



(Clockwise from top) A man sweeps down the floor inside Ananda Cinema Hall in Farmgate, that is opening its gates today to film lovers of the capital. Its twin theatre Chhanda Cinema Hall is also ready to open, with staff fixing up the chairs. Meanwhile, Balaka Cineworld on Mirpur Road is still not ready to open, while the gates of Modhumita in Motijheel also remain locked. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



# Silver lining for the silver screen?

## Some movie theatres reopen today, while some err on the side of caution

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

The government has given the nod to open doors of all cinema halls in the country and welcome in movie lovers who have been deprived of their favourite pastime for several months. After remaining deserted for quite a while, many halls in the capital are preparing to reopen today.

Hall owners, however, are still in a dilemma. While many have decided to follow the authority's decision, more than five owners are yet to finalise their steps for opening.

Halls that are opening from today are taking proper precautions. The maintenance staff and cleaners are taking extra care to ensure safety and hygiene -- starting from entrance to seats and ticket counters.

Preparations for reopening the capital's Ananda Cinema Hall are in full swing since this morning. Electricians are busy taking care

of technical issues, and cleaners are working to make every inch of their premises spotless.

"We have a total of 35 staffers. Most of them were on leave since the beginning of the pandemic," said Alauddin, the hall's manager. "They have all been asked to come back and resume their duties. We're very happy that we'll finally be open again."

The film "Shahoshi Hero Alam" -- starring Ashraf Alom Saeed, best known as Hero Alam -- is releasing at Ananda today.

Chhanda Cinema Hall, located right next to Ananda, is also preparing to reopen. The cleaning staff were seen working at the location this morning. "Rajdhani Raja", starring Shakib Khan, will hit the screen of this hall today.

"We've been working relentlessly after we got to know the government's decision," said Liton, a security staffer of the theatre. "We were starting to think

of alternative ways to survive, but now, I see hope."

New Market's Balaka Cinema Hall, however, is still closed till further notice. The authorities have not taken any steps yet to reopen.

"We have decided to observe the situation for a few more days," said Shahin Hossain, the hall's manager.

A similar scenario was seen at Modhumita Cinema Hall. "I don't think we'll have many visiting the halls now," said theatre owner Iftekhar Uddin. "There are no new releases and staffers are also on leave. I don't want to incur more losses by opening the doors at this moment."

Mia Alauddin, senior vice-president of Film Exhibitors' Association and owner of Sathi Cinema Hall, said he has decided to reopen today with "Shahoshi Hero Alam".

Star Cineplex, the one located inside Bashundhara City Shopping

Complex, will be functional from October 23, informed their senior manager. Their screens at Shyamoli Square will also remain closed until further notice.

Ovishar Cinema and Neptune Cinema Hall, located on Hatkhola Road, will also remain closed. "The owners have not decided to reopen the halls yet," informs security staffer Mahbubur Rahman Khan.

Meanwhile, Chitra Mahal movie theatre, located on English Road, will be opening today with "Shahoshi Hero Alam". One of seven screens will welcome moviegoers today at Blockbuster Cinemas inside Jamuna Future Park.

Most movie theatres outside the capital, however, have not decided to reopen yet. Many hall owners believe old films are their only option at the moment.

This scenario has put film producers in a new crisis. At least

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# Gender-based violence an epidemic: feminists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hasty decision of enacting death penalty in the law is not only appalling but harmful too, and the government should instead reform the social and legal system that actually tackle root causes behind impunity for rape and other sexual violence against women, a feminist alliance has said.

Terming gender-based violence an epidemic in Bangladesh, Feminists Across Generations said the culture in society which has allowed this violence to breed needs to be uprooted.

The coalition of activists fighting gender based violence made the remarks at a press briefing at Naripokkho office in the capital's Dhanmondi yesterday.

They placed a 10-point demand to take action and eliminate gender-based violence.

Activists believe the rape incidents in

the country are on the rise because of social stigma, a lengthy justice process, low conviction rates and fear of harassment by offenders.

"Death sentence was already a provision for gang-rape or rape-murder convictions. Now it's a deception, a play to the gallery. Without upholding human rights, what the law minister did is a stunt. There is no proof or research that death penalty can reduce rape. What happened now is not only appalling but harmful too," said Shireen Huq, founder member of Naripokkho.

Now the path of women has become harder too, as most victims will not report the crime now. Their families will discourage them if it happens within close relatives. At the same time, the rapist will be more aggressive to kill the victim to eliminate the proof, she said.

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## Shujan Roundtable Long way to eradicate rape culture: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a virtual roundtable yesterday discussed ways to prevent and remedy the ongoing incidents of violence against women.

Titled "Prevention and remedy for violence against women: What needs to be done?" the virtual roundtable was organised by Shujan-Citizens for Good Governance.

Keynote presenter Prof Dr Shahnaz Huda of law department at Dhaka University, also an executive member of Shujan, presented recent statistics of rape and violence against women and talked about causes behind them, such as the prolonged legal battle of cases, the culture of impunity and political affiliation of the perpetrators, all of which hinder the conviction of the rape cases.

Prof Shahnaz also presented some recommendations for the policymakers, such as repealing of archaic section 155 (4) of the Evidence Act-1872, that allows defence lawyers to introduce character evidence against rape complainants, redefining the archaic rape law by widening the scope of acts to be

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## 'Gender equality begins at home'

Says Saima Wazed

UNB, Dhaka

Stressing the need for educating children on gender equality at home, CRI Trustee and Co-chairperson Saima Wazed Hossain said she wants everyone in the country to be taught women and men are no different.

Children's gender education must start from home, she said, urging everyone to raise their voice in unison against violence against women everywhere -- in schools, colleges, workplaces, streets, or elsewhere.

Saima Wazed, also a thematic ambassador at Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), was speaking at a webinar to launch a campaign titled "Women's Safety in Public Places (WSPP)" on Wednesday night.

The campaign was launched by Young Bangla -- a youth wing of ruling Awami League -- and research organisation Centre for Research and Information (CRI) in collaboration with UNDP and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

Earlier in March, Young Bangla and Human Rights Programme of UNDP signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote the "Women's Safety in Public Places" campaign.

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# Ensuring post-Covid food security the key

## Says agriculture minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque yesterday said the country has continued its food production despite the extreme adverse conditions of the pandemic and natural disasters including cyclone and flood.

In this current fiscal, rice production has increased to about 3.87 lakh tonnes, he said.

The minister was speaking at a press briefing at his secretariat office on the occasion of World Food Day 2020. Agriculture Secretary Md Nasiruzzaman was also present at the event.

The minister said since the onset of coronavirus outbreak, the prime minister has instructed not to leave even an inch of land uncultivated in tackling the possible food crisis.

Like other countries, World Food Day 2020 will be celebrated in Bangladesh today at the joint initiative of the ministry and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The theme of this year is -- "Grow, nourish, sustain, together. Our actions are our future."

In the briefing, the minister said, "Even after the success in food production, we need to be aware of food and nutrition security in post-Covid Bangladesh."

"We must continue our initiative. With this target in mind, this time we are going to celebrate World Food Day," he said.

He said his ministry is working relentlessly to ensure food security during and post Covid-19 situation. Target of Aus and Aman paddy production has been increased.

Tk 10 will be given as subsidy against per kilogramme of boro paddy seeds to increase production in the coming season.

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## Mourning Day observed at DU

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka University authorities yesterday observed Mourning Day, commemorating the tragic deaths of students, employees and guests in a building collapse at Jagannath Hall in 1985.

Some 39 people, including 26 students, died as the roof of the auditorium of the Assembly Building (now October Smriti Bhaban) collapsed on this day 35 years ago.

To mark the day, university authorities organised various programmes and hoisted black flags atop all student dormitories and kept the university flag at half-mast.

Vice Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruazzaman placed a floral wreath at the memorial inside Jagannath Hall and later attended a discussion held on dormitory premises.

He said all have to take lesson from the incident and remain alert so such incident does not recur.

Special prayers were also offered at Jagannath Hall and university mosques.

# India seeks reduction of charges for using Bangladeshi airports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly-appointed Indian High Commissioner Vikram K Doraiswami yesterday requested Bangladesh to reduce all general charges for using Bangladeshi airports by Indian airlines for the time being, as Covid-19 has affected them like other airlines of the world.

He said this at a meeting with State Minister for Civil Aviation M Mahub Ali at his office at the secretariat.

During the meeting, the high commissioner also proposed to launch Agartala-Dhaka-Agartala flight and work on digitisation in all airports of Bangladesh, the ministry said in a release.

Meanwhile, while meeting with Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque at the latter's office in the city, the Indian high commissioner mentioned that his father had fought in the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh as a member of the Allied Forces and that Bangladesh-India relations were tested.

The high commissioner noted that the memorial constructed by Bangladesh in memory of the Allied Forces would further strengthen Bangladesh-India friendship.

During the meeting, India's friendly relations with Bangladesh, Bangladesh's Liberation War and various bilateral issues were discussed, the ministry said in a release.

The minister said Bangladesh does not have complete lists of the members of the allied force, Mujib force, refugee camps, training camps and the list of Indian hospitals providing wartime services.

The minister sought cooperation of the high commissioner to get these lists in preserving the correct and complete history of the Liberation War.

The high commissioner assured him of full cooperation in this regard.



Shops have encroached this footpath at port city's Muradpur area to turn it into a display spot for their motorbikes, narrowing the way for pedestrians. Bikes are a common menace on footpaths; some move about on it to evade traffic, others get parked on top. Whatever it may be, authorities generally seem to ignore these violations. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## DNCC to introduce new insecticide for waterbodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) is going to use a new insecticide for water bodies to kill mosquito breeding grounds on pilot basis.

According to officials, the new insecticide poses low risk to the environment compared to the present one being used. Named Novaluron, the tablet is manufactured by a company from England.

DNCC Deputy Chief Health Officer Lt Col Md Golam Mostofa Sarwar said, "These tablets will be disseminated at watery areas, which are mosquito breeding hotspots. Once used, the insecticide will be active for three months. A gram of the tablet can be used for 10 litres of water."

According to the official,

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MINI BYTES

Laptops disappearing from the market as pandemic drives demand

SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

Amidst the global pandemic, a spike in demand and crunch in supply has resulted in a shortage of laptops, particularly affordable ones, in the local market.

As more and more businesses and schools are moving online, so are laptops flying off the shelves. Particularly, laptops ranging between Tk 25,000 to Tk 50,000 are especially hard to find now, as the existing stocks are plummeting and new shipments are yet to arrive.

Several retailers in IDB Bhaban and Multiplan Centre -- two most frequented destinations for tech products in Dhaka, said laptops and tablets are high on demand and low in supply for the last few months.

Shahnaj Parvin, who came to IDB Bhaban with her eight-year-old daughter, told this writer she was looking for a laptop. "We've been looking for a budget laptop for my daughter's classes, but couldn't find any device within our budget yet."

Seeing the spike in demand, some retailers are asking up to Tk 2,000 to 6,000 more than the retail prices.

Turjo Roy, a university sophomore who was on his way out from Multiplan Centre after buying a laptop, said he had to pay Tk 2,000 more than the listed price.

Owner of a renowned distributor, requesting anonymity, admitted the issue and remarked it as an

"unfortunate outcome" of the pandemic.

When asked why this situation emerged to begin with, Atiqur Rahman, country manager of Dell in Bangladesh, said, "On the supply side, due to the pandemic, we have seen the component manufacturer were not able to forecast the rise in demand globally. Also, our distributors made some conservative forecast. On the demand side, we are seeing a huge rise in the work-from-home and school-from-home trend which pushed the demand too. But we expect things to change very soon."

Muzahidul Al Biruni Sujon, Director of leading tech product distributors Smart Technologies, echoed Atiqur.

"Due to worldwide production shortage, we are seeing a rise in demand which has grown around 30 percent. It's a shame we haven't been able to capture that market. But we are optimistic of catching up hopefully in a month or so," he said.

Local tech conglomerate Walton too has seen an uptick on their laptop sales and are able to meet their demand. "We are seeing a growth of around 20 percent per month for the last several months. We are comfortably meeting the demand and there's no shortage of supplies. We are even offering a laptop exchange offer now," said Liakat Ali, CEO of Walton Computer.