



US Senate set to confirm Barrett as life-time justice of the Supreme Court
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Vaccine for all, free of cost

Govt decides to make coronavirus vaccines available for all citizens once those are procured

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

The government has decided to administer Covid-19 vaccines to all the citizens free of cost once those are procured.

As per the decision at a high-level meeting recently, the government will purchase vaccines as soon as those are out in the market and administer those to all like it does under the existing immunisation programmes, said finance ministry officials.

The finance ministry has already sought \$2 billion in financial assistance from four development partners to purchase, store, transport and administer the vaccines.

It has written to the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, seeking from them \$500 million each.

In the letters to the multilateral lenders, the ministry said the government decided to procure and administer the vaccines at its own cost.

It also mentioned that large-scale commercial production of the vaccine is expected by the end of this year.

"In this context, a major initiative is afoot to import vaccines to Bangladesh in order to make the vaccines available for all the citizens," the ministry wrote.

Seeking anonymity, a top official of the finance ministry, told The Daily Star, "We have already sent letters to the development partners, seeking \$2 billion in financial assistance. We are still not sure how much we will get. Whatever amount we get, the rest will be managed from government funds."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Rab personnel arrest Mohammad Erfan Salim, son of Dhaka-7 lawmaker and Awami League Leader Haji Mohammad Salim, at his home in Chawkbazar area of Old Dhaka yesterday for assaulting a navy officer in the capital's Dhanmondi area Sunday night. Inset, unlicensed walkie-talkies found at his home.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

SUV with MP sticker has no papers!

No tax token, fitness clearance for 10yrs

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Road Transport Act-2018 stipulates up to six months' imprisonment or a fine of Tk 25,000 or both for driving a vehicle without an updated fitness certificate. The law also specifies a fine of Tk 10,000 for not having a tax token.

But, it seems the law is not applicable for lawmaker Haji Salim or his son Erfan Salim. Because the SUV police seized on Sunday night, after Erfan allegedly assaulted Navy Lieutenant Wasif Ahmed Khan in Dhanmondi, has had no fitness certificate since September 2010.

Police told reporters that the vehicle has a sticker given to the MPs and that it belonged to lawmaker Haji Salim.

His son and bodyguards were in the

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ASSAULTING A NAVY OFFICER

Haji Salim's son Erfan arrested

Illegal arms, walkie-talkies, handcuffs, liquor seized as his home raided; 'torture cell' found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mohammad Erfan Salim, son of Dhaka-7 lawmaker and Awami League leader Haji Md Salim, was sentenced to one year in prison yesterday for illegally possessing walkie-talkies and foreign liquor.

Rab Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam handed six months' imprisonment to Erfan for keeping the radio transceivers illegally and the other six months for the illegal liquor possession, said Lt Col Ashique Billah, Rab's Legal and Media wing director. Erfan's bodyguard Zahidul Islam, 35, was given the same punishment for the same offence, he said.

It came after Rab raided Erfan's home in the capital's Chawkbazar for six hours

from 12:30pm. Rab claimed that it found 38 black walkie-talkies, five Virtual Private Server (VPS) handsets, one repeater, a router, two unlicensed firearms, and seven bottles of foreign liquor from the house, said Rab officials.

Two more cases would be filed against Erfan under the narcotics and firearms acts, they said.

Earlier in the day, 37-year-old Erfan, councillor of Ward-30 under the Dhaka South City Corporation and son-in-law of an MP in Noakhali, and two others were detained in a case filed for assaulting a navy official in the capital's Dhanmondi area on Sunday night. The incident happened after Erfan's SUV hit the official's motorcycle.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Cable repairs can cause slow internet for five days

RASHIDUL HASAN and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Internet users may face reduced speeds in some areas for five days starting from the wee hours of today due to maintenance work on the submarine cable connecting Chennai to Singapore.

The 3,100-kilometre submarine cable, known as the i2i cable network, also connects Bangladesh's international internet gateway (IIG) operators with Singapore, industry operators said.

"Latency and congestion are likely to increase in some destinations, especially during the peak hours from 8:00pm to 1:00am," said Ahmed Junayed, secretary general, International Internet Getaway Association, Bangladesh (IIGAB).

Talking to The Daily Star last night he also said Bangladesh may experience

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Rangpur cop suspended over rape charges

Man held for raping minor in Noakhali

STAR REPORT

An assistant sub-inspector of Rangpur police was suspended yesterday on charges of gang-raping a ninth grader with two others.

In separate incidents, a man was arrested yesterday for allegedly raping a girl in Noakhali, and in Habiganj on Sunday, a court took cognisance of gang rape charges against eight people, including a union parishad chairman, and asked police to investigate the incident.

In Rangpur, the suspended police officer, Raihanul Islam, was discharging duties as an ASI

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

WOMEN REPRESSION CASES HC's monitoring order ignored

3 years on, authorities yet to form cell

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Over three years ago, the High Court directed the administration of the Supreme Court to form a cell to monitor whether the trials of cases filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 are completed in 180 days.

The monitoring cell, headed by the registrar general of the SC, would report to the SC and the government for taking appropriate action against judges, public prosecutors and investigation officers who fail to assign causes for not disposing of the cases on time, according to the HC directive.

Three years down the line, the SC administration failed to constitute the cell.

The SC office, however, could not say the exact reasons behind noncompliance with the HC directive. As a result, updated information on the disposal of cases filed under the act remain unknown.

Incumbent SC Registrar General Md Ali Akbar said he was not informed about the HC directive for formation of the monitoring cell.

"I will inquire about the High Court verdict and then will take necessary steps," he told The Daily Star on October 17.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



An idol of Durga arrives at Chattogram's Patenga Beach for its immersion in the sea. Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindus, ended yesterday with the celebration of Bijaya Dashami. Devotees bade farewell to the deity amid loud chants and drumbeats as the idols were immersed in the sea and rivers across the country.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Trump, Biden begin final week campaign

Covid-19 issue dominates as nearly 60m Americans cast ballots

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden yesterday were to storm swing states in the final week of campaigning before the Nov. 3 election, as surging coronavirus cases and an uncomfortable admission by his chief of staff keep the focus of the race on the pandemic.

Trump claimed progress in combating the disease even as the United States set records in recent days for daily infections, while Pence forged ahead with campaigning on Sunday despite close aides testing positive.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

US ELECTION



Durga Puja ends with immersion of idols

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindus, ended yesterday with the immersion of the idols of goddess Durga and her children in water bodies.

This year, the puja was different as worshippers mostly avoided any gathering and festivity due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Most of the puja organisers did not bring out any Dashami procession yesterday. Only a few brought out processions on a very limited scale.

All the temples across the country

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

IN TRIBUTE

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq

(02 November 1935 – 24 October 2020)

Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi rajiun

We deeply mourn the passing of one of the nation's pre-eminent lawyers and the former Attorney General of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. He was also renowned for his many philanthropic and social activities.

We recall with immense gratitude his invaluable contribution as a Legal Advisor to ACI Group during its inception.

We pray to the Almighty Allah for the salvation of the departed soul and extend our heartfelt condolence to the bereaved family.



BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,436
New cases in 24hrs



4,00,251
Total cases



5,818
Deaths



3,016,600
Recoveries



1,161,109
Deaths



43,503,823
Total cases

Cable repairs can cause slow

FROM PAGE 1
outages of between 100 gigabytes per second (gbps) and 150gbps due to the equipment changes being done by Bharti Airtel Limited at their Seabone cable at the Singapore end.

Junayed, who is also the vice-president of Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB), said currently Bangladesh has 1,700gbps bandwidth.

"Therefore, outages of 100 to 150gbps bandwidth would not have much effect on internet usage," Junayed, also managing director, Level 3 Carrier Ltd (LIC), added.

The latency and congestion level in internet usage may be at a minimum level, he said.

The slowdown in internet speed was likely to have started from yesterday, but Airtel has informed its Bangladesh counterpart that they are likely to start the upgrade work from the wee hours of today.

An IT expert, Junayed said major IIG operators have already taken some alternative arrangements to tackle the situation.

"We hope internet users will not face much problem from October 28 to November 1," he also said.

Md Emdadul Hoque, secretary-general of ISPAB, told The Daily Star

that reduced speeds may be experienced and that too during peak hours.

He also said there would not be much of an effect.

"Because of the maintenance, there will be some interruption and high latency. But the internet will be there," he told The Daily Star.

There are 39 IIGs in Bangladesh. Of them, 25 to 30 are operational. Only the top three would be affected by the maintenance work, Emdadul said.

IIGs import bandwidth from abroad and sell them among ISPs. There are 2,100 licensed ISPs across the country.

The South East Asia-Middle East-Western Europe 4 (SEA-ME-WE 4) 4 is an approximately 18,800 km submarine cable connecting Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Italy, Tunisia, Algeria and France.

"The SEA-ME-WE 4 is up. There is no maintenance over it. Only those IIGs that are using the SEA-ME-WE 4 from Cox's Bazar to Chennai and then are connected to the I21 to reach Singapore would be affected," said an industry insider.

The total number of internet subscribers rose 8.3 percent to an all-time high of 10.82 crore at the end of August, compared to February's 9.99 crore.



Heaps of iron rod occupy a pavement near the capital's Chankarpool intersection. The rods, being used for the construction of a high-rise, have been kept there for more than a month, putting pedestrians at risk of injuries. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Rangpur cop suspended

FROM PAGE 1
of Detective Branch (DB) of police.

Aleya Begum, 35, a resident of Moynakuthi Kachuturi area in the city, was also arrested for helping the alleged rapists.

The victim's family members said the police official identified himself as Raju, and was in a relationship with the victim.

Around noon on Sunday, Raihanul took the girl to Aleya's house and raped her. Then, two others also raped the girl, police said, quoting the victim's family members.

The victim dialled 999 in the evening seeking help and around 8:30pm, police rushed to the spot and rescued the girl, said the victim's mother.

The victim's father filed a case with Haragachh Police Station under Rangpur Metropolitan Police later that night.

Police are interrogating Raihanul, and legal action will be taken if he is found to be involved in the incident, said Abu Maruf, deputy commissioner of Rangpur Metropolitan Police.

In Noakhali, police yesterday arrested a man on charges of raping a 19-year-old woman in Hatiya upazila.

The arrestee is Helal Uddin, 40, of Kazirtek village.

Police said the woman came out of her room to go to the toilet around 1:00am on Sunday. Helal and another

accused Jamshed, 32, then forcibly took her to the bank of Meghna river, where Helal raped her with the help of Jamshed.

On Sunday night, the woman lodged a case against the two with Hatiya Police Station.

Police held Helal, who was later sent to jail. Police are looking for Jamshed, said Abul Khayer, OC of the station.

In Habiganj, eight men, including a union parishad chairman, were sued for gang rape on October 18 by the woman's husband.

On Sunday, a court directed Nabiganj Police Station to investigate the incident and submit a report within three days, said Azizur Rahman, OC of the station.

The accused are Muhibur Rahman Harun, chairman of Aushkandi Union Parishad of Nabiganj; member of the same UP Dulal Ahmed, 40; Sebul Miah, 28; Jibu Miah, 27, and Shahidul Miah, 25. Three other unnamed perpetrators were also accused in the case.

Police said the victim was abducted by the accused from Parkul village of the same union while she was returning home from Sherpur Bazar on October 8. She was confined to a place and gang-raped for three days.

[Our correspondents in Dinajpur, Noakhali and Moulvibazar contributed to this report]

Durga Puja ends

FROM PAGE 1
remained closed after the evening rituals (Sandhyarati) as per the decision of Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad and Mahanagar Sarbajanin Puja Committee.

Visitors were not allowed to enter temples or puja mandaps from the beginning of Sandhyarati.

During the puja, special prayers were offered seeking relief from the coronavirus pandemic.

This year, the five-day Durga Puja was held at 30,213 mandaps across the country. In Dhaka city, there were 232 mandaps this year against last year's 238.

Different programmes of Durga Puja were broadcast live on the Facebook pages of Mahanagar Sarbajanin Puja Committee and Dhakeshwari National Temple to enable devotees to take part in the rituals from their home.

HC's monitoring order ignored

FROM PAGE 1
Contacted, SC Spokesman Mohammad Saifur Rahman said he will have to inquire of the registrar general on the issue of monitoring cell formation.

He could not give any details about the issue.

The rise in reported incidents of sexual violence against women and children points to the failure of the existing law and justice system in prosecuting offenders and ensuring justice for the victims. And the monitoring cell could have played a role here, said legal experts.

THE DIRECTIVE

The HC directive came in the full text of a verdict delivered by the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice JBM Hassan. The full text was released on May 12, 2017.

On December 5, 2016, the bench delivered a short verdict after hearing a suo motu (voluntary) rule.

The rule was issued earlier during the hearing of a bail petition filed by Millad Hossain, an accused in a murder case filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

According to section 20 of the act, the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal must finish the trials of cases filed under this law within 180 days of charge framing.

Section 31 (ka) of the law states if the trial of a case is not finished on time, the tribunal judge, public prosecutor and police officer concerned have to submit separate reports to the SC and the government, mentioning causes for the delay, and then the authorities concerned should take necessary steps.

The HC judges said in the full verdict, "...the Registrar General of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh is directed to constitute a Monitoring Cell headed by him or the Registrar of the High Court Division along with the Secretary or his representative not below the rank of Additional Secretary of the Ministry

of Home Affairs and Law and Justice Division, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

"The Monitoring Cell shall monitor this aspect and shall submit report from time to time to the concerned authorities of the responsible persons for taking appropriate action in accordance with section 31Ka (3) of the Act, 2000 with a copy thereof to the Monitoring Committee for the Subordinate Judiciary of the Supreme Court."

WHAT HAPPENED TO MILLAD HOSSAIN'S CASE?

The HC refused to grant bail to Millad Hossain as there was a specific allegation against him and asked the trial court to finish his trial in one year in line with the full text of the verdict.

The law secretary and SC registrar general on December 5, 2016 submitted two reports to the HC, saying none of the lower court judges, public prosecutors and police officials concerned complied with the provision of the act on disposing of cases.

The law secretary and SC registrar general submitted the reports after the HC asked them to explain in 30 days whether there was any exercise of the section and whether the SC and law ministry had taken any steps in this regard.

Millad Hossain's lawyer Cumar Debul Dey told The Daily Star that the case against his client was filed with Rangunia Police Station in Chittagong on February 19, 2015 on charge of killing his wife.

The case was sent to the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-2 of Chittagong for trial. The tribunal framed charges in the case on March 21, 2015, but could not finish the trial on time.

Advocate Cumar said he will bring before the HC the issue of non-implementation of its order on forming the monitoring cell.

Vaccine for all, free of cost

FROM PAGE 1
A special allocation of Tk 12,000 crore was made in this year's budget for procuring medical supplies for emergency response to Covid-19, the official mentioned.

Once procured, the vaccines will be administered to people as it's done under the existing vaccination programmes to prevent diseases like measles, polio and diphtheria, the official added.

Finance ministry officials said a rough estimate shows that Bangladesh will require \$1.65 billion to \$2 billion to bring its population of 165 million under the Covid-19 vaccination coverage. Each person is likely to need two shots which may cost \$10-12.

They further said the government is asking for low-interest soft loans from the development partners.

Contacted, Md Abdul Mannan, secretary at the Health Services Division of the health ministry, said, "The vaccines should be given to all free of cost."

He, however, said those would be given as per the government's policy guidelines which are yet to be finalised.

At a virtual meeting with the

WB vice president for the South Asia region on Thursday, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal urged the global lender to take necessary steps to expedite the disbursement of assistance on the basis of population.

"Bangladesh ranks third among the International Development Association (IDA) countries in terms of population," the minister noted.

The coronavirus pandemic is taking a heavy toll on human lives and businesses across the globe. Rapid access to vaccine doses can bring outbreaks under control and also help avert economic shocks that may send more people back into poverty.

The World Health Organization has said that a vaccine against the novel coronavirus will be ready for registration by the end of this year or early next year at the earliest.

Vaccines typically require years of research and testing before reaching clinics, but scientists are racing to produce a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine by next year.

The first vaccine safety trial for humans began in March and six vaccine candidates have so far been approved for limited use. At least 12

more have reached the final stages of testing as of October 24, according to the New York Times Coronavirus Vaccine Tracker.

Though the government has not made a deal with any country to get a Covid-19 vaccine at the early stage, health ministry officials insist that they are in talks with the makers of five front-running vaccine candidates.

On September 26, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina 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.

Bangladesh also could get 20 percent of the vaccines it needs from the WHO and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation under the COVAX Facility, a mechanism designed to guarantee rapid, fair and equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines worldwide.

COVAX currently covers nine vaccine candidates, and its aim is to secure supply and delivery of two billion shots by the end of 2021 to over 170 countries that have signed up for vaccines.

SUV with MP sticker has no papers!

FROM PAGE 1
vehicle during the incident.

"An MP sticker was pasted on the vehicle and Haji Salim's protocol officer had been using it," Ashfaq Rajib Hasan, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Dhanmondi Police Station, said.

However, officials at Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) said a footwear company owns the vehicle and its fitness has not been checked by the authorities in 10 years.

Until this year, it was mandatory to have the fitness of a private vehicle checked by the BRTA every year and receive a fitness clearance. Using a vehicle without fitness clearance is an offence under section 25 of the Road Transport Act.

Every vehicle owner has to pay road tax and advance income tax while renewing the fitness clearance. But BRTA sources said there was no updated tax token for the vehicle, which is an offence under section 26 of the act.

A BRTA official said the owner was supposed to pay Tk 7,500 and an additional 15 percent VAT in road tax each year and Tk 75,000 as advance

income tax every year.

"So, the owner dodged more than Tk 5 lakh as he or she had not renewed the papers since 2010," the official said, wishing not to be named.

Besides, the BRTA in 2012 introduced retro-reflective registration number plates, popularly known as digital number plates, with radio frequency identification (RFID) tags that are mandatory for all vehicles.

But the vehicle in question does not have any of those.

"Although the absence of retro-reflective number plates and a RFID tag is not a distinct offence under the law, we often find that vehicles without such number plates have several other faults. Because, without the number plates, a vehicle can't be fully compliant," a BRTA executive magistrate told this correspondent.

According to BRTA, the Land Rover was registered in 2004 and the name of a footwear company was mentioned as its owner.

Contacted, an official of the footwear company said they sold the vehicle in

2006.

"We have all necessary documents in this regard. But, I don't know why BRTA documents still show our company as the owner of the vehicle. This is not our vehicle anymore," he told The Daily Star last night.

According to the Motor Vehicle Ordinance-1983, which had been in force until November last year, the seller of a vehicle must inform the BRTA in written form about the matter within 15 days of selling the vehicle. The new owner must do the same within a month.

"It's likely that they [buyer and seller] had not informed the BRTA about the development. The name of the owner would have been changed if they did," he added.

This correspondent tried to contact Haji Salim on his two mobile phone numbers mentioned on the Jaitiya Sangsard secretariat website. One of the phones appeared to be switched off while the other was not answered. There was no reply to the text messages sent to this number.

Haji Salim's son Erfan arrested

FROM PAGE 1
Erfan and the others were later shown arrested in the case.

Lt Wasif Ahmed Khan, 26, filed the case with Dhanmondi Police Station against Erfan and four others, Officer-in-Charge Ikram Ali Miah of the police station told The Daily Star.

Wasif also brought attempt-to-murder charges against the accused, including Ab Siddique Dipu, 45, protocol officer of Madina Group; Zahidul, Erfan's bodyguard; and Md Mizanur Rahman, 30, driver of Erfan's vehicle.

Dipu was absconding till last night. Mizanur was placed on a one-day remand yesterday.

Rab officials said they recovered two unlicensed firearms -- a pistol and a pellet gun -- raiding the fourth and fifth floors of Erfan's nine-storey building -- Chan Sarder Dada Bari -- on Debidasbhat Lane in Chawkbazar yesterday.

They said the walkie-talkies they seized are usually used by members of different government agencies. Besides, the VPS, repeater and router, seized during the raid, can be used to communicate in a radius of 10km.

Talking to reporters, Rab officials said they suspected that using the firearms and security equipment, Erfan's men used to pick up the councillor's opponents after introducing themselves as law enforcers.

Rab also seized 12 cans of beer and seven bottles of foreign liquor from Erfan's room. Besides, they found

400 pieces of yaba from Zahidul's possession, said Rab officials.

Visiting the luxurious house, The Daily Star correspondents found what appeared to be a control room fitted with some equipment.

Rab officials said some of the devices were used for hiding location information.

In another raid yesterday, Rab found a torture cell at a room on the top floor of 16-storey Madina Ashik Tower, which is a few yards away from Erfan's home, said Rab's Lt Col Ashique Billah.

Rab's Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam said they found bones, handcuffs, hockey sticks, knives, rope, yaba-taking materials and different types of security equipment there.

The raid was underway when this report was filed late last night.

According to the statement of the case filed by the navy official, a vehicle, with number plate Dhaka Metro-Gha 11-5736, rear-ended his motorcycle in Dhanmondi area when he and his wife were returning to their Dhaka Cantonment home from Nilkhet around 7:45pm on Sunday.

A man came out of the SUV and verbally abused them and left the spot. When the car stopped at a nearby signal, Lt Wasif knocked on the car's window and introduced himself. After that, all passengers got off the vehicle and started hurling abuse and assaulting Lt Wasif.

"We will see your navy-army, we will see your lieutenant-captain ... We will kill you now," Lt Wasif quoted

the assaulters as saying, adding that they punched and kicked him indiscriminately.

When his wife came to save him, they also assaulted her, the case statement said. They then left the scene abandoning the car.

The complainant said he could identify DSCC councillor Erfan and Dipu as a protocol officer of Madina Group owned by Haji Salim from his ID card.

On-duty police personnel and locals rescued Lt Wasif and detained the driver and seized the car.

Many pedestrians got the incident on video which later went viral. In the video, the injured navy officer is seen describing the incident to locals -- how he was beaten up. "I was beaten up in front of everyone indiscriminately even after I introduced myself repeatedly saying I am Lt Wasif. Thank God, I know some basics for my safety, I could survive ... Otherwise they would have killed me today. They assaulted my wife too," the officer said, adding that one of his teeth was broken.

Following the incident, Lt Wasif first lodged a GD with Dhanmondi Police Station on Sunday night.

Yesterday, a case was filed against five people, including Erfan and Dipu.

After primary treatment at a private hospital, Lt Wasif was sent to Dhaka Combined Military Hospital.

Police said it was lawmaker Haji Salim's vehicle with an MP sticker. Mainly the protocol officer uses the

RIFAT MURDER CASE

Children's court to deliver verdict today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A Barguna court is set to deliver the verdict today on 14 juvenile accused in the much-talked-about Rifat Sharif murder case.

Judge Hafizur Rahman of Barguna Children's Court on October 14 fixed the date to pronounce the verdict after hearing arguments from both the prosecution and defence lawyers.

Among the 14 accused eight are now on bail and the rest in the children's ward of Barguna jail.

Mostafizur Rahman Babul, public prosecutor of Barguna Women and Children's Court, said, "We have produced necessary evidence before the court against the juvenile accused. We hope we will get proper justice."

According to court sources, a total of 74 witnesses testified against the 14 accused, aged between 14 and 17.

Rifat was hacked in broad daylight in front of Barguna Government College on June 26 last year. He died of his wounds at Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital on the same day.

On September 1 last year, police pressed charges against 24 people, both adults and juveniles, in the murder case. Police had submitted the charge sheet to the court in two parts -- one against 10 adults and the other against the 14 juveniles.

The Barguna District and Sessions Judge's Court on January 8 this year had framed charges against the 14 juvenile accused. The trial of the accused began at Barguna Children's Court on January 13.

On September 30, the District and Sessions Judge's Court delivered the verdict on the 10 adult accused. The court handed down death sentences to six, including Rifat's wife Ayesha Siddika Minni, and acquitted the four others.

All the six death row convicts are now behind bars.

The main accused in the case, Nayan Bond, was killed in a "gunfight" with police on July 2 last year.

Trump, Biden

FROM PAGE 1
Biden accused the president of surrendering to the pandemic that has killed about 225,000 people in the United States.

With 6 days to go before Election Day, more than 59.1 million Americans have already voted in person or by mail, a pace of early voting that could lead to the highest turnout rate in more than a century, according to data from the US Elections Project at the University of Florida. Some 137 million votes were cast in total in 2016.

On Monday, Trump were scheduled to head to Pennsylvania, a critical swing state being heavily courted with frequent visits by both candidates, and were to speak at rallies in Allentown, Lititz and Martinsburg. He is set for multiple trips to Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin this week, as well as visits to Nebraska, Arizona and Nevada.

Biden was expected to remain in his home state of Delaware. He is scheduled to travel to Georgia today, with stops in Atlanta and Warm Springs, a town of about 400 people where Democratic President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who took office during the Great Depression and rolled out his New Deal recovery program, died in 1945.

That push in the Southern state, which went for Trump in 2016 by about 5 percentage points and has not backed a Democratic presidential candidate since 1992, shows Biden's effort to expand his party's reach as polls show a competitive race in the state.

vehicle. Haji Salim was not in the car during the incident. His son and bodyguards were in there.

Sajjadur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Ramna division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they were scrutinising CCTV footage taken from the area to know what actually happened and would take action accordingly.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said none of those involved in the incident would be spared.

"If anyone commits a crime, they will be punished. No matter who they are or whether they are public representatives, everyone has to face the law," the minister told journalists at his Dhanmondi home.

The Daily Star could not contact anyone from Erfan's family for comments.

Sohel Hawlader, assistant personal secretary to Haji Salim, who usually lives in Dhanmondi, said the lawmaker was ill and that his elder son Solaiman Salim would not talk to the media.

An employee at Madina Developers at Madina Ashik Tower said Erfan studied in England and Canada and came back to Bangladesh around three years ago. He became the ward councillor in February this year.

He also said Erfan had a private room on the roof of the building and that he used to play badminton on the roof. He did not agree to say anything further.

Tokon Thaakoor secures bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Filmmaker Tokon Thaakoor, who was arrested on Sunday in a case filed by Ministry of Information over misappropriating government funds, was granted bail yesterday by a Dhaka court.

Thaakoor was taken to Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Abu Sufian's court yesterday morning, where he received bail after lawyers of the state and his side presented their arguments.

The case, filed in 2016, accuses Thaakoor of misappropriating money from the national film grant-awarded film "Kaata", which he is directing.

Although Thaakoor allegedly took out Tk 13 lakh out of the allotted Tk 35 lakh, he did not work on the film.

The arrest warrant was made on October 3, and Thaakoor was arrested from his residence at the capital's Katabon at 8:30pm.

In a previous interview with The Daily Star,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



With the 22-day fishing ban at sea currently in place, trawlers remain docked and fishers have nothing much to do aside from informal work to pass the days. This photo was taken yesterday from Mariner's Drive Road in Chattogram city.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

ATTACK ON NAVY OFFICIAL Won't spare wrongdoers

Says home minister

AGENCIES

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said those who are involved in crime will be brought to book irrespective of their identities.

"If anyone commits a crime, he/she will be brought under the law, no matter who the person is," Asaduzzaman told reporters at his Dhanmondi residence when they sought comment about the attack on a navy official, reports UNB.

The home minister said police officials concerned were given order to investigate into the incident quickly and neutrally.

"It is unexpected... a person cannot be attacked or given threat," he said. "A crime is always a crime... a naval officer was attacked and we are dealing with the matter..." said the minister while responding to a question, reports BSS.

A case has been filed against Irfan Selim, son of MP Haji Selim, for "attacking" Lieutenant Wasif Ahmed Khan of Bangladesh Navy at Dhanmondi in the capital on Sunday night.

Lt Wasif filed the case with Dhanmondi Police Station against four named accused, including Irfan Selim, also councillor of ward-30 of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), and several unnamed accused.

The three other accused are AB Siddique Dipu (45), Md Zahid, (35), and driver Md Mizanur Rahman, (30).

According to the case statement, a private car hit Lt Wasif's motorcycle near Labaid Hospital around 7:45pm when he and his wife were returning to their Mohammadpur residence from Nilkhet.

Later, some people came out of the car and assaulted the

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WEBINAR ON SAVING AGRICULTURE SECTOR

Cooperative-based production, marketing a must: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only strong farmer organisations and cooperative methods of agricultural production and marketing can save the country's agriculture sector whereas 82 percent of the farmers have become landless, said speakers at a webinar yesterday.

In association with The Daily Star, the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) organised the online roundtable on "Food Sovereignty, Inclusive Food System and Access to Land Organisers", marking World Food Day 2020.

Prof MM Akash of Dhaka University told the event that farmers are being pushed out from this sector; after being landless, they are migrating to other informal sectors. "Second generation of farmers in Bangladesh don't want to be a farmer, but they have the ownership of agricultural land which should be taken from them and distributed among those who want to do

farming," said Prof Akash.

"We should ensure labour rights for the farmworkers and abolish discrimination between men and women. We have to ensure fair prices for the agricultural products and availability of agricultural ingredients," said the economist.

He proposed a cooperative-based agricultural structure.

In the keynote speech, Rowshan Jahan Moni, deputy executive director of ALRD also mentioned about cooperative ownership of production and marketing.

She said poor and disadvantaged sectors -- including small farmers, rural artisans, indigenous people, fisherfolks, poor urban dwellers and women -- have been hit hardest by the Covid-19 pandemic and remain the most vulnerable and food system is a major concern. She said there should be an agrarian reform of land to restore land rights to the farmers.

"Khas land and agricultural government

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

24 dengue patients in hospitals

UNB, Dhaka

A total of twenty-four dengue patients are currently taking treatment at different hospitals across the country.

Three new dengue cases were reported in the past 24 hours, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said in a media release.

Some 576 people have been diagnosed with dengue since the beginning of this year. Among them, 548 have recovered, the DGHS added.

Bangladesh witnessed a massive dengue outbreak last year when 101,354 people were hospitalised and 101,037 recovered fully.

Dengue killed 179 people last year, according to official figures.

Sea tourism can help country beat Covid blues: experts

UNB, Dhaka

For a country that has the world's largest mangrove forest the Sundarbans, the port of Chattogram, world's longest natural sea beach Cox's Bazar, the Teknaf peninsula and Saint Martin's Island, "sea tourism" can help beat Covid-19 blues by generating billions of dollars. All that's needed is an integrated initiative to connect these popular destinations by marine terminals, say experts.

"Bangladesh has a huge potential in the sea tourism sector. We need an integrated initiative that will help the country generate robust economic growth," Dr Md Kawser Ahmed, professor of the oceanography department at Dhaka University, told the news agency. "We can earn billions of dollars through sea tourism if the Sundarbans, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Teknaf and Saint Martin's Island could be connected."

While sea tourism has the potential to help Bangladesh get the "developed country" status by 2041, at the same time, the government should take appropriate steps like fixing environmental taxes for tourists not only to generate revenue but also to protect the country's valuable resources, according to Dr Kawser.

"We propose the government to fix Tk 500 for a tourist landing on Saint Martin's Island and a minimum of Tk 1,000 every night as environment tax. We hope tourists will pay this willingly," he said, also stressing the need for introducing scuba diving at Saint Martin's island to attract tourists.

Bangladesh, the professor said, can be a prime destination for foreign tourists in South Asia. "Bangladesh can take an initiative in the future to connect Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar and India by marine routes. So, government-to-

government agreements are needed for making this a success," he said.

But another expert, Research Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Dr Khandoker Golam Moazzem said tourism is needed in this country, but not at the cost of the environment. "We have to give priority to the environment at first. We can't destroy our resources in the name of tourism. So, we have to conserve the corals too."

Dr Khandoker said the government has to embark on a long-term plan to run passenger vessels in the seas prioritising the nature first policy. "Then, domestic and regional tourists will visit the spots. And the tourism sector will play a significant role in Bangladesh's economy," the economist said.

Shiblul Azam Koreshi, owner of Abakash Parjatan on Saint Martin,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Historic hillock razed or not?

Environmentalists, DoE say it was; MC College, EED deny claim

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

On October 10, a group of socially concerned citizens went to protest the gang-rape that occurred at Sylhet's MC College. After protesting, some of the participants entered the college campus and found that part of a historic hillock was reportedly being razed.

As they also protested this incident, the operation was halted and after a couple of weeks, and the college authority managed to reshape the hillock and claimed that it was not razed to begin with.

The hillock, commonly known as "Thackeray Tila", is named after William Makepeace Thackeray, who came to Sylhet as its Collector under East India Company in 1772.

During his tenure, he lived in a bungalow built on top of the hillock. Now, the residential bungalow of the

college's principal is situated there.

The part of the hillock centering the incident is adjacent to the college's old canteen, where a 10-storey building is being constructed, with a budget of Tk 13 crore.

Abdul Karim Kim -- general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), Sylhet chapter -- said, "On that day, we visited the college and found the contractor's men razing part of the hillock with an excavator."

"Although we saw them doing so, the authority claimed that they were removing unearthed soil stored at the bottom of the hillock. But we strongly protested the act," he said.

On Saturday, this correspondent visited the college and found that the hillock's slope was reshaped to the original state, but the soil was loose.

Md Uzzal Bakh, sub-assistant

engineer of Education Engineering Department (EED) in Sylhet, said, "The soil, which was unearthed while piling the building, was stored at the bottom of the hillock, and the contractor was just removing that soil, not razing the hillock."

MC College Principal Prof Saleh Ahmed also said the same. "I understand the importance of Thackeray Tila, as I live on top of it. The part razed is just the stockpile of soil previously unearthed, not part of the historic hillock."

"I vow to protect all hillocks, natural beauty and the college's heritage. In no way will I let the contractor destroy this," he said.

While the college authority and EED denied the allegation, Department of Environment (DoE) says otherwise.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Scrap digital security act

Zafrullah urges PM

UNB, Dhaka

Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury yesterday urged the government to abolish the Digital Security Act for strengthening democracy and removing the obstacle to investigative journalism.

Speaking at a human chain, he also called upon the government to withdraw all the cases filed against journalists under the act and ensure freedom of the press.

"Give journalists the scope for divulging facts. All the cases filed against them have to be withdrawn. Not only that, I also call upon the prime minister to annul the Digital Security Act and send it to the grave. It'll benefit you, the country and people. It'll also help strengthen democracy," Zafrullah said.

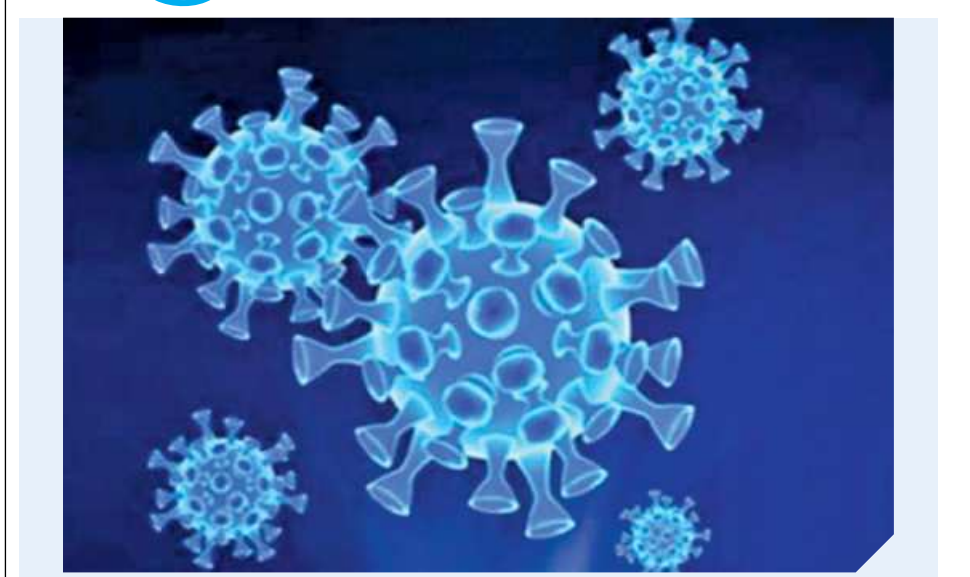
Bangladesh Mofussil Journalists' Association arranged the programme in front of Jatiya Press Club, demanding release of Ruhul Amin Gazi, president of a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ).

Stating that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Sunday urged journalists to write reports based on facts shunning yellow journalism, he said unethical or yellow journalism flourishes when freedom of the press is obstructed.

"When such an act (digital security) is used against journalists to prevent them from investigating facts, then yellow journalism and militancy emerge in the country," he observed.

Zafrullah alleged that the government's wrong policy, unfair behaviour and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



THREE COVID-19 MYTHBUSTERS

THE LIKELIHOOD OF SHOES SPREADING COVID-19 IS VERY LOW

The likelihood of COVID-19 being spread on shoes and infecting individuals is very low. As a precautionary measure, particularly in homes where infants and small children crawl or play on floors, consider leaving your shoes at the entrance of your home. This will help prevent contact with dirt or any waste that could be carried on the soles of shoes.

COVID-19 IS CAUSED BY A VIRUS, NOT BY BACTERIA – ANTIBIOTIC HAS NO ROLE AGAINST IT

The virus that causes COVID-19 is in a family of viruses called Coronaviridae. Antibiotics do not work against viruses.

Some people who become ill with COVID-19 can also develop a bacterial infection as a complication. In this case, antibiotics may be recommended by a health care provider.

There is currently no licensed medication to cure COVID-19. If you



have symptoms, call your health care provider or COVID-19 hotline for assistance.

THERE ARE CURRENTLY NO DRUGS LICENSED FOR THE TREATMENT OR PREVENTION OF COVID-19

While several drug trials are ongoing, there is currently no proof that Hydroxychloroquine or any other drug can cure or prevent COVID-19. The misuse of Hydroxychloroquine can cause serious side effects and illness and even lead to death. WHO is coordinating efforts to develop and evaluate medicines to treat COVID-19.

Source: World Health Organisation



Environmentalists photographed this excavator reportedly razing a part of "Thackeray Tila" of MC College campus on October 11. Days later, on October 25, the same area was seen reshaped to its original state, as if nothing happened. But the soil was still loose.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

President returns home

Bss, Dhaka

President M Abdul Hamid is returning home this morning after completing his health check-up at a hospital in Dubai of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"A special VVIP aircraft (BG-148) of Bangladesh Biman Airlines, carrying the president and his entourage members, is expected to land at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 7:30am," President's Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told the news agency yesterday.

The head of the state left the country for Dubai on October 14 for health check-up and eye treatment.

The president was scheduled to return home on October 22 but he had to spend four more days in Dubai till October 26 on the advice of his foreign physicians, Abul Kalam Azad added.

The 76-year-old has been suffering from glaucoma for a long time.



Wires put up by internet service providers are cluttering the capital city's line of sight. Hung from electrical and telephone poles, they cling together and gather dust, while compounding the chance for accidents. This photo was taken yesterday from Mirpur-1.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Tk 1.53cr cash support for poor in south

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An NGO along with three other organisations is providing cash support of Tk 1.53 crore to the poor in Satkhira and Khulna.

Unnayan is implementing it in the southwestern and southern districts of the country, with direction and funding of Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), Foreign Commonwealth Development Office and European Union, says a press release.

Those who are in food crisis amid the pandemic in eight unions under three upazilas will get the money under "Pathways to Prosperity for Extremely Poor People Project" that started in 2019, it adds.

Unnayan has identified 1,700 poor households from in Ashasuni upazila of Satkhira.

To distribute the money through mobile financial service, the NGO held a programme at its Shovnali office in Ashasuni on Sunday.

'A history of blood and conspiracy'

Says Quader on BNP

Bss, Dhaka

Criticising the political strategy of BNP, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP wears the mask of democracy as their political inheritance characterises blood and conspiracy.

"BNP's ill-politics is the biggest impediment on the way to institutionalisation of democracy in the country as killings and designing conspiracies are their political culture," he said in a routine briefing from his official residence in the capital.

Criticising BNP's demand for resignation of the government and holding elections under a neutral one, Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said the country is progressing under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina whereas they are trying to make an issue without any legal basis.

BNP is demanding the government's resignation by resorting to social demonstrations against rape after failing to exploit previous two issues like movements for safe road and quota reform, the minister told the online briefing.

"BNP leaders should take lessons from all their failed movements. There is no necessity to make demand for resignation of the government as the elections will be held as per the constitution in due time," he added.

Replying to a statement made by BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir on the possibility of peoples' agitation on streets, Quader said, "It is doubtful whether Mirza Fakhru himself has any belief in it."

Turning down BNP's repeated claim that there is no freedom of media in the country, he said allegations made by BNP are false and outdated. Even they are clamouring that the government has no tolerance on dissidents, he added.

26th death anniversary of Rokeya Begum

CITY DESK

Today marks the 26th death anniversary of Rokeya Begum, mother of Hasan Jahid Tusher, a deputy press secretary to the prime minister, says a press release.

On this occasion, doa mahfil and Quran recitation have been organised at her village home in Sreerampur under Magura Sadar upazila. Food will also be distributed among the destitute.

Tusher sought prayers from all for salvation of the departed soul of his mother.

Rokeya, wife of late Miah Md Abdur Razzaque (a former agricultural official), died in 1994 -- leaving four sons, two daughters and a host of relatives to mourn her death.



Sea tourism

FROM PAGE 3

said the island is not that attractive to tourists nowadays. "Around 2,000 tourists visit the island daily during the peak season (December to February). Now few domestic tourists visit due to bad weather and Covid pandemic," he said.

The vice president of Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh (TOAB) also said sea tourism will bolster Bangladesh's economy. "The government is building a tourist zone in Sabrang of Teknaf. Now tourists can enjoy the Bay of Bengal utilising the world's longest marine drive."

"The government should focus on the blue economy to tide over the economic crisis. As Bangladesh won the maritime boundary case with Myanmar and India in the International Tribunal, there is no problem in the Bay of Bengal. Ocean economy, known as the blue economy, offers opportunities in fishery, mineral resources, shipping and energy as well," he said.

Shiblu said there are now 150 Abakash and 70 restaurants on Saint Martin Island. "The government should also set up a "waste treatment plant" there as soon as possible. Moreover, the solar capacity should be improved to light up the site," he said.

Bangladesh has the right to fish and explore resources within 118,813 square kilometres of the Bay of Bengal. Sources said the ocean contributes around US \$6 billion annually to the Bangladesh economy. The gross value addition of Bangladesh's ocean economy was US \$6.2 billion in 2015.

The total contribution of the tourism and travel sector to Bangladesh's GDP was Tk 840.2 billion or 4.3 percent of the country's GDP in 2016, according to Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute data. And according to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the sector would grow by 7.1 percent each year raising the total contribution to Tk 1,783 billion or 4.7 percent to the country's GDP by 2027.

Tokon

FROM PAGE 3

Thaakoor had said that even though he had finished shooting -- costs for other technical processes, such as background score and publication, were a concern. "The government grant simply did not provide enough to complete the film."

Since 1976, the government has been funding films each year. However, from 1997-98 and 1999-2000, the government postponed the grants. From 2008-2018, some 22 feature-length films were funded, but are yet to be released. From 2007-2015, 41 films received grants, among which only 15 were released.

"The government funds come from people's pockets, and so directors should at least finish production of these films," said noted filmmaker Nasiruddin Yousuff. He expressed concern over how many directors fail to finish production, while many fail to even start production.

"Previously, the given amount was not enough for films, but at present, I believe with the increased amount, it is more than enough to finish a film production," expresses Bachchu. "It is a disgrace to arrest a director on such claims, as these issues could have been solved in another manner. Arresting a director will not solve this problem."

Actor-director Animesh Aich, who plays a role in "Kaata", feels that the funds should have been better managed. "Directors should allot their production budget in accordance with the received funds to avoid such problems in the future," he said.

IUB hosts webinar series marking UN Global Day

CITY DESK

With an aim to explicate various international issues -- from health to foreign policy -- Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) hosted a series of webinars on October 22, on the UN Global Day.

The programme was jointly organised by Global Gatekeepers Club of the Global Studies and Governance (GSG) Programme of SLASS, says a press release. As part of it, four webinars were hosted, where external various luminaries and faculties from IUB participated, presented papers, and chaired the sessions.

The first webinar highlighted the study, research and student visa requirements for Germany and explained scholarship facilities. Dr Nafisa Huq, Head of IUB's Department of Public Health talked on the topic 'Pandemic and Education'. Annuroopa Dixit, Pooja Midha and Rumana Kabir from DAAD -- one of the world's largest research and exchange student funding organisations -- were guest speakers for the session.

For the topic 'Bangabandhu and Bangladesh's Foreign Policy', two separate webinars were held, where renowned educationist, scholars, policymakers and professional specialists of the country took part. Prof Milan Pagon, Vice Chancellor of IUB delivered the welcome speech. Former ambassador Muhammad Zamir chaired the afternoon session while Dr Fakrul Alam from DU's Department of English, chaired the evening session.

Retired ambassador Tariq A Karim, Senior Fellow at Bay of Bengal Institute Project at IUB and Dr Delwar Hossain from Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka were discussants for the sessions, while various researchers and educators also spoke.

The discussants highlighted Bangabandhu's role in building a progressive, all-inclusive, democratic and sovereign Bangladesh.

The other webinar was held with the title "COVID Unravelling". Dr Meghna Guhathakurta, Executive Director, Research Initiatives, Bangladesh; Dr Md Mamun Habib, School of Business & Entrepreneurship at IUB; Dr Mohammad Sorowar Hossain from Department of Environment Science and Management at IUB and Dr Marsela Nyawara, Migration Health Officer (Covid-19 Response), IOM Cox's Bazar were guest speakers of the programme.

Former VC of BSMMU Prof Tahir no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent medicine specialist and former vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Prof DR Mohammad Tahir passed away yesterday at a hospital in Dhaka.

He was 80 years of age. Prof Tahir breathed his last around 8am while undergoing treatment at Labaid Hospital.

He was admitted to the hospital following a cardiac arrest, Proshanta Kumar Shaha, public relations officer of BSMMU, told The Daily Star.

Vice Chancellor of BSMMU Prof Kanak Kanti Barua has expressed deep shock at his death.



Scrap digital

FROM PAGE 3

repressive acts are taking the country to a wrong direction.

He also criticised the government for arresting some journalists, including Ruhul Amin Gazi and photographer Shafiqul Islam Kajol, under the Digital Security Act.

"Journalists are your (PM) friends as they present the truth to you and find out the truth. I would like to say no one can stay in power by indulging in repressive acts. You please release the journalists immediately and allow them to speak up and present the truth freely. This will pave the way for good governance in the country," he observed.

Zafrullah said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir on Sunday demanded the release of arrested journalists, but he did not assure that their party, if returned to power, will revoke the "black law" and ensure freedom of the press and people's freedom of expression.

He called upon all to get united to restore the freedom of expression in the country.

Zafrullah also urged the government to take steps for giving journalists a special incentive during the pandemic, in recognition of their contributions to the nation.



An alleyway in North Mugda has been in this state for nearly a month now. Even though they tolerated it for the first few days, residents of the area can no longer bear the suffering caused by it, especially as drainwater remains clogged as well, inset.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



Won't spare

FROM PAGE 3

navy official. They also verbally abused his wife, the navy official alleged.

Meanwhile, the incident went viral on social media, and generated strong reactions from netizens.

Md Ikram Ali Mia, officer-in-charge of the police station, said the driver of the car, Mizanur, was detained from the spot and shown arrested in the case.

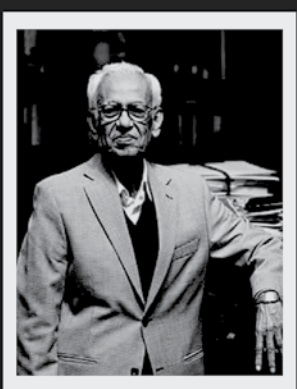
Later, members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) conducted a drive at the Old Dhaka residence of Haji Selim and detained his son Irfan and Irfan's bodyguard Zahid yesterday afternoon.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court placed Mizanur Rahman on one-day remand in the case.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Abu Sufiyan Mohammad Noman passed the order when Dhanmondi Police Station's Inspector Ashfaq Rajib, also the case's investigation officer, produced him before the court in the afternoon, seeking a five-day remand.

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THE LOSS OF THE GREAT SOUL



Barrister Rafiqul Haque (1935 - 2020)

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PARTEX GROUP

Partex Petro Limited (PPL)



PARTEX PETRO

Partex Group is establishing Condensate Fractionation Plant at Dangerchar, Karnafuli, Chattogram. The project will use natural gas condensate as raw material.

Please download the tender documents from the following URL: www.partexpetro.com/tender

TENDER NOTICE

Tender Publish Date	Name of works	Last Date & Time for Tender Submission	Tender Opening Date & Time
1	2	3	4
27/10/2020	Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Laboratory Equipment of Petroleum Products with all ancillaries.	20/11/2020 2 PM	20/11/2020 3 PM

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Global University Admission & Visa Processing Centre

BASHATI CONDOMINIUM House # 15, Road # 17, Banani, C/A, Dhaka M: 01406 252 275 / 70

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Thousands of haor people under erosion threat

Twenty villages in Netrakona's Khaliyajury upazila have already been washed away in the last 30 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Some 50 villages in Netrakona's Khaliyajury upazila are under threat of erosion due to heavy rain accompanied by gusty wind and high waves in the haor waters.

This type of natural calamity is locally known as Afal, said villagers.

At least 20 villages in the haor area have already been washed away in the last 30 years, said Swagoto Sarker Shuvo, president of Haor Unnayan Parishad.

The villages are Jagdishpur, Maganpur, Bikrampur, Kanainagor, Sultanpur, Aminpur, Khurshiganj, Kalipur, Hemnagor, Achhanpur, Nurpur, Kacharibari, Habibpur, Durgabari, Nagor, Shibpur, Kamarbari, Norsinghpur, Nayanagor and Saotal.

This type of natural disaster continues from June to November every year in the upazila, said Md Shamim Mia, chairman of Krishnapur union parishad (UP).

This time, some 50 villages out of 85 in six unions are facing threat of erosion due to high waves created in the haors following onrush of waters from the hills across the border through the Surma river and some major haors including Chhayar Haor and Dingaputa Haor, said the UP chairman.

The villages in Krishnapur union-Nazirpur, Muradnagar, Shyampur,

Krishnapur, Kutubpur, Kallyanpur, Dulatpur, Muslimpur and Jaherpur are at worst state due to erosion, he added.

The work of setting up of concrete blocks beside Krishnapur Eidgah to Kutubpur road was going on and 50 percent work was done but it has been

their dwellings from the wrath of natural calamities.

He added that a project titled "Village Protection" has been taken up to save the haor areas from erosion.

The upazila chairman also urged the authority concerned to take necessary

The natural calamity, locally known as Afal, continues from June to November every year. This year about 50 villages out of 85 under six unions of the upazila are facing erosion threat due to high waves in the haors and onrush of waters from the hills across the border

eroded, said the chairman.

The boundary wall of some educational institutions in the union have also been affected due to this year's natural disaster, he said.

Golam Kibria Jobber, chairman of Khaliyajury upazila parishad, said most of the families living in the haor areas are poor but they have to spend a good amount of money every year to save

steps to save thousands of haor people from the wrath of natural calamities.

Contacted, upazila Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) engineer Md Yunus Ali said to save the haor areas from erosion, the guide wall should be constructed alongside the village roads.

Khaliyajury Upazila Nirbahi Officer AHM Ariful Islam said they have already sent a proposal to the ministry concerned in this regard.



Haor people of Patra village in Netrakona's Khaliyajury upazila face erosion threat.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Criminals poison to death different species of fish worth Tk 15 lakh allegedly over personal enmity at Paikora village in Naogaon's Atrai upazila on Sunday night.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Damaged bridge passes a year without repair



PHOTO: AZIBOR RAHMAN

In an attempt to keep the vehicle from flipping over on the damaged part of the bridge's ramp, a rickshaw puller rides towards the narrow asphalted strip of the road. The photo was taken recently from Jhenidah-Marikelbaria road in Baliadanga village of Jhenidah Sadar upazila.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Thanks to the indifference of the authorities, a bridge in Jhenidah Sadar upazila has been causing sufferings to thousands of locals for a year now.

The bridge is on Jhenidah-Narikelbaria road in Baliadanga village of Kalicharanpur union.

With a gaping hole in a significant area and no guardrail on either side, the bridge poses hazards for all, especially for young children. Moreover, asphalted layer of a ramp of the bridge is damaged so severely that three-wheeled vehicles run the risk of overturning while getting on or off the bridge.

Locals said thousands of inhabitants in four unions -- Kalicharanpur, Ghorshal, Furshandi and Dogachhi -- use the road and over the past year, many passersby and vehicles got into a number of accidents on the bridge.

While talking to this correspondent, Pintu Shikdar, a member of Kalicharanpur Union Parishad (UP), said about one lakh people from the four unions and around 1,500 vehicles use the road every day on an average.

Accidents on the bridge are quite frequent and unless it is repaired urgently, ambulances

carrying critical patients as well as vehicles of other emergency services -- such as the fire service and police -- may get into a fatal accident any moment, he also said.

Battery-run auto-rickshaw driver Saddam Hossain said while it is very difficult for two vehicles to steer clear of the hole on the bridge and at the same time give way to each other, many vehicles flip over on the damaged ramp of the bridge.

Abed Ali, a trucker who frequents the road, said as the hole turned the bridge narrow, it now takes too long for vehicles in both directions to take turn and cross it.

Besides, without guardrails on its sides, it is really difficult for a driver to keep the vehicle from falling off the bridge, he added.

Contacted, Kalicharanpur UP Chairman Motiur Rahman said he would soon communicate with the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Jhenidah Sadar upazila and urge them to take necessary steps in repairing the bridge.

Ahsan Habib, the engineer at LGED in Jhenidah Sadar, said their estimations of the bridge's repair work have already been submitted to the authorities concerned.

Local fish aplenty in Chalanbeel

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPI, back from Chalanbeel

Azim Uddin from Handial village has been catching fish at Chalanbeel in the village, under Chatmohar upazila of Pabna, over the last one decade.

During this time last year, he got only 10 to 15 kilograms of local fish at the beel every day. But this year, he is catching 25 to 30 kg of fish every day.

"The entire Chalanbeel is filled with water now and we are getting a huge amount of local fish in the water body. I have been catching 25 to 30 kg of fish from Handial area of Chalanbeel over the past one month," said Azim.

A total of 81 fish species -- 72 indigenous and 9 exotic -- exist in the Chalanbeel, the largest wetland in

the country and a significant source of local fish species such as Rui, Katol, Chitol, Air, Boal, Puti, Tengra, Bayim, Kholse, Guchi, Sorputi and Bele.

"Production of local species of fish in Chalanbeel has increased remarkably due to lingering floods in the area this year. The floodwater as well as heavy rainfall helped good breeding of various local fish in Chalanbeel," said Shahed Ali, fisheries officer in Sirajganj.

The fish population in the water body has increased by around 50 to 60 percent due to the floods, he added.

This correspondent during a visit to of Chalanbeel's Handial area, Mannan Nagar in Tarash upazila of Sirajganj and Gurudaspur upazila in Natore, saw hundreds of locals

catching fish all day in the vast wetland.

Handial resident Raisul Islam said, "The fishermen are using various nets for catching fish. I have been getting good catch of fish, using Khora Nets for the last few weeks."

More than 50 locals have been catching fish from Handial area. But, due to excessive supply, they are not getting good price for the fish at local markets.

Each kg of small fish is selling for Tk 60 to Tk 100 and each kg of medium sized fish is selling for Tk 120 to Tk 200 at the local market, he said, adding that finding only a handful of customers at the local market, the fishers oftentimes bring their catch back home and dry those in the sun.

Trader found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Police recovered the throat-slit body of a trader from Bhairab river near Churamankathi area of Jashore on Sunday.

The deceased, Golam Mostafa, 50, a timber trader, was son of Pachu Mandal of Bagdanga village in Jashore Sadar upazila.

Churamankathi Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Mannan Munna said Mostafa went out of his house on Saturday night and did not returned home.

Local people spotted his body floating in the river and informed the police, Officer in Charge (OC) of Jashore Kotwali Police Station Moniruzzaman said, adding that, they recovered the body and sent it to Jashore General Hospital for autopsy.

3 teenagers held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Police arrested three teenage boys for their alleged involvement in attempting to snatch money from a pedestrian in Sadar upazila early Sunday.

OC of Sadar Police Station Mozaffar Hossain said eight teenage boys, riding on three motorbikes, intercepted a man at Bagdanga village and tried to snatch his money early Sunday.

Hearing the victim's cry for help, locals rushed in and manage to catch three of the alleged snatchers.



An everyday scene at Chalanbeel, where fishers are getting good catch of local fish. The photo was taken recently from Mannan Nagar area of the water body in Tarash upazila of Sirajganj.

PHOTO: STAR

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, DPHE

Sirajganj District, Sirajganj

Phone: 0751-62191

E-mail: ee.sirajganj@dphe.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice Open Tendering Method (OTM)

Memo No. 46.03.8800.061.07.109.17-305

Date: 25/10/2020

e-Tender is invited and published in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procurement of the following works:

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description of works	Last selling date and time of tender document	Deadline for submission of tender security	Tender closing date and time
506124	MM-PEDP-4/221	Major maintenance of 24 Nos. Govt. Primary School in Sirajganj District under PEDP-4 Project of DPHE during the FY 2020-2021.	10-11-2020 at 14:00	10-11-2020 at 13:00	10-11-2020 at 15:00
506126	MM-PEDP-4/222	Major maintenance of 10 Nos. Govt. Primary School in Sirajganj District under PEDP-4 Project of DPH during the FY 2020-2021.	10-11-2020 at 14:00	10-11-2020 at 13:00	10-11-2020 at 15:00
506128	MM-PEDP-4/223	Major maintenance of 9 Nos. Govt. Primary School in Sirajganj District under PEDP-4 Project of DPHE during the FY 2020-2021.	10-11-2020 at 13:00	10-11-2020 at 14:00	10-11-2020 at 15:00
506129	URC-20-21-012	Water and Sanitation Works of Upazila Resource Center (URC) Building at Tarash Upazila in Sirajganj District under PEDP-4 Project of DPHE during the FY 2020-2021.	10-11-2020 at 13:00	10-11-2020 at 14:00	10-11-2020 at 15:00
506130	URC-202-21-013	Water and Sanitation Works of Upazila Resource Center (URC) Building at Sirajganj Sadar Upazila in Sirajganj District under PEDP-4 Project of DPHE during the FY 2020-2021.	10-11-2020 at 13:00	10-11-2020 at 14:00	10-11-2020 at 15:00
506131	PTI-20-21-04	Water Supply, Sanitation and other works of Primary Training Institute (PTI) in Sirajganj District under PEDP-4 Project of DPHE during the FY 2020-2021.	10-11-2020 at 13:00	10-11-2020 at 14:00	10-11-2020 at 15:00
506132	DPEO-19-20-01	Repair and maintenance work for Water & Sanitation work of District Primary Education Office Building in Sirajganj District under PEDP-4 Project of DPHE during the FY 2020-2021.	10-11-2020 at 13:00	10-11-2020 at 14:00	10-11-2020 at 15:00

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited through any registered branch of enlisted banks up to the time specified in the notice. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Tabibur Rahman Talukder
Executive Engineer, DPHE
Sirajganj District, Sirajganj

GD-1700

Stop using monarchy

Thai opposition tells PM after Prayuth slams 'illegal protests' in parliament

REUTERS, Bangkok

Opponents of Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha yesterday urged him to stop using the monarchy to justify his hold on power and resign, in remarks made to a special session of parliament called by the former junta leader to discuss months of protests.

Student-led demonstrations which initially demanded the departure of Prayuth and a new constitution have increasingly turned their attention to the monarchy, calling for reforms to curb the powers of King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

"The prime minister is a major obstacle and burden to the country. Please resign and everything will end well," said Somporn Amornvivat, leader of the opposition Pheu Thai party, the largest single party in parliament.

Members of the opposition Move Forward party accused Prayuth of trying to use the monarchy to keep power - particularly regarding an incident around a royal motorcade that was used to justify tough emergency measures on Oct. 15.

Prayuth called the parliament session this week after the emergency measures - including a ban on protests - only inflamed anger and brought tens of thousands onto Bangkok streets.

He rejected a demand from protesters to step down and said last week it was his government's job to protect the monarchy.



"I'm confident that today, regardless of our different political views, everyone still loves the country," Prayuth said in his opening address.

"Though the people have the freedom to protest based on the constitution, authorities need to control the illegal protests," said Prayuth. "We do not want to see clashes or riots in the country," he said, accusing some protesters of "inappropriate actions."

But his opponents and protest leaders are sceptical the parliamentary session will resolve the crisis. His supporters have a majority in parliament, whose entire upper house was picked by his former junta.

Opposition MPs questioned Prayuth's reasons for emergency measures, especially the justification for a fracas around Queen Suthida's motorcade on Oct. 14, when she was jeered by protesters.

"There was an attempt to use the royal motorcade to distort the truth and make people hate and confront each other," said Move Forward MP Suttawan Suban Na Ayuthaya. "Don't bring the monarchy into this conflict."

Protesters are set to march to the German embassy at 5 pm to petition Berlin to investigate the king's use of his powers while in the European nation, where he spends much of his time. The German government has said it would be unacceptable for him to conduct politics from Germany.



Chileans react after hearing the results of the referendum on a new constitution in Valparaiso, Chile, on Sunday night. Chileans voted overwhelmingly in a landmark referendum to replace their dictatorship-era constitution, long seen as underpinning the nation's glaring economic and social inequalities. The result set off wild celebrations across the capital and other cities after voters threw out the constitution left by the regime of 1973-1990 dictator Augusto Pinochet.

PHOTO: REUTERS

US battles homegrown disinformation crisis

AFP, Washington

Russia's coordinated effort to nudge Americans toward voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election caught social media companies flat-footed and remains a stain on the reputation of Facebook in particular.

Four years later, the FBI and other American security officials -- aware of interference but silent last time -- are warning that Russia and Iran are meddling.

In 2020, Americans are playing the leading role, posting the bulk of false or misleading comments, memes, photographs and videos that are spread with the ease and speed of online distribution. And there are signs that it is out of control.

"What the Russians did in 2016 was show a toolkit, where you could use deceptive actors online working in coordination with each other as a political tool," Joshua Tucker, a professor of politics and expert on data science and social media at New York University, told AFP.

"There's been a fixation on foreign interference, but the people who really have an incentive to influence the outcome of an election are people who live in that country -- Americans."

Facebook's latest report about inauthentic behavior confirms the trend.

In the first week of October alone it took down 200 Facebook accounts, 55 Pages and 77

Instagram accounts that originated in the US.

Copying the Russian tactics of 2016, the operators used stock profile photos and posed as right-leaning individuals across the United States. Some of the removed accounts were older, and had pretended to be left-leaning individuals around the 2018 US congressional elections.

The overall effect was to sow political discord and undermine faith in the democratic process.

Research undertaken by Tucker and his colleagues shows that political partisanship

-- heightened by social media algorithms that drive users to one side of a story -- means neither liberals or conservatives are good at sorting fact from fiction when challenged.

As part of a third-party fact-checking relationship with Facebook, AFP has flagged thousands of false or misleading posts in the US. Some had been shared hundreds of thousands of times. User feedback shows that even verified facts are not accepted when they go against partisan political belief.

But social media researchers say the detection of such accounts are the exception rather than the norm.

Professor Russell Muirhead, co-author of

"A Lot Of People Are Saying," a title that plays on words often used by Trump to promote unproven theories, said US disinformation has evolved rapidly since 2016.

He referred to Pizzagate in 2016, the false claim that top Democrats ran a child sex trafficking ring from a Washington, DC pizza restaurant. That story portrayed Hillary Clinton as a concentration of pure evil.

In this election cycle, Pizzagate has metastasized and been succeeded by the QAnon conspiracy theory, which claims that Trump is locked in a struggle with Democratic and Hollywood elites who practice child sex trafficking and cannibalism.

Its adherents are taking aim at Biden. "QAnon is now painting Biden not as a legitimate opponent but as part of this team of globalists who are intent on destroying America, not to be argued with but to be eliminated," said Muirhead.

The most immediate disinformation risk to the 2020 vote, however, according to Tucker, is Trump's repeated claims that the use of mail-in ballots will lead to fraud and a "rigged" election. He made the same claims in 2016. Subsequent investigations showed no evidence of widespread fraud.

"Who needs the Russians running around casting doubt on the integrity of the democratic process when the president of the United States is doing it?" Tucker said.

Senate set to confirm Barrett to US SC

REUTERS, Washington

The Republican-controlled US Senate was expected to confirm President Donald Trump's nominee, Amy Coney Barrett, as the next justice to the Supreme Court, a move that will tilt the country's highest court further to the right for years to come.

No nominee to the Supreme Court has ever been confirmed by the Senate this close to a presidential election, with nearly 60 million ballots already cast ahead of Election Day on Nov. 3.

The rush to confirm Barrett, 48, has bitterly divided Democrats and Republicans, who are expected to split along party lines on the final vote. Trump has said repeatedly he wants her in place to vote on any election-related cases that go to the court.

With Republicans controlling the chamber 53-47 and no indication of an internal revolt against the conservative appeals court judge succeeding liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Barrett looks almost certain to take up a lifetime appointment on the bench over universal Democratic opposition.

Several Republicans who previously expressed concerns about rushing the process, including Alaska Republican Lisa Murkowski, are expected to approve Barrett's nomination.

With Barrett confirmed, the Supreme Court will have a solid 6-3 conservative majority.

Barrett is expected to participate in a crucial hearing on Nov. 10, where Trump and his fellow Republicans will ask the court to strike down the Affordable Care Act.

The 2010 healthcare law, popularly known as Obamacare, has helped millions of Americans obtain medical insurance and protected those with pre-existing conditions.

Russia strikes kill 78 rebels in Syria

AFP, Beirut

Air strikes by Syrian regime ally Russia killed 78 fighters from a Turkey-backed rebel group in northwest Syria yesterday, a Britain-based war monitor said.

Russian warplanes also wounded 100 people when they targeted a training camp of the Faylaq al-Sham faction in the Jabal Duwayli area in Idlib province, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

In March, a fragile truce brokered between Moscow and Ankara stemmed a deadly months-long Russia-backed regime military offensive on the country's last major rebel stronghold in Idlib.

The National Liberation Front, an umbrella group of Ankara-backed rebels, told AFP that Russian strikes yesterday had hit one of its positions, but did not give an exact death toll.

The March truce has largely held with the exception of some bombardment and intermittent air strikes on the area, according to the Observatory.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Third attempt at Karabakh ceasefire quickly collapses

A third attempt at halting weeks of fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh collapsed quickly yesterday with Armenia and Azerbaijan trading accusations of violating the US-brokered ceasefire within minutes. The latest "humanitarian ceasefire" was announced by Washington on Sunday, after truces brokered by Russia and France fell apart over previous weekends. Azerbaijan's foreign ministry said Armenian forces had shelled the town of Terter and nearby villages in "gross violation" of the truce. Armenia's defence ministry said Azerbaijani forces had "grossly violated" the ceasefire with artillery fire on combat positions in various parts of the frontline. More than 1,000 people have been reported dead in the fighting which broke out on September 27.

China 'to sanction' US firms over Taiwan arms sale

China yesterday said it would impose sanctions on Lockheed Martin, a Boeing defence division and other US firms involved in arms sales to Taiwan, the self-governed island that Beijing views as its territory. The two US giants were involved in a recent sale of nearly \$2 billion worth of missiles to Taiwan, and foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian urged the US to stop arms sales to the island. The status of Taiwan holds potential for conflict between the United States and China, during a wider struggle for technology, security and trade supremacy. Beijing says Taiwan is an inviolable part of China to be reclaimed, by force if necessary.

Japan sets 2050 deadline for carbon neutrality

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga yesterday set a 2050 deadline for the world's third-largest economy to become carbon neutral, significantly firming up the country's climate change commitments. Delivering his first policy address since taking office, Suga placed the environment front and centre as Japan plays catch-up with climate pledges made by other major economies. Tokyo had previously only aimed to achieve carbon neutrality some time in the latter half of the century, a goal that critics called vague. But the new target was praised by activists and experts, and puts Japan on the same timeline as Europe and Britain and a decade ahead of China, which last month set a 2060 goal.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A woman argues with law enforcement officers during an opposition rally in Minsk, on Sunday, on the final day of an ultimatum set by the opposition for their embattled strongman leader to resign after months of mass protests. Factory workers chanted slogans, students took to the streets and police made detentions yesterday as Belarusians answered an opposition call for a national strike to force President Alexander Lukashenko to quit.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'We will not give in, ever'

Macron vows not to surrender to Islamist radicals amid growing French goods boycott calls

AGENCIES

France urged Arab countries to stop calls for boycotts of French products while President Emmanuel Macron vowed the country would never give in to Islamic radicals.

Comments made recently by Macron about Islamic militants and his reaction to the October 16 murder of a French teacher by a teenaged Chechen extremist have sparked tension with several Arab countries and populations.

Macron said history teacher Samuel Paty was beheaded for showing caricatures of a topic derogatory to Muslims to pupils "because Islamists want our future", prompting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to suggest the French leader have "mental checks".

On September 2, Macron had already presented a draft law to combat "Islamist separatism" in France, an issue that is being widely discussed in the country.

On Sunday, Macron said in a tweet: "We will not give in, ever" to Islamic radicals.

Macron added in comments on Twitter that France "cherished" freedom, "guaranteed" equality, and experienced fraternity "intensely" in a reference to the nation's credo.

"Our history is one of fighting tyranny and fanaticism. We will continue," he said.

His comments came as the French foreign ministry urged countries where boycott calls had been made to stop them and ensure the security of French citizens.

Yesterday, the Turkish leader added his voice to calls in the Arab world for citizens to spurn French goods. French goods have already been pulled from supermarket shelves in Qatar and Kuwait, among other Gulf states, whereas in Syria people have burned pictures of Macron and French flags have been torched in the Libyan capital Tripoli.

As the backlash over France's reaction widened, European leaders rallied behind Macron.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel condemned Erdogan's "defamatory" remarks about the French leader. The PMs of the Netherlands and Greece also expressed support for France, as did European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen.

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan accused Macron of "attacking Islam," while the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, the Taliban, the Lebanese Shia movement Hezbollah and Morocco have also spoken out against France.

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25 October 2020

RIGHTS WATCH

Rights and Challenges of Older People in Bangladesh

DR. NAHID FERDOUSI

The United Nations has initiated various international guidelines for the well-being, dignity, development and realisation of human rights of older persons. Consequently, many developed and developing countries have paid attention to develop elderly social support programme and welfare based legal framework in line with UN standards. Older persons as senior citizens deserve more attention and care from the State as well as the society but their rights are not being ensured extensively in Bangladesh. The problem underlies the fact that this issue is not prioritised at the policy level and that the laws in place are not properly implemented.

The government took few initiatives for the older people, such as pension system, retirement benefits and some other initiatives under Social Safety Net (SSN) programmes, i.e. the Old Age Allowance (OAA), the Allowances for the Widow, Deserted and Destitute Women, the Vulnerable Group Development (VGF) and so on. However, a vast number of people from the older

authorities are unaware of the policy. Also, the elderly people are not getting public transport facilities, residential establishments, separate healthcare at the grassroots level and other infrastructure in hospitals, airports, buildings and different recreational places, as envisaged under the policy.

In the same year 2013, the Maintenance of Parents Act was enacted for giving maintenance to parents by the children. Before enactment of this Act, there was no specific legislation to bring any legal action for maintenance rights of the parents. The Act can be considered as a milestone in the arena of rights of elderly people. The law ensures the right to food, cloth, shelter, medical facilities for parents and grandparents (sections 2 & 4). In case of separate living of the parents, the children are responsible to give them a reasonable amount of money from their daily, monthly or yearly income (sec 7). The law also ensures the parents maintenance through equal responsibilities of male and female children. Another important

adoptive or childless parents. So, it does not include adoptive and step-parents under the term 'parents'. Additionally, the law does not mention by whom and as to how 'reasonable amount of money' is to be paid by children for parents' maintenance. In the context of India, section 5 of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007 incorporates assenting and step guardians of children which expands the scope to get maintenance.

Older persons as senior citizens deserve more attention and care from the State as well as the society but their rights are not being ensured extensively in Bangladesh.

According to section 5(2) of the Act, the court may arrange children to give a month to month recompense to support elderly parents. But the Parents Maintenance Act 2013 of Bangladesh does not have similar provisions. However, looking at the positive aspects of the law, it can be said that, if the law is properly implemented, the safety, security and all other opportunities for many uncared elderly parents will be ensured. But the Rule under the Act has not yet been formulated.

In 2017, the Foundation for the Development of Older Person Act (Draft) was prepared under the Ministry of Social Welfare. The government has planned to establish 'Elders Development Foundation' (*Probin Unnayan Foundation*) by enacting the Foundation for the Development of Older Person Act. It is set to be enacted for the development of older persons. The major objectives of the draft law are to ensure facilities such as food, clothing, communication and treatment for the increasing number of older persons. With the present demands of elderly, the draft law should be enacted for the execution of the national policy and for providing social service facilities to ease the plight of the older people. Additionally, the government should adopt the Madrid Plan of Action towards achieving the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development of all citizens including the elderly so that they can pass their later life with respect, dignity and peace.

THE WRITER IS PROFESSOR OF LAW, BANGLADESH OPEN UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH.



population remains outside the ambit of these programmes. The government is providing pension benefits for elderly after their retirement specially for the government sector. But private sector workers and migrant older workers do not receive any pension. Thus, most of the elderly face various challenges in financial issues under the exiting social security programs.

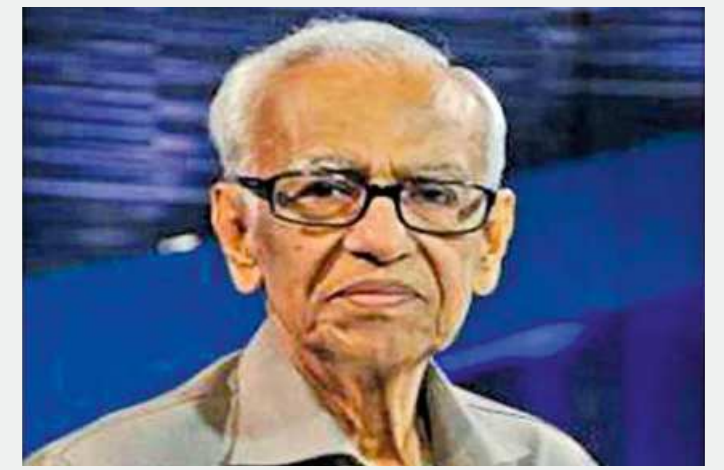
The National Policy on Older Persons was formulated in 2013. Although the policy is a positive initiative, due to lack of specific legal framework and sincere efforts from the concerned ministries, it yet to be properly implemented. Most of the older people and service providers

provision entails that the children shall never compel their parents to live in parents care or in any other place against their will (sec 3). The offences are cognisable, bailable and compoundable. In case of obstruction or non-cooperation from son's wife or daughter's husband or children or any other relatives, such person shall be liable as abettor to the same crime and punishment (sec 6).

Although the law has established the parents' legal entitlement to maintenance from the children, it is not free from some drawbacks. The law does not provide for the maintenance of

LAW TRIBUTE

Reflecting on the legacy of Barrister Rafique-ul Huq



SHAH MONJURUL HOQUE

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, breathed his last on October 24 leaving behind an inextinguishable legacy in the legal arena of Bangladesh. There is hardly any single areas of law that was not enriched by the unparalleled acumen of his scholarly legal mind.

He contributed significantly to the development of an array of branches of law, including constitutional, civil, criminal, admiralty, customs, tax, and arbitration. He played the role of an *amicus curie* in many cases where crucial issues regarding the interpretation of the Constitution of Bangladesh were involved, and he assisted the Supreme Court in answering pertinent questions of law. Mr. Huq had conducted thousands of cases, nearly 500 of which have been reported in the recognised law reports.

Late Mr. Huq was the pioneer of the company and corporate law in Bangladesh as well. He was one of the members of the Company Law Reform Committee in 1977. In addition, he was a member of the National Committee related to Finance, Banking and Credit wherein he acted as Chairman of the Finance and Banking Sub-Committee and played a pivotal role in reforming the banking laws. He also played an instrumental role in enacting various laws including Bangladesh Bank Orders and pertaining to Private Investment. He was one of the members of the Committee formed for developing the share market. He also served as Chairman of the Corporate Law Committee. Moreover, he was the member of International Chamber of Commerce, Asia, and International Court of Arbitration.

His acumen reigned above partisan politics, across regimes. Post-independence, he was directly involved with the drafting of laws during the regime of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. During that time, he was asked to draft the Nationalisation Order, 1972, and subsequently, he drafted denationalisation law while Mr. Ziaur Rahman was in power. Later, he challenged the indemnity ordinance (indemnifying murderers of Bangabandhu) passed during the period of Ziaur Rahman before the Hon'ble High Court Division and got the same declared illegal and unconstitutional. His contribution as a lawyer during the national crisis of 2007-2009 was enormous. He represented people of different political identities and intersections. He acted as a lawyer of many political leaders, including the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, and thus played a significant lawyerly role in reinstating rule of law and democracy at that time.

From 1975 to 1976, he acted as Chairman of the Bar Council Tribunal as well as Election Tribunal. He was appointed as the Attorney General for Bangladesh in 1990 and in that capacity, he also acted as Chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council. Moreover, he was one of the members of the representative team who attended the General Assembly Meeting of the United Nations in 1990.

His passion, dedication, sincerity, professional integrity, and commitment towards rule of law, judiciary, country, and people at large made his life worth celebrating and reflecting on. He was a great legal thinker, who lived in a time way ahead of his own. His legacy will stay as a legendary one - of one Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, of his time and forward.

THE WRITER IS AN ADVOCATE, SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH.

LAW LETTER

WILL DEATH PENALTY END THE EPIDEMIC OF RAPE?

MEHADI HASAN

In the context of increasing numbers of rape, on many occasions, the so-called 'cross-fire' and death penalty tend to come up as two apparently viable options for addressing the offence of rape. However, a demand for both of the above, masks the real problem underlying the crisis and have their own shares of problems.

In the wake of an increasing number of incidents of rape, recently, the President promulgated an ordinance increasing the maximum punishment in rape cases to death penalty from life imprisonment. It took immediate effect and amended Section 9(1) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 prescribing death as the highest punishment for the offence of rape. Section 9(2) of the aforesaid Act prescribes the punishment of death penalty or imprisonment for life for the rapist, if in consequence of rape or any act by him after rape, the victim dies.

It is to be mentioned that, previously, the highest punishment for rape was life imprisonment which is a strict punishment itself. Now the question arises, in spite of provisions of strict penalties under law, what was the reason behind the increase in the number of rape? And the answer is- the prevailing culture of impunity. Due to social stigma, threats by the offenders or local political goons, and delay in litigation process, many victims and their families prefer not to report incidents of rape. Many incidents of rape remain unreported or untried. Due to various legal and institutional factors e.g. lack of evidence, delay in sending the rape victim for forensic examination,

faulty and biased investigation, the rate of conviction and punishment in rape cases is very low. That means, in majority of rape incidents, the rapist gets away unpunished. This culture of impunity gives confidence to the rapists to repeat the heinous crime and potential rapists to actually commit the crime.

On the other hand, extrajudicial killing in the name of 'crossfire' is not only illegal but also unconstitutional. Extrajudicial killings violate Articles 27, 31 and 35 of the Constitution, which guarantee, for every citizen, equal protection of law, the right that no action detrimental to life, liberty etc. shall be taken except in accordance with law, the right to be punished only upon a public and speedy trial by an independent and impartial court.

In order to abolish the culture of rape from the society, we need to get rid of the culture of impunity. In this regard, the society, the political parties, the law enforcement agencies, and the court, all need to perform their respective duties properly. Alongside implementing the existing laws, the victim and the witness should be given protection so that they can give their statement without any hesitation and fear. The society must stop victim blaming. Instead, we need to focus on our moral education and stand by the rape victims so that they can get justice.

The court must strive to ensure speedy disposal of rape cases. By abolishing the culture of impunity, we can build a society where our children and women will feel safe. Neither death penalty nor extrajudicial killing can actually be an answer in this regard.

THE WRITER IS STUDENT OF LAW, NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY.



LAW ANALYSIS

Proposed Bangladesh Land Act and land rights of the indigenous people

MAHERA BINTE RAFIQ

The proposed 'Bangladesh Land Act 2020' has stirred a good many quarters of thinkers. However, what has not come to much focus is the issue of land rights of the indigenous people. For generations, the indigenous people are fighting for their ancestors' lands which have been systematically taken away either for settling outsiders or for realising various government projects. It is high time their rights be recognised and implemented in and through domestic laws.

Article 6(2) of the Bangladesh Constitution provides that, 'The people of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangalees as a nation and the citizens of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangladeshis'. This provision masks indigenous people's identities with a majoritarian identity: both in terms of nationality and citizenship. Article 23A, articulates that 'it should be the policy of the state to take step to protect and develop unique local culture and tradition of the tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities'. However, without preserving the economic, political, educational and land rights it seems next to impossible to protect the cultural rights of the indigenous people.

The proposed Land Act in Section 112 (5) provides that no land owned by indigenous community should be taken over unless for the development and protection of them and their environment. On the other hand, Section 111 deals with the regular provision of acquisition in case of public interest subject to the approval of the District Commissioner. If any party feels aggrieved by such decision, (s)he has to file objection against such application to the district commissioner under section 118. An authority who is supposed to give the permission for acquisition, is assigned to adjudicate upon complaint on the same

The root of the problem lies in the lack of inclusivity of the indigenous community in proper legal and administrative forums. It is evident from numerous case studies that though there are provisions for compensation and settling issues regarding land acquisition of indigenous communities, those have merely been followed.

issue. It strikes at the very root of the basic principles of natural justice.

The lifestyle of the indigenous people is unique; because they tend to have a very close connection with and because they depend on their surrounding nature, lands, forests and swamps for their living. Though Section 112(5) gives protection to the lands recorded in their names (apparently their homestead and immovable properties owned by them), it does not guarantee protection from changes in surrounding areas' forests, and lands by privatisation, commercialisation and other projects. But the obligation not to dismantle or bring any structural changes in these areas is well recognised under international law such as ILO Convention No. 107, United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People etc. If such areas be selected for acquisition under section 111, their life, culture, habitat and livelihood will be subjected to serious threat. And if so happens, for the impropriety of section 118, they will remain incompetent to get any remedy. In this regard, we cannot conclude that if the proposed land act comes into force, the section 112 (5) shall be enough to safeguard the interest of the indigenous community. The root of the problem lies in the lack of inclusivity of the indigenous community in proper legal and administrative forums. It is evident

from numerous case studies that though there are provisions for compensation and settling issues regarding land acquisition of indigenous communities, those have merely been followed.

Under Chittagong Hill Tracts Treaty of 1997, no khas land or tenancy of hill tracts can be subjected to disposal, transfer or lease without the prior permission of the regional district councils. However, the reality is that the regional district councils representing the indigenous communities have not yet been entrusted with the responsibility of land administration, general administration, law and order, and local policing according to the CHT Accord of 1997. All these functions are regulated by and under the authority of the local district Commissioner. Fewer provisions of the Peace Treaty have been implemented till date. In this context, if the proposed Land Act comes into force consigning all powers to the District Commissioner and the Settlement Officer, the council's provision would become meaningless.

In this backdrop, a comprehensive legislation on protecting the rights of the indigenous people needs to be enacted. Additionally, Peace treaty of 1997 needs to be properly implemented. To enforce the Peace Treaty in the fullest sense, land administration of hill tract areas and other local administrative responsibilities should be assigned to the CHT district councils. All the Hill tract Regional Councils (Bandarban, Rangamati, Khagrachari) should include the local tribal groups therein according to the Act. All the government projects in CHT areas should be initiated after consulting with the indigenous communities. There should be special allocation for the advancement of the indigenous community in the national budget.

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Braving a possible second wave

Are we taking the precautionary measures seriously?

It is a matter of grave concern that the numbers of new Covid-19 cases in the country are refusing to show any signs of significant decline. In fact, we have been warned by our Prime Minister of the possibility of a second wave, which is likely to worsen as winter approaches. The manner in which we are going about our daily lives amidst the ongoing pandemic would seem as if we are out of the woods, which we are not. According to a recent report published in this daily, the government is aiming to implement and monitor a “no mask, no service” policy. It has asked public and private organisations not to provide services to people without a face covering—made mandatory in all institutions, markets, schools, and social and religious gatherings. As the number of infected people nears 400,000, the reluctance to wearing a face mask remains worryingly common.

Experts around the world have predicted that winter will exacerbate the spread of Covid-19, and there are widespread fears that the second wave will be even worse than the first. Countries across Europe are seeing a resurgence in cases after successfully slowing outbreaks earlier this year. While the “no mask, no service” policy is surely an optimistic and prudent approach, why the government did not ensure the strict implementation of such directives earlier on remains a question. Moreover, should we have to face a second wave, it will be wiser if we also put social distancing into practice—especially in packed mass transport and places of gathering. Hygiene practices too, seem to have become a thing of the past. The cautionary instincts which were once so apparent amongst the public seem to have lost its zeal.

In dealing with the pandemic, we must learn from our past mistakes and lack of control. We fear whether the new directives can be properly enforced as the government previously failed to implement them, including when people were warned that they would have to face legal action if they do not wear masks, maintain social distancing and follow health guidelines while outdoors. We need to revise our deficiencies in the healthcare system and prepare it for a second outbreak. At the same time, the government must explore all possibilities for procuring Covid-19 vaccines as lagging behind in the global race for it is not an option, even more so with the possibility of a new outbreak. The first time, we failed to make the most out of early warnings; we simply cannot afford to do the same again.

Durga Puja signifies our syncretic culture

We must hold on to the values of inclusivity and religious harmony

THIS year's Durga Puja, which ended yesterday with the Dashami, has been a more muted celebration than usual, as have been all other religious festivals this year due to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. While there was not the usual festive atmosphere we see during this most significant festival of the Hindu community, the puja was enthusiastically observed in the temples and the significance of the occasion remains the same.

Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country but it is also a nation that is founded on the values of religious harmony and a syncretic culture. The Durga Puja is also an event that brings together members of other faiths and reflects Bengali culture, which celebrates diversity. For Bangladeshis today, faced with the most formidable challenge of trying to fight and survive a pandemic, it is time to reinforce the values of promoting an inclusive society that embraces people of all faiths and communities. As is often the case, the issues faced by minority communities are not always given enough importance, leading to insecurity and disenchantment. The sporadic incidences of vandalism in temples and destruction of deities, the attempts to grab lands of minority groups and communal sentiments expressed by some quarters—these are challenges to our basic values as a nation. They must not be overlooked or understated by the government, or by society at large, but be addressed with sincerity and compassion.

The last day of Durga Puja signifies victory of good over evil, a universal sentiment that is crucial to human existence. At this time of crisis, we must reinforce our inclusivity, and embrace and promote religious and ethnic harmony, which are essential elements in making us stronger, more resilient and united as a country. We extend our best wishes to members of the Hindu community on this auspicious occasion. We hope that through such festivals, our faith in one another is reinforced, and that we are more empathetic to each other, regardless of what creed we belong to.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Whatever happened to safety measures?

Given the way people are roaming around these days, it is as if everyone is suddenly immune to the coronavirus and all the warnings seem to be falling on deaf ears. On one hand, we are complaining that the authorities are not taking enough measures to curb the crisis, and on the other, we are not abiding by the rules. When I left my house recently, I was shocked to see several groups of people without any safety precautions. There was even a group of teenagers sharing a smoke! I hope we take safety more seriously, especially as winter is approaching and the chances of the infection spreading is higher than ever.

Persia Nargis, *Khulna*

A looming tragedy in the University of Dhaka's centennial celebration

THE GRUDGING URBANIST



ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

Is this the right way to celebrate the centennial of the University of Dhaka in 2021? Like many of my colleagues in Bangladesh and around the world, I was horrified to learn that the university administration has made plans to demolish a 20th century architectural icon inside the university campus to expand and upgrade its insufficient facilities. Yes, change is inevitable. And so is growth. But how does a society treat its cultural heritage as it grows? This is a perennially contested question that warrants thoughtful judgement in a specific time and place. However, it is truism that a conscientious society treats its cultural patrimony with utmost care.

The iconic Teacher-Student Centre, popularly known as TSC, the universally admired centre of the country's student politics and cultural life, may soon face the wrecking ball. This will be an irredeemable national tragedy.

Let us consider the history of this beloved building complex. The Greek architect, planner and theoretician Constantinos Apostolos Doxiadis (1913-1975) designed TSC during the early 1960s. This was a turbulent time, marked by conflicting currents of political tension and architectural optimism in what was then East Pakistan. On the one hand, the two wings of postcolonial Pakistan were at loggerheads because of the political domination of East Pakistan by the military junta based in West Pakistan. On the other hand, many architectural opportunities arose in East Pakistan between 1958 and 1968, the so-called Decade of Development that benefitted from the United States' technical assistance to Pakistan.

The United States allied with Pakistan as part of its Cold-War-era foreign policy to create a geostrategic buffer against the socialist milieu of the Soviet Union-India axis in South Asia. Under the purview of a technical assistance programme, the United States Agency for International Development and the Ford Foundation provided support for building educational and civic institutions in East Pakistan. Since there was a dearth of experienced architects in East Pakistan, the government sought the services of American and European architects for a host of buildings that were constructed during the 1960s. Doxiadis was among them.

He designed multiple institutional complexes, sponsored by the Ford Foundation. Among them were the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development in Comilla; College of Home Economics in Dhaka, and the Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka. However, it was the TSC that arguably captured the imagination of the people and, given its central location, became an emblem of Dhaka's architectural modernity. Located at the historic heart of the University of Dhaka, TSC exemplifies

a modernist architectural sensitivity toward spatial needs for tropical climatic conditions. It blends local parameters of space-making—particularly the indoor-outdoor continuum and generation of space around courtyards—with the International-Style's visual expression of building forms.

To gain a deeper understanding of the TSC, it helps to explore the architect's personal development, as well as his design strategy prior to this project. Doxiadis was born in 1913 in Bulgaria to Greek parents. Early on in his childhood, he was influenced by his father, who was the Greek Minister of Refugees, Social Welfare, and Public Health. Such exposure allowed him to contemplate the issues of refugee housing and how residential settlements could address global problems. In 1935, Doxiadis graduated from the Athens Technical University as an Architect-Engineer, and a year later, he earned his doctoral degree at the Charlottenburg University, in Berlin. Subsequently, he served as Chief

and universal values of harmonious living. Lest we forget, Doxiadis' prolific years of the 1960s coincided with the publication of a number of seminal books and articles that, in their disparate ways, criticised the ideological bases of modern industrial societies. Among the works he had studied were Rabindranath Tagore's *Towards Universal Man* (1961), Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), Ian McHarg's *Man and His Environment* (1963), and Edward T Hall's *The Hidden Dimensions of Man* (1966).

It is evident that Doxiadis tried out his theories of ekistics at the TSC, among other projects in Bangladesh. Construction of the TSC complex began in March 1962, after the University of Dhaka authorities gave their approval of Doxiadis Associates' final design. The 3.7 acre site is located at the intersection of Bakshi Bazar Road and Mymensingh Road, with the Suhrawardy Uddyan (park) on the east. Access to the site is from the north, where three streets meet to form a major urban node and

is a trendsetting building as the structure employs a double roof to minimise heat gain, by allowing the cool breeze to pass through the two layers of the roof. Providing a protective canopy for the building shell, the upper roof has a wing-like formation, with rainwater drainage in between. The facade of the building is a Mondrian-esque composition of vertical columns and horizontal lintels.

The auditorium, also rectangular in plan, is 170 feet by 85 feet and is covered by a reinforced concrete parabolic vault, a pioneering construction technique in the country. The auditorium has a level floor, with removable seating, and a spacious stage with dressing rooms. The airy cafeteria features a high ceiling and overlooks the sprawling courtyard to the north. It consists of two segments placed on either side of a linear green mall. The west wing of the cafeteria contains a large game room, plus dressing rooms, showers, and toilets that serve the swimming pool. The east wing houses the main eating area and a kitchen, with the customary auxiliary spaces. The hypostyle hall of the cafeteria has a reinforced concrete frame and provides a continuous band of clerestory around its perimeter. The guest house, east of the cafeteria, comprises six rooms, each with an attached bathroom and balcony.

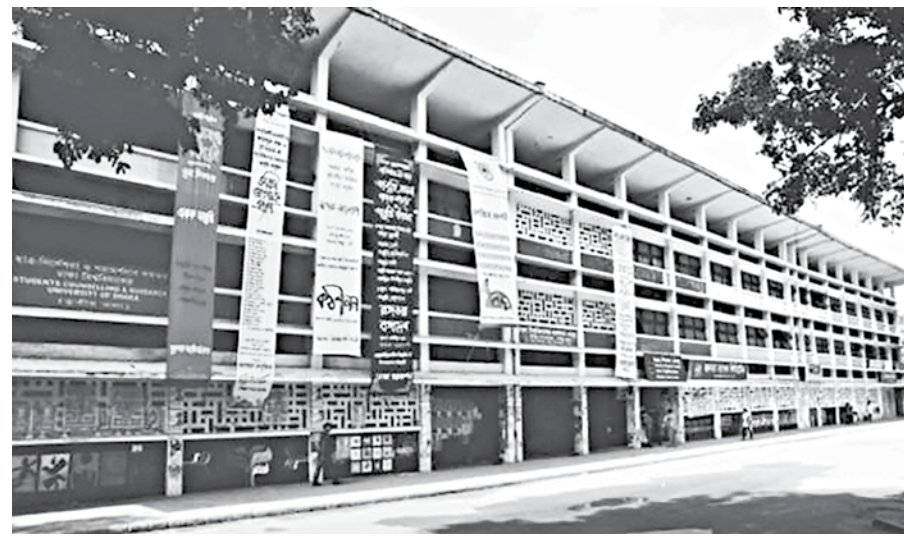
Covered walkways, supported on steel columns, weave together the major buildings and green spaces. Functioning more like a continuous loop of linear pavilions, rather than corridors, the walkways are the social spine of the entire complex. The Teacher-Student Centre is one of the first buildings in Bangladesh to employ a pavilion theme in non-residential architecture. Extensive use of brick *jalis* (latticework) in the buildings ensures visual privacy while providing natural ventilation. Considered a sensible response to the needs of a tropical climate, Doxiadis assembled the buildings and courtyards in a lush tapestry of organic fluidity and spatial interconnectivity. The whole complex feels like an organic miniature city.

Over the years, TSC has become part of a national narrative. Many of the pivotal student movements took shape around this historic urban node. Furthermore, the centre is also celebrated as a verdant and breezy urban space, a rare liberating experience in this overcrowded city.

Plato once said: “Any city however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich. These are at war with one another.” Dhaka's war is between mindless growth and mindful growth. Which side will the University of Dhaka take?

Dhaka will be a lesser city without the TSC. Cultural heritage is essential for a city to tell its stories. Without stories, a city can only reproduce the banality of its growth for growth's sake. The University of Dhaka should focus on reversing the decline of its academic standards instead of engaging in a self-defeating agenda of mindless expansion.

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The iconic Teacher-Student Centre at the University of Dhaka.

STAR FILE PHOTO

Town Planning Officer for Greater Athens and, during World War II, as Head of the Department of Regional and Town Planning at the Ministry of Public Works. After the war, he became the Director-General of the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. In 1951, he founded Doxiadis Associates, a private consulting firm of engineers, architects, and planners. Rapid growth as an international practice led to offices on five continents and projects in 40 countries.

Doxiadis created the Athens Center of Ekistics in 1963, although he had introduced the concept of “ekistics” back in the 1930s. As he later explained in his book *Ekistics: An Introduction to the Science of Human Settlements* (1968), the term represented an objective, comprehensive, and integrative approach to all principles and theories of human settlements. Criticising the top-down planning model of the first half of the 20th century, Doxiadis employed the notion of ekistics to promote a multidisciplinary, inclusive, and bottom-up approach to architecture and city planning. He hoped that such a method would create a synergy among the organic context of the locale, data-driven theorisation of planning,

the geographic centre of the sprawling campus of the University of Dhaka. It is a historic gathering place for students and the public during such national celebrations as Victory Day, Independence Day, Language Movement Day and Pohela Baishakh (the first day of the Bengali year). The horizontal building block to the north acts as a transition from the urban hustle and bustle to the verdant interior of the complex.

Doxiadis conceived TSC as an architectural ensemble, comprising six elements: The Student Union Building, which accommodates the student union headquarters, offices for students and teachers, conference rooms, a library, lounges, bookshops, and a general store; the auditorium, which serves as a multipurpose hall and features a seating capacity of 800; the cafeteria; the guest house; the swimming pool; and the water tower (unbuilt).

The buildings are aligned with the east-west axis, to take advantage of the prevailing breeze from the south or north. The three-story Student Union Building is rectangular in plan, 158 feet by 37 feet, and composed of a reinforced concrete frame and non-loadbearing brick walls. It

Mandating DNA evidence in all violence against women cases

Will it help or hurt the victim?



TASLIMA YASMIN

NO doubt that in rape cases, DNA evidence can strengthen investigations and prosecutions. DNA tests are often considered as conclusive evidence in rape cases where a suspected accused

needs to be identified, or where the accused person's involvement in the crime needs to be determined. As such, in investigations of rape cases where the DNA of the victim or the accused is available, the investigating police officers commonly collect and send the samples to the DNA laboratory. With the enactment of the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Act 2014, legal provisions for collection, preservation, destruction of sample, liability for misuse of information, etc had been outlined. Under the DNA Act, the DNA report is also made admissible as evidence in the court proceedings. However, despite the already existing procedures for DNA test, the much-debated amendment to the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 (WCRPA) had added a further provision (section 32A) requiring DNA testing in all offences under the WCRPA.

Section 32A requires that in case of all offences committed under the WCRPA, DNA examinations have to be done for both victims and the accused persons irrespective of their consent to such examinations. However, DNA evidence cannot come to the assistance of the court or investigation authority

in all cases of rape. For instance, one of the most disputed issues in a rape case is whether sexual intercourse between the victim and the defendant was consensual. While DNA evidence can help conclusively to decide whether the accused person was involved in the act in question, it cannot prove consent of the victim when both parties admit that the sexual intercourse did take place.

The new section, in fact, makes the requirement of DNA examination applicable not only in rape cases, but in all other offences committed under the various provisions of the WCRPA. Needless to say, DNA tests may not be necessary in all offences filed under the WCRPA, and would perhaps vary on a case-by-case basis. Such a mandatory provision requiring DNA test in all cases may delay the investigation process even further and create superfluous pressure on the resources of the DNA laboratories.

Importantly, in the majority of the rape cases filed under the WCRPA, the victim has no DNA samples to provide, either because of the delay in filing the case or because she herself may have destroyed all relevant samples by bathing, urinating, washing the clothes etc. There are also cases where no DNA samples could be found from the vaginal swab of the victim as the offender might have used a condom or might not have discharged any DNA. In all such cases, the investigating officers would commonly rely on other relevant evidence. However, after the addition of this new section in the WCRPA with clear emphasis on collecting DNA evidence in all cases, the trend of dependence on DNA test reports for conviction may be more rigorously practiced. This would mean that in cases where DNA

test reports cannot be produced or the reports do not find accused's DNA, there is a potential danger that the accused may be exonerated from the charge altogether; or during trial, the prosecution case could be weakened substantially despite other evidence supporting conviction. The similar tendency of over-reliance on medical evidence is already present in existing rape cases, which commonly undermines the evidentiary value of the victim's testimony.

There is also the risk of mishandling of the test reports by the investigating authorities, as collection and preservation of DNA samples are extremely crucial for keeping the evidence free of contamination. A contaminated DNA report undoubtedly has dire consequences as it can either exonerate a guilty person of the charge or can implicate an innocent person. If DNA tests are to be done in such huge numbers irrespective of whether or not a particular case requires them, the chances of mishandling of the samples and reports will naturally be higher. The ultimate consequence would again be a further burden of corroboration imposed upon the victim of rape.

Section 32A of the WCRPA also does away with the requirement of obtaining consent of both the victim and the accused before taking their samples for DNA profiling. However, the DNA Act required obtaining of such consent, as it is a standard rule that an individual's DNA sample cannot be used without his/her authorisation. Under international human rights law norms, no one can be subjected to medical and scientific experimentation without their free consent. In case any person is not

willing to give consent, the DNA Act provided that the authority can then seek permission from the court. However, under the new amendment, doing away with the requirement of obtaining consent, especially of the victim, is rather problematic. There may be sensitive information that the victim may not prefer to share with the police knowing that this information may be used against her or become part of the public record and may be subjected to scrutiny by the defence side in open court (for instance, it may disclose information about a consensual sexual partner of the victim). Allowing the investigating officers to compel the parties to give DNA samples without any court intervention is a dangerous proposition that needs to be reconsidered.

Besides, before adding such a mandatory provision in the WCRPA, extensive training of police to properly collect, preserve and transport the DNA samples to the laboratories had to be ensured, as well as ensuring training of lawyers and judges regarding the standard of admissibility of the DNA evidence in rape cases. At the same time, the DNA laboratories needed to be equipped with modern technologies and resources—their capacities to preserve and examine such a massive number of potential DNA samples needed to be thoroughly assessed. Inclusion of this provision in the WCRPA thus needs to be carefully reconsidered, keeping in mind that the reforms in the rape laws are meant to benefit the victim, not to increase her ordeals.

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What Bangladesh did right and India could not

Ahsan H Mansur is Executive Director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh. In an exclusive interview with Eresh Omar Jamal of The Daily Star, Dr Mansur talks about the recent revelation by the IMF that Bangladesh is set to surpass India in terms of per capita GDP, and other factors relating to Bangladesh's growth.

According to the International Monetary Fund's latest World Economic Outlook report, Bangladesh is set to surpass India in terms of per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020. How significant is this achievement? And what are its major ramifications?

We can take some pride in this because India is a big economy, and even though India has many problems, it has always been ahead of us in terms of GDP. We have somewhat overcome that and reached a parity, which is a big achievement. This has happened because of two opposing developments—while Bangladesh has recorded consistent good economic growth, India's growth performance faltered in recent years.

The two main positive developments for Bangladesh have been: (i) consistently accelerating economic growth over the last 20 years; and (ii) much more stable exchange rate of the Bangladeshi Taka compared with the Indian Rupee, underpinned by much better macroeconomic management by the Bangladesh government.

If we look back at what happened in India, until the Modi government came to power, India was substantially ahead in terms of per capita GDP in dollar current terms. Why India couldn't maintain that differential included the following factors. First, Modi government's mismanagement through demonetisation, which was very costly and not carefully thought through and which turned out to be an economic disaster. Second, the Indian economy and society, driven by politics, has been going through a period of increased social division, induced by religious riots, lynching, and regional communal and other issues like the unilateral move on changing the status of Kashmir. Once a society gets divided and the government's attention remains focused on socially divisive issues, it is proven that the economy suffers—India being a poster-perfect example of that. Finally, the Indian government's Covid-19 management has been very harsh in the sense that they suddenly declared everything to stop on the same day—railways, airlines, road transportation, everything came to a standstill. As a result, more than 60 million migrant workers were economically dislocated thousands of kilometres away from their village homes without work, income and transportation. Working class people, particularly those already close to the borderline of poverty, suddenly found themselves free falling to the bottom.

The damage done to the Indian economy during the Covid-19 outbreak, together with

the other two factors mentioned above which already weakened investment and growth momentum in the economy in many ways, led to the worst contraction in economic activity in the world. This itself was the big contributing factor for India to fall behind Bangladesh. Yes, we have performed better in some sense, but that does not mean we can afford to get complacent. We are still below the USD 2,000 per capita GDP mark. And countries like Vietnam, who started below us in the 1980s, are way ahead. China and South Korea, who were at par with us in the 1950s, are even further ahead. So we have performed well among South Asian countries, but not so much in comparison to the East Asian economies.

Nevertheless, we should take pride from this, and it is particularly interesting because in the recent Indian political narrative, many influential political leaders labeled Bangladeshis as termites and alleged that poor Bangladeshis were invading India by migrating en masse. That is a myth and fearmongering that some politicians have created to make political gains. And this projection by the IMF, an independent global organisation, is definitely going to create a new narrative debunking that myth.

Some Indian writers have suggested that Bangladesh surpassing India in terms of per capita GDP is a result of India underperforming, rather than Bangladesh performing well. What is your take on that?

I fully agree with that assessment. India has really underperformed in the last five years, since it was at least 20 percent ahead of Bangladesh in per capita terms five years ago. The main contributing factors are the ones I have already mentioned. I would also like to underscore and recognise that Bangladesh's performance in terms of exports, remittances and balance of payments stability have been consistent, and that its macro-stability has been stellar in the context of South Asia.

Is there any chance of these figures being skewed by rising inequality, and their calculation being based on nominal GDP rather than on GDP based on purchasing power parity?

Absolutely. That is also a factor. India is still significantly ahead of us (in per capita income) in terms of purchasing power parity. And for ordinary people, it is the PPP based measure that matters—because although our dollar income has been higher, on average, our citizens can buy less than what an Indian citizen can afford. Prices in Bangladesh are higher than in India for most categories of goods and services.



AHSAN H MANSUR

This is another indicator that shows why we shouldn't get complacent. Yes we have outperformed India in some way, but in other ways India is certainly ahead of Bangladesh.

Overall, what have been the major factors behind Bangladesh's growth success, and what have been the major impediments?

Bangladesh's growth success comes down to many reasons. One is the steady performance of our exports and remittances. Even though we are vulnerable due to being overdependent on a single export product, our export growth has been better than most other South Asian countries. Remittance performance is also similarly better.

Secondly, Bangladesh's remittances, because our workers are low-skilled and rural based, are aimed more towards the poor and more towards the rural economy. Inflow of workers' remittances to rural Bangladesh has contributed to a vibrant rural non-farm economic base in the country. The other day, I was telling an Indian journalist that no one ever heard of our farmers committing suicide because of economic hardship, which is very common in India. In part, our farmers are doing quite well despite some problems from time to time. They are getting better prices and access to markets. The rural people are also getting a lot of support from internal remittance (from urban to rural areas) and from external remittance (from other countries to rural areas). That helps the rural economy and creates good demand

in the whole economy. And finally, this has created a situation where non-farm income is more than the farm income in rural areas. Sixty percent of rural income comes from non-farm sources, which is a very different picture compared to most other developing countries. Most of the people, about 65 percent, still live in rural areas, so that has increased general economic wellbeing. And their wellbeing ultimately determines the wellbeing of the country.

The third factor is that our social indicators have been remarkably good—in part, supported by the strong performance of the rural economy. In social indicators like life expectancy, child and maternal mortality rates, fertility rate of our women, gender parity in education, access to water, better sanitation—Bangladesh is ahead of India, and in some cases ahead of Sri Lanka as well.

Finally, good fiscal management has also contributed to macro-stability and growth performance. Bangladesh's macro-stability has been anchored by good fiscal policy, and that continues to be the case. Despite our unimpressive performance on the revenue side, fiscal deficit and public debt have been contained well below what are considered sustainable.

In terms of impediments, in my opinion, so far what we have achieved are the low-hanging fruits. We have not gone for the fruits which are hanging high. But we must go there. If we want to become an upper-middle income country or a high-income country, which the government and we all aspire to be, we have to undertake fundamental reforms in wide-ranging areas. The tasks ahead will be extremely challenging and multi-dimensional. We have an education system which needs to be completely overhauled and made up-to-date. We have to improve the standards of our public education system and significantly increase the skill level of our workers. Unless we do that, we cannot technologically advance, and without technological advancement and adaptation, we will not succeed. Bangladesh is among the least technologically advanced countries in Asia—in terms of complexity of our products—and we have a long way to go. Technology is becoming ever more important and complex, and unless we combine skills development with technological adaptation and do so without destroying our environment, we cannot even hope to perform well in the future.

Secondly, the country still suffers from significant gaps in infrastructure. We need huge government investment, and for that we need huge revenue to cover the expenses in a

sustainable manner. We need investment in physical infrastructure as well as investment in the social sectors like health, education, poverty reduction. But our public sector does not have domestic resources. Our Tax/GDP ratio is extremely low and falling. It was 11 percent of GDP in 2010 and declined to 8.9 percent by 2019. That is not good at all. And the government is really suffering. It couldn't even spend much during the Covid-19 situation and had to depend almost entirely on a bank-led credit expansion and monetary expansion. We need more public resource mobilisation and fundamental reforms in the tax system—in both direct and indirect taxes. Reforms in tax policy and tax administration, including automation, must be a part of it, without which the government cannot help take this country to the next level. But so far, nothing significant has been done on the tax reform front.

Thirdly, the economy also needs a lot of investment from other sources. To transform Bangladesh into a high-income country, Bangladesh would need to achieve an average GDP growth rate of 9.5 percent between 2020-2040—that's a huge challenge! That will require our Investment-GDP ratio to be in the range of 40-44 percent of GDP. Currently we are at about 30-31 percent of GDP. We have not been able to exceed the 30 percent level for a long time. Private sector investment is even less buoyant, it has been stuck at 22-23 percent of GDP for the last 10 years. Unless we can mobilise significantly higher private domestic investment along with supporting public sector investment, and also bring in foreign direct investment into the country, we will not be able to become an upper-middle income or high income country. The investment climate has to improve very significantly. Our ranking in terms of the indices like the ease of doing business, productivity index, and logistics index are terrible and we have a long way to go.

Finally, we have to diversify our exports. There is huge potential within the garments sector, we have to exploit those. But we must also diversify, otherwise we are just too vulnerable. And that means, we must give exporters of other products the same incentives that we give to the garments sector. Also, domestic protectionism is extremely high in Bangladesh. And that is very counterproductive for export diversification and allocational efficiency, because it makes production for the domestic market much more attractive than production for exports. That really needs to change.

This is an abridged version of the interview. For the full text, visit The Daily Star's website.

We've talked enough about biodiversity. Let's try to save it now



HASEEB MD IRFANULLAH

WE may blame Covid-19 for drawing our attention away from biodiversity conservation. But the truth is, for a long time, we have been talking about biodiversity a lot, rather than saving it. That is why the

World Wildlife Fund International estimates that the earth's wildlife has gone down by almost 70 percent in the last five decades; the United Nations predicts that the world's one million species, out of eight million, would be extinct in the next few decades; and the World Economic Forum ranks biodiversity loss as the third most serious risk for the world, after weapons of mass destruction and climate change.

Through the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), countries did set targets to save world biodiversity, first by 2010, then by 2020. But they have failed tremendously. Given the present alarming decline in our biodiversity, we need to transform our conservation approaches altogether.

Let us take our current approach to saving wild species in danger. First, we need to measure the overall conditions. There are some important issues that ensure the survival and existence of a plant or animal species in nature: for example, the number of mature individuals, if the number is increasing or decreasing over the years, if they are widely distributed or confined to a small area, etc. Based on these criteria, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) developed an assessment system 56 years ago to prepare the Red Lists of threatened species.

If an assessed species' condition is good, it is classified as "Not Threatened" on a Red List, which is good news. But if the condition is bad, the species is put in one of three threatened categories: Critically Endangered, Endangered, and Vulnerable, corresponding to the severity of the condition. Based on the conservation status of a species, we take measures to save it from extinction.

Plants have always been slow in entering the Red Lists. IUCN, for example, has so far assessed about 120,400 species of the world, of which 36 percent are plants.

The year 2001 saw Bangladesh's first attempt to prepare a plant Red List, a year

after IUCN published the first animal Red List of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh National Herbarium (BNH)—an agency of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)—under the leadership of renowned botanist Professor M Salar Khan, assessed 106 plant species and found four as threatened. Twelve years later, following IUCN's Red List methodology, BNH listed 120 species in the second volume of the plant Red List.

Recently, BNH and IUCN have initiated

for that decision to materialise.

A Red List preparation is a time-consuming academic endeavour, which demands large groups of experts to conduct and review the species assessments. The interest of funders in such an exercise has always been limited. Institutions supposed to lead such initiatives often show low enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the new BNH-IUCN project is a good step forward towards the long-pending plant Red List of Bangladesh.

Since 2016, the animal Red List of Bangladesh has been repeatedly quoted by different conservation and environmental action plans and strategies of Bangladesh. Many environmental project documents have mentioned the Red List while discussing the dire condition of Bangladesh's biodiversity. Countless Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports written by many consulting firms matched the biodiversity of project areas against the animal Red List.



The elusive Bengal tiger spotted in the Sundarbans.

PHOTO: RAKESH NARALA

a new project under the World Bank-Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD)'s Sustainable Forests And Livelihoods (SUFAL) programme (2018–2023), to assess 1,000 plant species out of a total of about 4,000 and to prepare an updated plant Red List of Bangladesh. This new initiative was first discussed in a meeting of the National Committee for Updating Species Red List of Bangladesh, held in May 2015 and chaired by the secretary of the MoEFCC. It took a while

In the wake of this development, it would be useful to explore the impact of IUCN's last animal Red List of Bangladesh (2015), also funded by the World Bank. In that exercise, 160 biologists rigorously assessed 1,619 species of mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, freshwater fish, crustacea and butterflies. Alarmingly, about 24 percent of these species were found to be threatened. But what was the use of that knowledge, captured in almost 2,400 pages in seven volumes?

That Red List also furthered research on biodiversity in Bangladesh. On October 20, 2020, I searched on Google Scholar—an online search engine for finding academic research publications—and found around 230 items published in the last five years citing the "Red List of Bangladesh".

Since the publication of 2015's animal Red List, several conservation projects targeting threatened species were initiated or completed. The ongoing UNHCR-IUCN's

Asian Elephant conservation activities around the Rohingya refugee camps are essentially a legacy of IUCN's elephant conservation work initiated back in 2001 with the US Fish and Wildlife Service's support, which was later strengthened under the BFD's Strengthened Regional Cooperation for Wildlife Protection (SRCWP) programme. Similarly, the USAID-Wild Team's Bengal Tiger (2014–2018) and UNDP-BFD's Ganges River Dolphin (2015–2020) conservation projects were results of earlier initiatives by other conservation organisations.

The animal Red List of Bangladesh (2015), therefore, was an excellent academic exercise and is being used as reference in new research, but has not helped much to stimulate significant conservation action on the ground.

The 1,000 plant species' Red List will indeed improve our knowledge on Bangladesh's biodiversity and will be an excellent reference point. But knowing the conservation status of species is meaningless, unless we take action to improve the situation. We, therefore, should use the new Red List project to advocate for a paradigm shift in Bangladesh's conventional biodiversity conservation in two important areas.

Project-based, donor-funded approaches have not been good for meaningful, long-term conservation. We need uninterrupted funds for our conservation work. We have 10 years of experience in managing the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF). We should use that experience to establish the Biodiversity Conservation Fund—as described in Article 36 of the Bangladesh Biodiversity Act, 2017—to support our conservation activities.

The assessment of 1,000 or 25 percent of plant species of Bangladesh will help us to map the areas where the threatened species are now found. Combining this location data with that of 1,619 animal species can build an outstanding knowledge base for us—the prioritised ecosystems to be conserved. We can then prepare comprehensive investment plans to spend resources to conserve these ecosystems, instead of focusing on a few individual species.

Now the question is—are we ready to go beyond biodiversity research and focus more on conservation action?

Dr Haseeb Md Irfanullah is an independent consultant working on environment, climate change, and research systems. His Twitter handle is @hmirfanullah

Damages

FROM PAGE 12
among the enlisted members.

Notwithstanding this, a member can violate party discipline and draw the attention of the speaker and earn the right to speak, Bangabandhu remarks. The leader of the house notes with a great deal of annoyance that the members are wasting invaluable time of the house by persistently raising irrelevant points. Time so wasted could have been profitably utilised, he adds.

UN SURVEY

The first ever official survey on damage and repairs in Bangladesh following the Liberation War estimates a loss of about Tk 930 crore for the new nation, according to an official report released in Dhaka today. The survey carried out by SK Dey, special consultant to the UN Relief Operation and a former minister in the government of India, places the estimated loss very close to the preliminary and unofficial estimate by the Bangladesh government at over Tk 1,000 crore. SK Dey in his report says the survey has covered only tangible damages which could be estimated from ledgers and on the spot.

"Behind the tangible damages lie a world of damages, assessment of which is a near impossibility," he adds.

SOURCES: October 28, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.



An Iraqi demonstrator reacts during anti-government protests in Baghdad, Iraq, yesterday. Dozens of Iraqi protesters again clashed with security forces in Baghdad yesterday, a day after a rally marked the first anniversary of the start of nationwide mass anti-government demonstrations. PHOTO: REUTERS

Scientists

FROM PAGE 12
This had the effect of skimming the photon across the two electrons. Electrons behave like particles and waves simultaneously, and as such when one electron was ejected, the waves moved the second electron.

The waves from the second electron merged with the first, and the photon could move across this interference pattern.

By measuring this pattern using a Cold Target Recoil Ion Momentum Spectroscopy (COLTRIMS) reaction microscope, and with the knowledge of where the hydrogen molecule was, the scientists could record the time it took the photon to move.

"Since we knew the spatial orientation of the hydrogen molecule, we used the interference of the two electron waves to precisely calculate when the photon reached the first and when it reached the second hydrogen atom," said Ph.D. candidate Sven Grundmann in a statement.

"And this is up to 247 zeptoseconds, depending on how far apart in the molecule the two atoms were from the perspective of light."

Pompeo starts

FROM PAGE 12
technology, officials said.

Esper will also be discussing ways to increase cooperation between the two countries' military forces.

This could include intelligence sharing, stepping up joint exercises, and arms sales -- including possibly US F-18 fighter jets.

Pompeo will go on from India to Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Indonesia, all of which have a key role in Indian Ocean maritime traffic where China has cast a greater shadow.

The secretary of state said ahead of the trip that his meetings would "include discussions on how free nations can work together to thwart threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party".

Swechhasebak

FROM PAGE 12
A few days ago he was released from jail on bail. His elder brother Jewel Chandra Das, 35, is also a known criminal in this area, with nine cases against him.

"I have visited the spot. We identified a group from the upazila Jubo Dal, working under a former convener, as the murderers."

Contacted, Shuvashish Podder Lito, president of the district Jubo League, told The Daily Star that Somrat was the main accused in the murder of a Jubo League leader.

"We are conducting drives to detain those are involved in the murder. The dead body was sent to hospital for autopsy. No case has yet been filed in this regard," said the OC.

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 12
bridge and fell into a canyon about 25 feet deep at Dele area of the Central African Republic.

The accident took place around 12:30am local time yesterday. They were going to Bangui from Kaga port.

ISPR said Abdus Samad and Mokhlesur Rahman are being treated at the Level 2 UN Hospital at Bangui and would be shifted to Uganda for better treatment.

Other Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers are safe in CAR, it added.

Oxford vaccine gives hope to all age groups

FROM PAGE 12
The news that older people get an immune response from the vaccine is positive because the immune system weakens with age and older people are those most at risk of dying from the virus.

The Financial Times reported earlier that the vaccine, being developed by Oxford and AstraZeneca, triggers protective antibodies and T-cells in older age groups - among those most at risk from the virus.

The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is expected to be one of the first from big pharma to secure regulatory approval, along with Pfizer and BioNTech's candidate.

If it works, a vaccine would allow the world to return to some measure of normality after the tumult of the pandemic.

Called AZD1222 or ChAdOx1 nCoV-19, the vaccine was developed by Oxford University scientists and licensed to AstraZeneca in April, which took on the task of scaling trials

and production.

The vaccine is likely to provide protection for about a year, CEO Pascal Soriot said in June.

The British drugmaker has signed several supply and manufacturing deals with companies and governments around the world as it gets closer to reporting early results of a late-stage clinical trial.

The news came as the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) on Sunday called for global solidarity in the rollout of any future coronavirus vaccine, as the number of cases soared across the world.

In a video address at the opening of the three-day World Health Summit in Berlin, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the only way to recover from the pandemic was together and by making sure poorer countries had fair access to a vaccine.

"It is natural that countries want to protect their own citizens first but if and when we have an effective vaccine, we must also use it effectively. And

the best way to do that is to vaccinate some people in all countries rather than all people in some countries," he said.

"Let me be clear: vaccine nationalism will prolong the pandemic, not shorten it."

Apart from the vaccine news, the picture was unrelentingly grim in Europe as a string of countries reported record increases, led by France, which posted more than 50,000 daily cases for the first time on Sunday, while the continent passed the threshold of 250,000 deaths.

At least 43,080,500 cases of coronavirus have been registered since the outbreak emerged in China last December, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1100 GMT on Monday. Of these, at least 29,194,100 are now considered recovered.

On Sunday, 4,313 new deaths and 408,969 new cases were recorded worldwide. Based on latest reports, the countries with the most new

deaths were India with 480 new deaths, followed by the United States with 461 and Iran with 337.

Governments have been desperate to avoid the lockdowns which curbed the disease at the start of the year at the cost of shutting down their entire economies. But the steady rise in new cases has forced them to ratchet up controls steadily.

In Spain, which has had more than 1 million cases of the disease, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warned the country was facing an "extreme" situation as he announced a new state of emergency on Sunday, imposing local nighttime curfews and banning travel between regions in some cases.

Italy, the country worst hit in the early stages of the crisis in March, also imposed new curbs, ordering restaurants and bars to close from 6 pm and shutting down cinemas, and gyms and imposing local curfews in several regions.

Waiting for re-entry

FROM PAGE 12
return because of the restrictions imposed have to obtain an exceptional entry permit allowing them to return to the Gulf country, effective from August 1.

The employer must apply for an entry permit for the respective expatriate worker, using Qatar Portal, an official website of the Qatar government.

Contacted, Monsur Ahmed Kalam, president of the Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh, said around 4,000 to 5,000 Bangladeshis with return tickets were waiting to go back to their workplaces in Qatar.

Of them, workers employed at private companies are mostly having problems getting re-entry permits. The exact number of such workers could not be known.

The Bangladesh Embassy in Doha has already submitted a list of stuck workers to the Qatar authorities.

Miraz Hossain, a private company worker in Doha, said he came home on February 1 on a two-month

vacation and was supposed to return to Qatar on April 1.

Aside from the two-month vacation, he had permission for an additional four months' stay outside Qatar. His employer applied for his re-entry permit in August.

"But it was turned down," said Miraz, who is from Dhaka. Another application filed in September was also rejected.

Md Abdullah, 29, who works as a salesman for a company in Qatar, is facing a similar problem.

The migrant worker from Sylhet's Kanaighat said he came home on March 5 on a 45-day vacation. His employer had applied for his re-entry in July but it was rejected immediately.

Abdullah said his employer applied again in August but the website Qatar Portal still shows his application to be "under process".

"I have been unemployed at home. My family sold two CNG-run autorickshaws we owned to meet our financial needs."

During their protest, the

migrant workers demanded that the government should look into their matter and address it to the Qatar government for an immediate solution.

According to the embassy, Qatar hosts around 4 lakh Bangladeshis, mostly migrant workers. More than 80 percent of Bangladeshi male workers there are involved in the construction sector.

The Gulf country is a major remittance-generating country for Bangladesh -- with migrant workers remitting \$1.1 billion from Qatar last year, government data shows.

On October 15, Bangladesh Ambassador Jashim Uddin, during a meeting with the Qatar foreign ministry's Head of Asia Affairs Khalid Ibrahim Al-Hamar, sought Qatar's support in facilitating the return of stranded Bangladeshi expatriates, according to a social media post of the embassy.

In response, the Qatar official assured Ambassador Jashim of extending all possible cooperation.

According to the post, both

expatriate Bangladeshi workers and a good number of Qatar-based Bangladeshi businessmen remain stranded at home.

Contacted, FM Borhan Uddin, director general (West Asia wing) of Bangladesh foreign ministry, said they will verify the matter of stranded expatriate workers.

He said for workers' re-entry to any of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries -- including Qatar -- the sponsor needs to apply to the local authorities for clearance.

Otherwise, the automated system will not allow the worker and the relevant embassy in Bangladesh will also not issue a re-entry visa, he told this newspaper recently.

It cannot be correct that stranded workers did not get re-entry permission despite the sponsors' applications maintaining due procedure, he said, adding the problem could be elsewhere then.

Asked about the memorandum submitted by the stranded workers to the foreign ministry, he said he was unaware about the matter.

First stage of Egypt parliament elections wraps up

AFP, Cairo

Polls closed in Egypt Sunday after the first phase of parliamentary elections in which candidates loyal to President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi are expected to sweep to victory.

Some 63 million voters out of Egypt's more than 100 million people are eligible to elect 568 of the 596 lawmakers in the lower house, widely seen as a rubber-stamp body for executive policies.

The remaining deputies will be appointed by former army general-turned-president Sisi, whose government has over the past six years silenced any serious political opposition to its rule.

The first phase of voting took place over the weekend in 14 governorates including Alexandria and Aswan.

Polling stations opened on Saturday morning and closed on Sunday at 9 pm local time (1900 GMT).

The second stage of voting, to

be held on November 7-8, will cover Egypt's 13 other governorates including Cairo.

Run-offs are scheduled to take place in November and December, and the newly elected lawmakers will begin their terms in January.

The new parliament will be the second to convene under Sisi, who took office in 2014 after the previous year leading the military ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi.

The outgoing legislature, elected in

2015, was packed with Sisi supporters and featured only a small opposition bloc known as 25/30.

Over 4,000 candidates, believed to be mostly pro-government, are competing for 284 of the 568 seats reserved for individuals. Eight party lists are running for the remaining 284 seats.

Many of the candidates also stood for election five years ago in a political landscape marked by the presence of dozens of parties but with little weight and influence on the ground.

Biden no lover of UK's 'Trump clone' Johnson

AFP, London

The political bromance between Boris Johnson and Donald Trump leaves Britain and its transatlantic "special relationship" exposed if Joe Biden wins next week, just as the country needs all the friends it can get.

The UK is divorcing the European Union and looking to revitalise partnerships elsewhere, but has managed to antagonise Trump's Democratic opponent over its Brexit plans for Northern Ireland.

French President Emmanuel Macron has at times also strived to keep Trump close. But the British prime minister is more closely associated with his fellow convention-shredding populist in Washington.

"There is a lot of frantic repositioning going on at the moment here in London by this administration in Britain," former Conservative finance minister George Osborne told CNN on Sunday.

"But I don't think Joe Biden will feel particularly warmly toward this British government, and they're going to have to work very hard to change that," he said.

Last December, as Johnson closed in on a general election victory, Biden showed his disdain in describing the Conservative politician as a "physical and emotional clone" of Trump.

The president has himself praised Johnson as "Britain's Trump", and the prime minister's own long trail of provocative comments has come back to haunt him.

Biden was vice president to Barack Obama when Johnson, in 2016, wrote that Obama was anti-UK owing to his "part-Kenyan" heritage and "ancestral dislike of the British Empire".

That remark was highlighted recently on Twitter by Obama's deputy national security adviser, Ben Rhodes, who sees Johnson as Trump "with better hair" and a higher IQ. Many veterans of the Obama administration are likely to populate a Biden White House.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12

Nine of yesterday's deceased were males.

One died at home and the rest in hospitals, said the press release.

One was aged between 21 and 30, three were between 51 and 60, and the highest 11 were over 60 years old.

One each was from Sylhet and Barisal divisions, three from Chattogram division and 10 from Dhaka division.

As 1,493 people recovered from their illnesses in the same 24 hours, the number of recoveries rose to 3,016,600.

This is more than 79 percent of all confirmed cases.

As of yesterday noon, 2,358 Covid-19 patients were undergoing treatment in general beds and 260 in ICU beds in coronavirus designated hospitals across the country.

On March 8, the DGHS reported the first three confirmed cases while the first death was reported on March 18.

ACC to seek

FROM PAGE 12

it will be unwise and not possible for me to travel at this point," the letter reads.

Contacted, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan said, "Halder's failure to return to Bangladesh is a willful violation of court order."

Halder didn't provide any medical document proving his ailment, said Khurshid, adding the HC bench is supposed to hear the matter next Thursday.

"Since he is absconding in a graft case, we'll plead to the court to give directives to the Inspector General of Police to bring back Halder with the help of Interpol," he said.

Halder, a former managing director of NRB Global Bank and Reliance Finance Limited, had earlier shown willingness to return home and repay the embezzled money.

He also submitted his flight schedule and ticket number to the court, said Khurshid.

In August, he wrote to ILFSL -- one of the four non-banking financial institutions (NBFI) -- saying he would return home and settle the liabilities with the firms if he was provided with proper security.

On September 7, ILFSL's counsel Mahfuzur Rahman Milon submitted the letter with an application to the HC bench of Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar for its directive in this regard.

The HC then ordered the firm to inform it when Halder would return to Bangladesh for settling his transactions and liabilities with the firm.

On October 21, the HC directed law enforcement agencies to arrest Halder immediately after he landed at Hazrat Shajalal International Airport.

At the same time, the HC bench asked law enforcers to give Halder the opportunity to refund the money to the organisations from which he embezzled the money.

Fury after Qatar 'forcibly examined' women at airport

AFP, Doha

Female passengers flying from Qatar were subjected to invasive searches after a premature baby was found abandoned in an airport bathroom, in procedures the Australian government yesterday described as "grossly disturbing" and "offensive".

A number of women -- including from Australia -- were removed from their flight and examined for signs of childbirth after the baby was found in a bathroom at Hamad International in the Qatari capital.

Australia's government on Monday condemned the October 2 incident, which only came to light after Australian

passengers spoke out, and said concerns had been lodged with Qatar.

"This is a grossly, grossly disturbing, offensive, concerning set of events. It is not something that I have ever heard of occurring in my life," Foreign Minister Marise Payne said.

"We have made our concerns very clear to the Qatari authorities at this point," she said, adding that the matter had also been referred to Australian Federal Police.

A source in Doha briefed on the incident told AFP that officials "were forcing women to undergo invasive body searches -- basically forced Pap smears," an internal examination of the cervix.

Passenger Wolfgang Babeck told AFP women returned to his flight from Doha to Sydney in a "shell-shocked" state, having been told to remove clothing from the lower half of their bodies for an examination by a female doctor.

"All of them were upset, some were angry, one was crying, but basically nobody could believe what happened," the commercial lawyer said, adding he thought the incident could be "a violation of international law".

That flight, Qatar Airways' QR908 to Sydney, was four hours late departing Doha as a result, according to air traffic website Flightradar24.

It is not clear how many flights were involved.

In an official statement, Doha's Hamad International airport confirmed a broad outline of events, without providing details of the procedures, or the number of women and flights involved.

"Medical professionals expressed concern to officials about the health and welfare of a mother who had just given birth and requested she be located prior to departing," the statement said.

"Individuals who had access to the specific area of the airport where the newborn infant was found were asked to assist in the query".

SPORT

WHAT TO WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
Indian Premier League
Hyderabad v Delhi
Live from 8:00pm
TEN 2
UEFA Champions League
Lokomotiv v Bayern Munich
Live from 11:55pm

Marseille v Man City
Live from 2:00am (Wednesday)
SONY SIX
UEFA Champions League
Shakhtar Donetsk v Inter Milan
Live from 11:55pm
Borussia M'gladbach v Real Madrid
Live from 2:00am (Wednesday)



Robert Lewandowski, last season's European Player of the Year, failed to get on the scoresheet against Atletico Madrid in their first match, despite the Polish striker being in red hot form with a record 10 goals in first five games of the Bundesliga season. The 32-year-old striker will surely be looking to fill his boots when the Bavarians play away to Lokomotiv Moscow tonight. PHOTO: TWITTER

Kings, Abahani likely participants in AFC Cup

SPORTS REPORTER



Rahmatganj Muslim Friends Society's slim hopes of playing in the upcoming AFC Club Cup were dashed after the giant-killers failed to submit some of the documents for the licensing of Asia's second-tier competition, paving the way for six-time professional league champions Abahani Ltd to participate along with Bashundhara Kings.

The cancellation of the 2019-20 season of Bangladesh Premier League -- the champions of which gain direct entry to the AFC Cup group stage -- due to the coronavirus pandemic offered a glimmer of hope for Rahmatganj as they finished runners-up to Bashundhara Kings in the Federation Cup, which was completed this season.

The second slot, in normal times, went to Federation Cup champions, who would play in the play-offs stage. Bashundhara, having won the Federation Cup, is virtually assured of direct entry and the second slot is now up for grabs, but as runners-up Rahmatganj first had to obtain licence for the AFC Cup, and even that may not have been enough.

Bashundhara Kings (champions in last completed BPL), Abahani (runners-up), Saif SC, Sheikh Russel, Mohammedan SC and Rahmatganj MFS had submitted their documents within the deadline of August 5. The AFC asked Rahmatganj and Mohammedan to submit some more documents within the extended deadline of September 28, but both failed to

produce their documents. AFC will take the final decision on Bangladesh's slots in late November.

"As Rahmatganj MFS and Mohammedan could not submit all their documents, they don't have any chance of getting the AFC Cup license, leaving four clubs -- Bashundhara Kings, Abahani, Saif SC and Sheikh Russel KC -- to avail the AFC Cup license. The assessment of the documents is going on and we are likely to know within a short period of time," said Bangladesh Football Federation's competition manager Zaber Bin Taher Ansari.

Ansari however said that the AFC has yet to release any regulations relating to the 2021 AFC Cup but the Asian body has already asked them to send the standings of the 2018-19 Bangladesh Premier League, where Bashundhara Kings finished champions ahead of second-placed Abahani.

"It is all but certain that Bashundhara Kings will get a spot in the upcoming AFC Cup as Federation Cup champions but the other one is still uncertain. What I can guess after talking to AFC officials is that Abahani may get a chance as the second team after Bashundhara as the AFC always prioritises the league table over the Federation Cup standings. So, it was not guaranteed that Rahmatganj would have gotten the AFC Cup slot even after obtaining the license," said Ansari, adding that Bashundhara Kings and Abahani will have a greater possibility to represent Bangladesh in the next AFC Cup.

No respite for Zidane

AGENCIES



Real Madrid have released the pressure on Zinedine Zidane temporarily, with the next job to fix their dismal start in the Champions League.

Madrid's 3-1 victory over Barcelona in the Clasicos on Saturday swerved a third consecutive defeat after losses to Cadiz in La Liga and Shakhtar Donetsk. But the effects of the implosion against Shakhtar, who had 10 first team players missing due to coronavirus infections, still linger, with Madrid sitting bottom of Group B.

Zidane will know a convincing performance away to Borussia Monchengladbach on Tuesday should suspend talk of a crisis and dispel doubts about his future, at least for now. Some reports in the Spanish press were even discussing the arrival of Mauricio Pochettino if mistakes were not rectified at

Camp Nou.

"I have always been critical of myself, it is what drives you to improve," said Zidane. "After a loss, as a coach, most of the criticism comes at me and that's normal." Zidane routinely sidesteps the issue of his future, which creates a nervousness after he resigned so unexpectedly after winning the Champions League in 2018.

Every slip-up is projected as a slump and any doubts feed the idea Zidane might suddenly depart. "Nothing changes," he said. "Last year? The same. In my first spell? The same. What I have to do is do my job." Anything but a win on Tuesday and the cycle begins again.

CAN THE 'LIFEBLOOD OF INTER' KEEP FLOWING?

After Romelu Lukaku scored his eighth and ninth goals of the new season in Inter's Matchday 1 draw with Gladbach, Gazzetta dello Sport called the Belgian



"the lifeblood of Inter, not only for his goals but for his ability to transform every ball he receives into a potential attacking move". Lukaku also struck twice as Inter beat Matchday 2 opponents Shakhtar 5-0 in last season's Europa League semifinal in Dusseldorf. Will the No. 9 bring his shooting boots to Ukraine?

MOSCOW BECKONS FOR RAMPANT BAYERN

Any fears that Bayern might fluff their lines on their return to the UEFA Champions League were dispelled when they mauled Atletico 4-0, extending their

epochal European winning streak to 13 games. Los Colchoneros at least stopped Robert Lewandowski scoring -- no small achievement given he had hit six in his previous two Bundesliga matches. Lokomotiv Moscow will note that Bayern won 5-0 when they last met the Railwaymen in Moscow, in the UEFA Cup in 1995.

CAN LIVERPOOL FIGURE OUT MIDTJYLLAND?

After Liverpool drew the Danish champions, Jurgen Klopp said that Midtjylland "has been for years one of the most interesting teams". The club's focus on mathematical modelling and set pieces has caused a stir; indeed, ex-FCM throw-in expert Thomas Gronnemark now works for the Reds. Atalanta blew Midtjylland's cool with a 4-0 victory last time out, but Brian Priske's side could yet add up to be a handful for a Liverpool team still unsettled following centre-back Virgil van Dijk's long-term injury.



THIS ONE IS FOR DAD

After smashing an unbeaten 107 off just 60 balls to help Rajasthan Royals beat holders Mumbai Indians by eight wickets on Sunday, Ben Stokes raised his bat and hand with a folded finger after the hundred as a gesture to his ailing father whose middle finger was amputated because of injuries while playing and coaching rugby league. "Things are a bit difficult right now, but hope this has given a bit of happiness back home," an emotional Stokes said after the match.

PHOTO: IPL T20

AZARENKA'S Halloween dilemma

AFP, Prague

Victoria Azarenka ended her season after reaching the Ostrava Open final on Sunday but she is now facing another tough battle -- striking a deal with her son on his Halloween costume.

After losing to compatriot Aryna Sabalenka 6-2, 6-2, Azarenka confessed she had had a "heated argument" with her four-year-old son Leo who insists on being Elsa, the snow queen from the Walt Disney blockbuster "Frozen".

"He likes to wear different costumes every day... and he's into Frozen and Paw Patrol now," said Azarenka. "I said, how about mommy's going to be Elsa, and he said, no, I want to be Elsa, and I said, well, Elsa is a girl, and he said, well, I want to be Elsa." So that started to be a heated argument and his dad suggested also that maybe he'll be Olaf but he didn't take that lightly, it was a blunt no," she half-sighed, half-chuckled.

The former world number one and this year's US Open finalist still has almost a week to strike a deal with Leo, but she knows outstanding diplomatic skills will be required to reach a compromise. "One Halloween, when we were able to do it together, we were all skeletons so hopefully we'll figure something out," she said.



South Africa cricket board resigns

REUTERS, undated

Cricket South Africa's (CSA) entire board has resigned, the organisation said on Monday, with an interim committee likely to be tasked with bringing the governing body out of its administrative turmoil.

A day after five members, including acting president Beresford Williams, stepped down CSA said its other board members have also resigned.

"...the Members' Council had deliberated and resolved that in order to best serve the interest of cricket in South Africa, the entire Board should resign - which they did," CSA said in a tweet.

"All independent and non-independent directors have now resigned." CSA has been battling governance issues with a damning internal report providing a long list of concerns about the actions of various staff members.

Sports minister Nathi Mthethwa told the International Cricket Council (ICC) this month that he intended to intervene in the running of CSA unless it committed to governance reforms by Oct. 27.

England are scheduled to arrive in South Africa next month to play three Twenty20s and three one-day internationals from Nov. 27.

'What a time to be alive'

MOST WINS IN F1 HISTORY

DRIVER	WINS
Lewis Hamilton (UK)	92
Michael Schumacher (GER)	91
Sebastian Vettel (GER)	53
Alain Prost (FRA)	51
Ayrton Senna (BRA)	41

REUTERS, UNDATED

Lewis Hamilton put no limits on what he could achieve after roaring past retired Ferrari great Michael Schumacher on Sunday as the Formula One driver with most wins in the history of the sport.

The Mercedes driver's 92nd victory was one of his most crushing. Hamilton lapping all but three rivals at the Portuguese Grand Prix.

Hamilton took the chequered flag a huge 25 seconds ahead of second placed teammate Valtteri Bottas, who had led at the end of the first lap.

The six-time world champion, who joined Mercedes from McLaren in 2013 and is now set for a record-equalling seventh title, was just as quick to thank his team mates at track and factory afterwards.

"I knew that we would win championships. Did I think we would win as many as we have? No. Did I think that we would win this many races? Of course not," the Briton told reporters.

"This is a phenomenal time for us and the great thing is it's not just me. What a time to be alive," he added.

Asked how he could raise the bar, Hamilton said it depended on the team. "Going by our history together... I think there's a lot more for us to do.

"I'm 35 years old, I still feel physically strong but of course you wonder when is it going to tip over, when are you going to start losing performance? But as shown by today, it's not yet."



From Channel swimmer to Giro winner

AFP, MILAN

Tao Geoghegan Hart, who once played truant to see Sky's launch, on Sunday became the renamed team's latest major tour winner when he seized his opportunity in the closing time trial at the Giro d'Italia.

"It's incredible! It was impossible for me to even think about winning the Giro when we started in Sicily," said the 25-year-old who started the race working for former Tour de France winner Geraint Thomas.

Thomas crashed in the third stage, and Geoghegan Hart, a Londoner with Scottish and Irish roots, became the fifth Briton to win a major tour and the second to win the Giro, following Chris Froome in 2018.

All 12 British triumphs have come since 2011. Sunday's was the 11th in the colours of the team now known as Ineos.



When it was launched, as Sky in 2010, with Brad Wiggins as the star, Geoghegan Hart, a schoolboy from Hackney in east London, turned up to watch.

With his good looks, reddish hair, relaxed nature and easy banter he most resembles Wiggins, another Londoner and Sky's Tour de France

groundbreaker. Geoghegan Hart's name can cause problems and the second line on his personal web page reads: "It's Tayo GAY-gan Hart."

He is passionate about coffee. His web page has a photo of the gear he takes with him: bags of beans, scales, press, grinder, dripper, filters, jugs, kettle with adaptor plug and a mug. "of course." On Sunday, after his triumph, he insisted the coffee would still smell the same.

"I'm going to stay the same person," he said. "Wake up every day looking forward to riding my bike, loving my life and being grateful for the amazing position, the privilege, that I'm in to be in this team and at these races."

The son of a builder and the eldest of five siblings, Geoghegan Hart tried team sports such as football. At 13, was the youngest member of a six-person relay team

from a local club that swam the English Channel.

"He came to us through soccer and swimming; he liked the idea of cycling because he was fed up of other people letting him down, and cycling is a sport where it's largely down to the individual," Hackney Cycling Club coach Keir Apperley told The Guardian. Geoghegan Hart joined Sky in 2017 as a trainee. He moved to Girona in Spain, a popular base for cyclists.

In 2018 he rode his first big tour, the Vuelta. Last year, he was part of the victorious Ineos team at the Giro but crashed and broke a collarbone on the 13th stage. Even so, he developed a taste for the race.

"I really liked the Giro," he said earlier this year. "There are a lot more opportunities than in the Tour de France."

That opportunity arrived this year. Geoghegan Hart grabbed it.

QUIZ CONTEST

The Daily Star | STAR CINEPLEX

10 WINNERS EVERYDAY! 2 PREMIUM TICKETS FOR EACH WINNER

Email your answer to starquiz@outlook.com by 4.00 pm today with your name, DOB, mobile number and address. The winners of the quiz will be announced tomorrow in this newspaper and through email.

Winners are requested to follow the instructions given in email

QUIZ - 05
What is the website address of STAR Cineplex?

WINNERS LIST OF QUIZ - 04

1. Mofajjal Hossain Mojahid, Cumilla
2. Nafisa Bari, Rayerbazar
3. Shanjid Khan Mojlish, AUST
4. Nazmul Hasan, Banasree
5. Tushar Bhuiyan, Zigatola
6. Syeda Shadab Mohsin, Motijheel
7. Tabassum Fariha, Circuit House Road
8. Shirin Akter, Gazipur
9. Mahboob N M, Segunbagicha
10. Rafayet Ahmed, Khulna



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Waiting for RE-ENTRY

Bangladeshi migrant workers facing trouble going back to Qatar; Doha handed list

JAMIL MAHMUD

Hundreds of Bangladeshi migrant workers employed by private companies in Qatar are facing difficulties returning to their workplaces as their online applications for re-entry permits, required due to the pandemic, have been rejected or are under process for an unduly long time.

The workers said they came home on vacation before the Covid-19 pandemic struck -- holding valid visas and residence permits, known as the Qatar ID Card.

Stuck at home for months with no jobs now, they are feeling the financial crunch.

They applied online via their respective employers in Qatar maintaining due procedure, yet they are facing this trouble.

On October 11, over a hundred Qatar-based migrant workers formed a human chain in front of Press Club in Dhaka. A team of the protesters later that day submitted a letter of memorandum to the foreign ministry in this regard.

However, during a meeting on Thursday, Qatar Foreign Minister Yousuf Mohamed Al Othman assured Bangladesh Ambassador Jashim Uddin that "exceptional entry permits" would be issued to expatriate Bangladeshi workers in a short time, according to a press release issued by the embassy.

Due to the pandemic, expatriate workers unable to

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



In search of food, a flock of common mynas flies over a garbage dump in Barishal city's Kaunia Puranpara Moylakhola area yesterday afternoon. The area is designated for the city corporation's dumping.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

CHINA 'THREATS' Pompeo starts South Asia tour in India

AFP, New Delhi

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in New Delhi yesterday, kicking off a four-country Asia tour that he has said will focus on the "threats" posed by China.

Joined by Defense Secretary Mark Esper for the two-day visit, Pompeo will hold top-level talks following a spike in tensions between India and China since a deadly border clash in June.

India has sought US cold weather equipment as the showdown goes into the freezing Himalayan winter and officials said this could be raised when Pompeo and Esper meet India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

The world's two biggest democracies are expected to sign an agreement on sharing geo-spatial intelligence, paving the way for the United States to ship sophisticated missile

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Swechhasebak Dal activist killed at Bogura temple

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A Swechhasebak Dal activist was killed in front of a temple in Sabgram Bazar in Bogura's Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Subroto alias Somrat Das, 27.

The incident occurred around 1:00am in front of a Durga temple, following an internal feud between two criminal groups, police sources said.

Humayan Kabir, officer-in-charge of the Sadar Police Station, said, "Somrat was crossing the temple area on a motorbike in the last night, when at least 5-6 men attacked him from behind with sticks and sharp weapons.

To survive, Somrat took shelter on the temple premises but the attackers dragged him out and hacked him with sharp weapons.

He died at the spot, the OC said.

However, he said Somrat was involved with the BNP and was a union Swechhasebak Dal activist.

When contacted, Ali Ashraf Bhuiyan, superintendent of Bogura Police, said, "An internal feud between two criminal groups led to the murder. Somrat was a criminal in that area. There are four cases filed with police stations against him, including ones for murder, arms possession and robbery.

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Damages assessed at Tk 930cr



Netherlands' Charge d'Affaires CJ Schneider calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Gono Bhaban on October 27, 1972.

October 27, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

DON'T UNNECESSARILY LENGTHEN HOUSE BUSINESS

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman chides the members of the Gono Parishad today for unnecessarily lengthening the business of the house. The prime minister is requested by Deputy Speaker Mohammad Baitullah to place his view following a commotion in the house as Moinuddin Miazi alleged favouritism by the chief whip in the preparation of the list of speakers of the general discussion on the draft constitution.

The prime minister laments that the members are not conversant with parliamentary procedures and conventions. He says the list of speakers in parliamentary democracy is always prepared by the party and the speaker calls upon the members to speak from

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Bangladesh passes 4 lakh Covid-19 cases mark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of confirmed cases of novel coronavirus surpassed 4 lakh mark as the Directorate General of Health Services reported 1,436 new cases in the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

The new cases were 10.44 percent of the 13,758 tests done in 111 rt-PCR laboratories in the country. With this, the total number of coronavirus infection rose to 4,00,251.

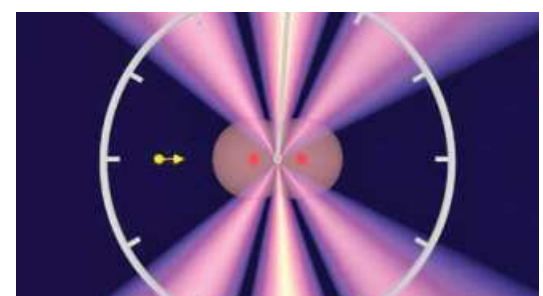
Bangladesh is now the country with the 18th highest number of confirmed cases, according to worldometers.info.

Besides, 15 Covid-19 patients died in the same 24 hours, taking the number of deaths to 5,818, said a DGHS press release.

This is around 1.45 percent of all confirmed cases in the country, according to the DGHS.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Scientists measure smallest amount of time



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A zeptosecond, the shortest amount of time ever recorded, has just been measured by scientists.

It represent one trillionth of a billionth of a second.

Physicists from Goethe University Frankfurt used this measurement to record how long it takes for a photon to cross a hydrogen molecule - approximately 247 zeptoseconds.

In order to measure this event, scientists irradiated a hydrogen molecule using X-rays from the PETRA III laser, the most powerful light source of its kind.

The energy of the X-rays was set so that only one photon was needed to send both electrons out of the hydrogen molecule.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

ACC to seek contempt order against PK Halder

Likely to ask Interpol for help in bringing him back

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission will seek contempt of court order against Prashanta Kumar Halder alias PK Halder who is allegedly involved in misappropriating over Tk 10,000 crore from four non-banking financial institutions.

The anti-graft watchdog will also seek assistance from Interpol to bring Halder back to Bangladesh.

Halder was supposed to return to Bangladesh on Sunday. But on Friday, Halder in a letter to International Leasing and Finance Service Limited (ILFSL) informed that he was feeling feverish and physically unwell.

"Given the present Covid-19 situation, this looks like a symptom and

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Bangladeshi peacekeeper killed in road accident

2 others hurt

STAR REPORT

One Bangladeshi UN peacekeeper in the Central African Republic died in a road accident and two others sustained injuries, said Inter Services Public Relation Directorate yesterday.

The deceased was Lance Corporal Abdullah Al Mamun, 36, and the injured are Sergeant Abdus Samad, 35, and soldier Mokhlesur Rahman, 31.

ISPR said Mamun was driving a water bowser (water tank), which lost traction on a slippery

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Two intra-city buses trying to overtake each other on the road in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday afternoon. One of the drivers is seen wielding a stick to intimidate his opponent. Such unwarranted "races" between buses are a major cause of road accidents in the country.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Oxford vaccine gives hope to all age groups

Europe prepares for more pain ahead as Covid cases surge

AGENCIES

The Covid-19 vaccine being developed by the University of Oxford produces a similar immune response in both older and younger adults, and adverse responses were lower among the elderly, British drug maker AstraZeneca Plc said yesterday.

A vaccine that works is seen as a game-changer in the battle against the novel coronavirus, which has killed more than 1.15 million people, hammered the global economy and shuttered normal life across the world.

The positive news offered some hope to millions around the world, specially Europe, where leaders warned of difficult months ahead as the resurgent Covid-19 pandemic forced authorities to impose new restrictions to try to curb the spread of the disease.

However, British Health Secretary Matt Hancock cautioned that the vaccine would not be widely available until next year and said "we're not there yet".

"It is encouraging to see immunogenicity responses were similar between older and younger adults and that reactogenicity was lower in older adults, where the COVID-19 disease severity is higher," an AstraZeneca spokesman told Reuters.

"The results further build the body of evidence for the safety and immunogenicity of AZD1222," the spokesman said, referring to the technical name of the vaccine.

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PRAYER TIMING OCTOBER 27
 Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
 AZAN 4:50 12:45 4:00 5:36 7:15
 JAMAAT 5:25 1:15 4:15 5:39 7:45
 SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION