abdus Salam Mursheduy (Vote: 91),
Sheikh Mohammad Aslam (Vote: 44)

VICE-PRESIDENT (POSTS: 4)

Candidates (8):
Imrul Hasan (Vote: 89), Kazi Nabil

Ahmed (Vote: 81), Ataur Rahman
Bhuiyan Manik (Vote: 75),
Tabith Awaal (Vote: 65),
Mohiuddin Ahmed (Vote: 65),
Sheikh Mohammad Maruf Hossain (Vote: 61), Amirul Islam Babu (Vote: 56), SM Abdullah Al Fuad (Vote: 48)

ELECTED MEMBERS :

Zakir Hossain Chowdhury (Vote: 87), Abdul Wadud Pintu (Vote: 86), Bijon Barua (Vote: 85), Arif Hossain Moon (Vote: 85), Nurul Islam Nuru (Vote: 84), Mahi Uddin Ahmed Selim (Vote: 84), Tipu Sultan (Vote: 81),

Satyajit Das Rupu (Vote: 76), Iliyas Hossain (Vote: 75), Imtiaz Hamid Sabuj (Vote: 74), Mahfuza Akter Kiron (Vote: 70), Harunur Rashid (Vote: 70), Amer Khan (Vote: 69), Saiful Islam (Vote: 69) and Mohidur Rahman Miraz (Vote: 68).

SPORTS REPORTER



Three-time president of Bangladesh Football Federation Kazi Salahuddin retained his helm for another four years as delegates gave the former star player the mandate to run the show of game's local governing body for a fourth consecutive term.

The 66-year left two independent candidates -- Badal Roy and Shafiqul Islam Manik -- far behind in the presidential race by bagging 94 out of 135 votes which were cast, pouring cold water on the anticipation of a battle between him and Roy, who got 40 votes.

Manik ended in third position with a single vote as a total of 135 delegates out of 139 turned up in the much-discussed polls. Delegates of Chattogram Abahani, Sheikh Jamal DC, Sheikh Russel KC and Faridpur DFA did not turn up

An election was held and they passed it. That's all. To tell the truth, there was huge pressure on the delegates. You cannot always tell the truth and this kind of result is not unexpected.

BADAL ROY

in the congress as well as in the elections.

Though general football fans, who also turned up yesterday in front of the election venue forming a small human chain, raised their voices on social media platforms and took to the street protesting against the incumbent president in the past, the delegates eventually chose Salahuddin as the president.

Salahuddin, also president of South Asian Football Federation, was the strong candidate

since the announcement of the withdrawal of Roy, who was completely silent during the election process. He had submitted his withdrawal letter after deadline but started communicating with the delegates on Thursday, just two days before the election.

Roy, who was paralysed followed a brain haemorrhage in 2017 and did not turn up to the election venue yesterday, had urged the delegates to make

it a silent revolution to bring change in the BFF leadership. But the delegates gave Salahuddin another chance to complete his unfinished work of past 12 years.

It was not only Salahuddin who shone in the much-hyped polls, his panel completely outplayed the integrated panel, who had called for a campaign to bring a change and was hopeful of seizing on the important posts. Instead the Salahuddin-

led panel secured the senior vice-president's post as well as three vice-president posts.

Abdus Salam Mursheduy, too, retained his leadership as the senior vice-president for the fourth successive term by outvoting Sheikh Mohammad Aslam by 91 to 44 votes.

Salahuddin's combined panel also won three out of four vice president posts.

The result was not as expected as the delegates promised to me. The return of Badal Roy in the race and the influence on the delegates might have two major reasons. The result is not expected to me.

SHAFIUL ISLAM MANIK

Actually, it is the triumph of the voters, who brought this result. Many people said many things, but the delegates gave the answers, and I want to thank them.

I have been with football for 12 long years and I always ensured that it was held regularly, and so those involved with football supported me. Many current players came before the AGM to wish me and that helped me realise that

I was working well.

If you look back at the previous elections' results, the number of votes in favour of me has gradually increased, although a section doesn't want to see me at BFF.

We are not here to play politics; all of us are here for football... Those who have been elected from the opposition panel also love football and we will work together in the future.

---Kazi Salahuddin



Even though it was a two-day intra-squad practice match, Mominul Haque raised his bat to express happiness after making a hundred on the final day at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Mohammad Mithun scored 62. Bangladesh Test captain Mominul however heaped praise on the pacers' effort. "I was bit nervous initially but later enjoyed my batting. I think our pace bowlers bowled brilliantly in this match," Mominul said after the match. The cricketers will play another two-day match from tomorrow.

PHOTO: BCB

Old friends meet on the touchline for first time

AGENCIES



In a highly-anticipated first clash between two former stars of Italy and AC Milan now chasing coaching glory, Gennaro Gattuso's Napoli test their 'Scudetto' ambitions at Andrea Pirlo's Juventus tonight.

It was one of football's most successful midfield partnerships: on the one hand, the snarling, combative Gattuso, and on the other, the thoughtful, elegant, unflappable Pirlo. The pair formed the backbone of a memorable AC Milan team for more than a decade and helped Italy win the 2006 World Cup.

Tonight, the old chums will face each other on the touchline for the first time. Napoli has made an impressive start to the season, winning both of its opening games, while Juve, chasing a 10th successive Serie A title, began with a win and a draw.

While the coaches are good friends, there is no love lost between their teams. More than any other fixture in Italian football, it has come to be seen as a clash between the rich, industrial wealth of the north and the much poorer south.

Napoli has enjoyed the upper hand in the last two meetings, beating Juventus 2-1 in Serie A and winning last season's Coppa Italia final on penalties after a 0-0 draw.

It is a clash which Inter Milan coach Antonio Conte can't wait to see. "Juve v Napoli? I'll enjoy watching it," said Conte, who coached Pirlo as a player to the first three of Juventus's current run of nine Serie A titles. "Napoli are underestimated a lot," continued Conte.

"They are an excellent team, they are among the favourites for the Scudetto. They have a staff and a very good coach who will make life difficult for everyone."

In coaching terms, Gattuso, 42, has had a head start on his former team mate. He is already at his sixth club since embarking

on his new career at Swiss side FC Sion in 2013, where he was unceremoniously sacked after three months. The 41-year-old Pirlo, meanwhile, will be in charge of only his third game as a coach, having been handed the reins in August following the dismissal of Maurizio Sarri.

"He's lucky to be starting at Juventus, but this profession is one where a great playing career is not enough," warned Gattuso. "You have to study, work hard, and you don't get much sleep."

Despite their very different playing



styles, the two players complemented each other perfectly at Milan.

"When I saw him play it made me think I had to change profession," Gattuso once said. "I understood what I had to do, and he took care of the rest. He helped me much more in my career than I did him."

They would also play pranks on each other, with Gattuso's short temper making him a prime target.

Pirlo added: "We'd get out of his way when he got mad but once he'd calmed down and gone to his room, we'd come back out, pile up the sofas in front of the door and block his exit."



Leeds United's Rodrigo Moreno was ecstatic after striking his first goal for the club to earn a 1-1 draw at home to Manchester City in the Premier League on Saturday as Pep Guardiola was denied victory against one of the men (Leeds' Argentine coach Marcelo Bielsa) who inspired him to be a coach. PHOTO: REUTERS

Chilwell impresses as Chelsea storm Palace

REUTERS, LONDON



Chelsea beat Crystal Palace 4-0 at home in the Premier League on Saturday as Ben Chilwell marked his league debut for the Blues by scoring a goal and creating another for fellow defender Kurt Zouma before Jorginho sealed the win with two penalties.

Palace had stifled Chelsea in a goalless first half but Chilwell punished them for a rare defensive error, firing home from close range in the 50th minute after Mamadou Sakho fluffed a clearance, allowing Cesar Azpilicueta to line up a cross. Chelsea doubled their lead in the 66th minute when the visitors failed to clear a corner and Zouma rose above everyone else in the box to meet a cross by Chilwell and send a header past Vicente Guaita.

Jorginho made sure of the win when he converted two penalties in the space of five minutes late in the game.

Lampard made six changes to the team that salvaged a 3-3 draw after being 3-0 behind at West Bromwich Albion last weekend, four of them at the back as he gave league debuts to goalkeeper Edouard Mendy and left back Chilwell.

'Teammates make me want to work harder'

REUTERS

Inter Milan's Romelu Lukaku was named the Europa League player of the season for 2019-20 after the Belgian forward led the Italian side to the final with goals in every knockout round.

Lukaku, who scored 34 goals in all competitions in his first season in Italy, scored seven times in the



Europa League. "I want to thank my family and my agents for their support. I also want to thank my coach and the club staff, the board, and the president for their trust and for helping me throughout this season."

"Most importantly, I want to thank my team mates, who have been great with me from the first day I joined. They've been like brothers to me... Every day I come to training, I come with a smile... they make me want to work harder."



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

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT BSRM building a safer nation



GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES

World's Largest VRM

SHAH CEMENT

Million years on rock record

Jaflong hosts Eocene Sylhet Limestone from ancient age, waits for country's first geo museum



DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Jaflong, a popular tourist destination, is rightly revered as the Daughter of Nature for its natural splendour.

In the midst of that breath-taking beauty, there lies a live museum of rock record from a very ancient age on geological time scale.

Those are not the regular rocks rolling down the streams from hills of Meghalaya. Formed at least 27 million years before the first human ancestor appeared on earth, they are pieces of geological history.

The bed of rocks, right at the eastern bank of the river Dauki, is commonly referred as the Eocene Sylhet Limestone, which has been an important subject of geological research and study for decades.

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A group of businessmen recently put up a signboard mentioning that a High Court writ allowed them to extract mineral resources from a protected land of geo-heritage in Sylhet whereas the writ has not allowed them to do anything of this sort. The court only asked the government for the reason for cancelling a lease.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Mother-in-law says AL leader took Tk 100cr from her

Files case, police yet to record it

MOSTAFA SHABUI, Bogura

A local Awami League leader in Nandigram, Bogura has reportedly stolen Tk 100 crore from his mother-in-law by forcing her to write him cheques and fixed deposit receipts, according to a complaint filed with Bogura Police Station.

Over the last five years, Anwar Hossain Rana, 41, joint-secretary of Nandigram AL, and his wife Akila Sharifa Sultana Khanam Anjuara sometimes threatened Delowara Begum, 68, with murder and made her give them the cheques.

In the complaint made on Thursday night Delowara also blamed three employees of businesses owned by the family for being complicit in the racket.

Police have yet to record the complaint as a case and said they would conduct a primary investigation first.

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Man 'murdered' 6yrs ago shows up in court

N'ganj court summons 8 DB, CID cops

UNB, Narayanganj

A Narayanganj court has summoned eight police officials to appear before it after a man, allegedly abducted and murdered six years ago, appeared before another court during the trial of a case on Wednesday.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Aftabuzzaman passed the order on Friday. The man named Mamun appeared before the Narayanganj court Wednesday noon.

His father Abul Kalam had filed a case with Fatullah Model Police Station on May 9, 2016 stating that Mamun was "abducted" on May 10, 2014.

Six people were accused in the case and they all were also imprisoned for different terms.

Allegations of torture of the accused in the name of interrogation during remand were also made against the policemen.

Eight DB and CID officers, who probed the case at various stages, have been asked to appear before the court within seven working days along with the investigation report, said Narayanganj CID Police Superintendent Harun-Ur-Rashid.

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

China won't change stance

October 4, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

UN OFFICIALS DISCUSS FOOD WITH BANGABANDHU UN officials now on a visit in Dhaka -- Sir Robert Jackson, Urquhart and Lansky -- have an hourlong discussion on relief operations in Bangladesh with Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Gono Bhaban today. Robert Jackson communicates to the prime minister greetings from the UN secretary general. The visiting team of UN officials is learnt to have discussed prospects of UNROD's operation in Bangladesh, besides the current relief effort. They also discuss the food and transport situation of the country.

'NO PREJUDICE AGAINST BANGABANDHU'

China claims in the UN General Assembly today that it cherishes friendly sentiments for the people of "East Bengal" and it has no prejudice against Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. However, it makes it clear that it would not retreat from its earlier stance against the admission of Bangladesh into the UN.

HIGH-LEVEL MEET REVIEWS TEA PRODUCTION

Bangabandhu today presides over a high-level conference which reviews various aspects of tea such as production, plantation and export.

KHAS LAND FOR LANDLESS PEASANTS

Land administration and revenue minister Abdur Rab Serniabat today says that the government has decided to distribute two and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



20 more die, 1,182 infected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty people were reported dead from Covid-19 in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With this, the total number of deaths rose to 5,325, while the death rate stood at 1.45 percent.

Another 1,182 cases were recorded in the same 24 hours, taking the total number of positive cases to 3,67,565, said the release.

Against a number of 9,554 tests in the 24 hours, the positivity rate was 12.37 percent, while the overall positivity rate stood at 18.57 percent.

At least 1,442 Covid-19 patients recovered in the same 24 hours.

With this, the total number of recoveries rose to 2,80,069, while the recovery rate stood at 76.20 percent.

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Hubble finds Supernova 5b times brighter than sun



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

An exploding supernova in a galaxy 70 million light-years away has been recorded by the Hubble Space Telescope.

The rare event outshone the entire host galaxy, coming from a white dwarf star that gathered material from its companion star.

A white dwarf is a degenerating star that is reaching the end of its life cycle. When it has depleted its nuclear fuel, the star expels its outer material, reaching temperatures exceeding 100,000 Kelvin.

When the white dwarf reaches a critical mass, its

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Flood in Sirajganj worsens

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The overall flood situation in Sirajganj deteriorated yesterday as flood water from the swelling Jamuna and other rivers inundated new areas in the district.

KM Rafiqul Islam, sub-divisional engineer of Water Development Board in Sirajganj, said the Jamuna was flowing 21cm above the danger level at Kazipur point in the morning.

"Water level in the local rivers is increasing slowly and this trend will continue

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PRAYER TIMING OCTOBER 4

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-45 12-45 4-15 5-53 7-30
JAMAAT 5-20 1-15 4-30 5-56 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Arms factory busted in Ukhia: Rab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rapid Action Battalion claimed to have busted a firearms-making factory in a remote hilly area of Ukhia upazila in Cox's Bazar and arrested two firearms makers in this connection.

The arrestees are: Abu Majid alias Kana Majid and Robi Alam of Moheshkhali upazila, said Major Mehedi Hasan, deputy commanding officer of Rab-15, yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-15 launched a drive in Madhurchhara, which is adjacent to Kutupalong Rohingya camp, on Friday afternoon and arrested Majid and Robi, said Major Mehedi.

Later, the Rab team recovered two guns, two bullets and several equipment used for manufacturing firearms from a hut set up by the arrestees, he claimed.

The duo had been making and supplying firearms to Rohingya robbers for a long time, claimed the Rab official.



Unable to tolerate the pain, 30-year-old Akib sitting on the floor in front of Chattogram Medical College Hospital holding his abdomen. A slow patient registration process at the hospital makes many like Akib suffer. He received medical attention half an hour after reaching the hospital.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

India's virus deaths pass 100,000

AFP, New Delhi

Deaths from the novel coronavirus in India passed 100,000 yesterday, official data showed as the pandemic continued to rage across the world's second most populous country.

A total of 100,842 people have now died, health ministry figures showed, giving India the third-highest death toll in the world behind the United States and Brazil.

In terms of infections, India has recorded 6.47 million cases and is on course to overtake the US as the country with the most infections in the coming weeks.

India's population of 1.3 billion is, however, around four times larger than that of the United States, which has seen more than twice as many deaths, raising doubts about India's official numbers.

"We do not know the reliability of death rates in India," virologist T Jacob John told AFP.

"India does not have a public health surveillance system, documenting real-time all disease events and deaths," he said.

Even though India is carrying out around one million tests per day, as a percentage of the population its testing rate is much lower than many other countries.

The United States, for example, has tested more than five times as many people as India proportionately, according to tracking website Worldometer.

That India's real numbers might be much worse than the official data suggest is borne out by a string of studies measuring antibodies to the virus among the population.

On Tuesday, India's lead pandemic agency released a survey suggesting that more than 60 million people -- 10 times the official figure -- could have contracted the virus.

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