

**BANGLADESH
UPDATE**



1,837
New cases in 24hrs



4,32,333
Total cases



6,194
Deaths



3,49,542
Recoveries

**GLOBAL
UPDATE**



1,321,546
Deaths



54,544,313
Total cases

Soumitra cremated with state honours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legendary Bengali actor Soumitra Chatterjee was cremated yesterday evening and a gun-salute at Kolkata's Keoratala Burning Ghat. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, leftist politicians Biman Bose, Suriya Kanta Mishra, along with thousands of Chatterjee's fans and admirers, joined the funeral procession. The procession started from Nandan in Rabindra Sadan, considered the hub of Bangla theatre, reported Indian newspapers. Soumitra Chatterjee passed away in Kolkata yesterday. He was 85. The Dadasaheb Phalke awardee was hospitalised over 40 days ago after testing positive for coronavirus. He later tested negative for the virus, but the condition of the veteran actor remained a matter of concern owing to co-morbidities and advanced age. Soumitra's body was brought out of Belle Vue Clinic hospital around 2:00pm and taken to his residence in Kolkata's Golf Green. His body was then taken to the Technician Studio in Tollygunge, where his long-time colleagues paid their last respects.

After that his body was kept at Nandan for about two hours from 3:30pm, and from there the final procession started at about 5:30pm. Mamata Banerjee, Biman Bose, Suriya Kanta Mishra and thousands of Chatterjee's fans and admirers paid their last respects while following health guidelines necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Soon after news of actor-director-poet-writer Chatterjee's death spread, a pall of gloom descended on West Bengal as well as Bangladesh. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed deep shock at his death. In a condolence message, she said a big vacuum has been created in the sphere of acting due to the death of the brilliant thespian. "Soumitra Chatterjee will remain in the hearts of people through his creative works," she said. The prime minister prayed for the eternal salvation of the departed soul and expressed sympathy to the bereaved family. Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid and others also expressed shock at Soumitra's death.

He won because the election

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Election officials of both parties have said there is no evidence of major irregularities. Democrats and other critics have accused Trump of trying to delegitimise Biden's victory and undermine public confidence in the American electoral process. Before the election, Trump had refused to commit to a peaceful transfer of power. Trump's refusal to concede did not change the fact that Biden was the president-elect, but it has stalled the government's normal process of preparing for a new presidential administration. The Trump administration's decision not to recognize Biden as the winner has prevented Biden and his team from gaining access to government office space and to funding normally afforded to an incoming administration to ensure a smooth transition. The federal agency in charge of providing those resources, the General Services Administration, has yet to recognize Biden's victory. 'ABSOLUTELY DISGRACEFUL' Senator Bernie Sanders, one of the main challengers to Biden for the Democratic presidential nomination, criticized Trump's post-election conduct. "Trump will have the distinction of doing more than any person in the history of this country in undermining American democracy. The idea that he continues to tell his supporters that the only reason he may have lost this election was because of fraud is an absolutely disgraceful, un-American thing to do," Sanders told CNN's "State of the Union" program. Biden has spent days huddled

with advisers as he weighs Cabinet appointments, fields congratulatory calls from world leaders and maps out the policies he will pursue after being sworn in on Jan. 20. He is expected to continue meeting with advisers in private on Sunday. Biden has won 306 votes in the state-by-state Electoral College system that determines the presidential winner, according to Edison Research, far more than the 270 needed to secure a majority. States are in the process of certifying their election results. The Electoral College meets to vote for the new president on Dec. 14. John Bolton, Trump's former national security adviser turned critic, on Sunday called on Republicans to acknowledge Biden's victory. Bolton last week accused his fellow Republicans of "coddling" and "kowtowing" to Trump as the incumbent despite his defeat. "I think it's very important for leaders of the Republican Party to explain to our voters, who are not as stupid as the Democrats think, that in fact Trump has lost the election and his claims of election fraud are baseless," Bolton said on ABC's "This Week" program. "I take this as a test for the Republican Party. ... I don't buy the argument that Donald Trump has hypnotized Republican voters," Bolton added. TRUMP SUPPORTERS RALLY On Saturday, tens of thousands of flag-waving Trump supporters ventured into Washington to echo his claims of election fraud during the "Million MAGA March," referring to Trump's campaign slogan of "Make America Great Again."

Race against time

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that the students get the textbooks by the beginning of the New Year despite uncertainty over school reopening. "We have started sending primary textbooks to the upazilas and only a nominal number of secondary books were sent to upazilas," NCTB Chairman Prof Narayan Chandra Saha told The Daily Star. "As we started late in the process of awarding tender and work order, we have set a target that all books will reach the upazilas by December 26," he said. This year, around 35.36 crore textbooks will be printed and distributed among 4.16 crore students of pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. Of them, around 10 crore books are for primary students. The government, however, will not arrange its "Textbook Festival", held on January 1 every year, due to the pandemic. "The festival is important but it will not be wise to hold such festivals that could create a health risk," said Education Minister Dipu Moni recently. According to the NCTB chairman, it is still not decided how students will receive the books. THE DELAY NCTB officials blamed the Covid-19 pandemic for the delay in initiating the tender process, issuing work orders, and other necessary tasks related to the printing of such a large number of textbooks. Usually the tender process ends by April-May, and winning bidders receive their work orders by June-July and start printing books in August. The textbooks are ready in October and almost all new textbooks reach students by January 1, the first day of the new academic year. "But this year, the process of awarding tender and giving work order was completed in July and August because of the pandemic,"

Narayan said. There was a 66-day shutdown from March 26 across the country to curb the spread of the virus. And even after the shutdown was lifted, the board could only work with 25 percent of its manpower due to government orders about attendance of officials and employees at offices for several more weeks. A section of NCTB officials, however, were sceptical about the quality of the textbooks as several printing companies combined to bid for the tender. These companies got the work at about 25 to 30 percent lower than this year's bidding price of the estimated printing cost of textbooks. Asked about the matter, the NCTB chairman said they will supervise the quality of books. "We will not give scope for anyone to give lesser-quality books." TEXTBOOK DISTRIBUTION HISTORY Since 2010, the government started distributing free textbooks to both primary and secondary level students at the very beginning of the academic session. Previously, the government used to distribute free textbooks only at the primary level, which turned out to be difficult for many students belonging to low-income groups or disadvantaged communities. A set of textbooks would cost between Tk 1,000-1,500. Besides, printers would often create an artificial crisis by not printing and distributing books on time. In some cases, books used to hit the stalls in March-April or even later that year. In the last 10 years, the government has handed out over 331.38 crore copies of textbooks to students. The success has led to significant improvements in enrolment at the primary and secondary levels, as well as a decrease in the dropout rate at both levels, say NCTB officials.



The last of the legends bows out

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Naseeruddin Shah once said was "stylelessness and lack of acting", was the quintessentially intelligent actor. During a career spanning over six decades, Soumitra, a gem discovered by master director Satyajit Ray, donned several hats -- actor, poet, essayist, elocutionist and playwright, and play director. He was the last of the Mohicans in Bangla cinema, whose outlook and thinking were shaped by the tumultuous decades of the 1943 Bengal famine, the 1946 communal riots and newly independent India's socio-economic and political turmoil. Born in 1935, Soumitra spent his initial years in Krishnanagar in West Bengal's Nadia district. As his father was in theatre, acting ran in Soumitra's blood. It was during his childhood that he was introduced to the world of stage acting through family stage performances by his grandfather and father Mohit Chatterjee. Soumitra's father had taken part in the Indian freedom movement and the actor's grandfather, who espoused radical nationalism, was jailed during the British rule. As the actor recalled in an interview, his home hosted several noted freedom fighters and social reformers like Bagha Jatin (Jatindranath Mukherjee), Annie Besant, Subhas Chandra Bose, Sarojini Naidu, Dr Rajendraprasad and Kaji Nazrul Islam. While his father brought him to the stage, it was his mother Ashalata Devi who injected in him an early interest in literature. The parents together shaped the formative years of the great actor. But it was a play by the doyen of Bengali theatre Sisir Bhaduri, which Soumitra had gone to watch during his college days in Kolkata, that was the turning point in his life as he decided to become an actor. Soumitra shifted to Kolkata in 1951 after passing his matriculation examination from Howrah Zilla School and took admission in City College on Amherst Street in north Kolkata. There, he was exposed to an exciting cultural landscape of West Bengal as he came close to writers like Shakti Chattopadhyay, Sunil Gangopadhyay and Amitabha Dasgupta, who would often meet at the Coffee House in College Street. It was in Kolkata that Soumitra came in touch with Satyajit Ray at the

Senate Hall of Calcutta University, where a reception was being held for the director and his unit after the success of "Pather Panchali". One evening in 1956, Nityananda Dutta, Ray's Assistant Director, introduced him to Ray at his residence. The director was scouting for someone to play the role of Apu in "Aparajito". But Ray found the actor a bit too old for the role. Soumitra, however, did not have to wait long to break into Ray's world. His handsome frame and manner of dialogue delivery impressed Ray, who roped him in to play Apu in "Apar Sansar", the third movie in the Apu trilogy, alongside Sharmila Tagore. There was no looking back for Soumitra after that. Who can forget the picture of a bearded young man, who lost his wife, carrying his son on his shoulders? It is one of the most abiding images of Bangla cinema. Soumitra found a mentor in Ray and the partnership saw the actor in 14 films and two documentaries of the master director. From Amal in "Charulata", to the adventure-loving young man in "Araner Dinratri" to the private sleuth Prodosh Mitter aka Felu, in "Sonar Kella" (1974) and "Joy Baba Felunath" (1979), Sandip in "Ghare Baire", to the tenacious swimming coach in Koni, the actor's repertoire includes a wide range of characters in commercial and art house films. The relationship between him and Ray ended with the director's death in April 1992. By that time, the collaboration between the two produced one of the greatest chapters of Bangla cinema through 14 films -- "Devi" (1960), "Abhijan" (1962), "Charulata" (1964), "Araner Din Ratri" (1970), "Ashani Sanket" (1973), "Hirak Rajar Deshe" (1980), "Ghare Baire" (1984), "Canashatru" (1989) and "Shakha Prashakha" (1990). Such was the effect of Ray-Soumitra collaboration that many film analysts have often been compared with the duo to the likes of Akira Kurosawa-Toshiro Mifune, Max von Sydow-Ingmar Bergman and Marcello Mastroianni-Federico Fellini. Soumitra never let go of an opportunity to express his gratitude to Ray. "I don't know what I would have done if he were not there. Most of my dreams would have remained unfulfilled had I not met him. He [Ray]



was an inspiration for me and would always remain alive in me. Manik da [Ray's nickname] had been a mentor for me," he said on several occasions. Soumitra also worked with other legendary directors of Bangla cinema, such as Mrinal Sen, Tapan Sinha, Tarun Majumdar and Goutam Ghosh through roles in "Kshudhita Pashan", "Akash Kushum", "Kaalbela" and "Ganadevata". Soumitra's role of the dashing handsome, swashbuckling, horse-riding grey character Mayurbhan in Tapan Sinha's "Jhinder Bondi" would always remain etched in anyone's memory. Age failed to wear down Soumitra. Even at 80, he displayed his acting prowess in national award-winning film "Mayurakshi" (2017), "Bela Sheshe" (2015) and "Posto" (2017). His success in cinema notwithstanding, the stage remained Soumitra's first love. His famous rendition of William Shakespeare's King Lear in Suman Mukhopadhyay's Raja Lear earned him accolades, while Soumitra himself wrote more than 15 plays and directed more than 30. "I always loved direct interaction with the audience. Theatre is in my blood. If given a second chance, I would still opt for nothing less than acting on stage," he once said in an interview. Idealism is something that was in Soumitra's DNA. A leftist known for his proximity to Marxists and former chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, Soumitra was on several occasions outspoken on contemporary issues such as intolerance and the demonetisation exercise in 2016. In 1970s and 80s, he turned down the Indian government's Padma Shri award twice, and in 2001 he refused the national award for best male actor in protest against the alleged "biased attitude" of the award's jury. Any Bangla film aficionado in the modern era could instantly recall Soumitra's immortal delivery of the dialogue: "fight Koni, fight", while playing the role of a swimming coach egging on his swimmer-student in the 1984 film "Koni." The actor's fans had been echoing the same dialogue over the last 40 days as he battled for life due to post-Covid complications, which took away one of the greatest personalities of Bangla cinema.

RU journo sent

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secretary general. Moulana Muhibullah Babunagari was made chief of the advisory body, which accommodated 20 advisers. Before this committee, Junayed served Hefajat as secretary general, while Nur Hossain Qasemi was amir of Hefajat-e-Islam's Dhaka unit. A central committee of 151 members was also formed during the council. The meeting was held around two months after the death Hefajat Amir Ahmed Shafi, who passed away on September 18. The new committee excluded almost all who were pro-Ahmed Shafi, including his son Moulana Anas Madani. Apart from him, Moulana Mainuddin Ruhi, joint secretary general of the former committee, Mufti Faizullah, founding joint-secretary general of former committee, Mufti Moulana Abul Hasnat Amini, nayeab-a-amir, Anas Madani, publicity secretary and Moulana Kolimullah and joint secretary general of former committee, could not make it to the new committee. The committee list was, however, not made public till the filing of the report on Sunday evening. Asked, Moulana Meer Edris, a member of the council preparation committee, did not say why those who held posts earlier in the committee were omitted this time, but asked journalists to wait for further development. Hefajat sources told The Daily Star that Junayed Babunagari, Nur Hossain Qasemi, and leaders of Khelafat-e-Majlis, basically shaped the committee. Junayed was made amir as he has the biggest influence on Hathazari Madrasas compared to other leaders. Soon after the council, Moulana Mainuddin Ruhi told this newspaper that this committee is completely illegal as it did not follow organisation

Babunagari picked

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regulations. Refusing to accept the new committee, he said Hefajat-e-Islam never had any top leader "who had affiliations with any political party". This is first the time that it accommodated a secretary general who is also secretary general of Jamiyat-a-Ulamaye Islam -- a component of the 20-party alliance led by BNP, he added. Terming Hefajat a non-political platform, he said the man who convened the council is not a member of Hefajat-e-Islam, which is why the whole council, including today's committee, is illegal. Azizul Haque Islamabadi, organising secretary of Hefajat-e-Islam, told The Daily Star that these are baseless comments. "The committee was formed unanimously with consent from all councillors who gathered yesterday from across the country." Mohammad Moinuddin, brother-in-law of late Ahmed Shafi, in a press conference demanded judicial probe into Shafi's death. He claims that Mufti Harun Ezhar, Inamul Hasan, Meer Edris, Nasir Uddin Munir, in presence of Junayed Babunagari, played a role in the death. He also requested not to form any committee before the judicial enquiry. Alleging that Hefajat, being a non-political entity, is sliding into the grip of the BNP-Jamaat, led by anti-Shafi elements, he urged his fellows to come forward in resisting the force that is using Hefajat for political gains. Moulana Mainuddin Ruhi, Moulana Sarwar, Moulana Ashraf Uddin and Moulana Osman Qasemi were present among others in the press conference in this regard. On the occasion of Hefajat's council, police and local administrations deployed additional forces, including Rab and riot police, led by three executive magistrates, at various corners of Hathazari upazila to avoid any untoward situation.

Jubo League

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sources said.

However, a good number of less controversial men including lawyers, journalists, and former leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League have got places in the Jubo League committee. And many leaders in the previous committee have been left out. Some of the former student leaders who became members of the committee for the first time are Saifur Rahman Sohag, Joydev Nandi, Monwarul Islam Masud, Shamsul Kabir Rahat, Abdul Aziz, Aditya Nandi, and Delwar Shahzada. Lawyer Syed Saidul Haque Sumon, well-known as a social media influencer, has become law secretary while at least six journalists have become members in the committee. Surprising many, Ashikur Rahman, son of founding chairman of Bangladesh Jatiya Party Nazirur Rahman Manzur, was made an executive committee member. Several Jubo League leaders alleged that there was nepotism in some cases. The previous committee had 151 members, but 50 posts have been created to accommodate more leaders in the new committee. Bangladesh Cricket Board director Sheikh Sohel and FBCCI President Sheikh Fazle Fahim were given berths in the 27-member presidium committee. Five posts in the presidium committee remain vacant. The most talked-about member of the new committee is Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury alias Nixon Chowdhury. Nixon defeated Awami League nominee and presidium member Kazi Zafrullah in Faridpur-4 in 2014 and 2018 national elections. Nixon Chowdhury recently hit the headlines by engaging in a dispute with local administration officials during the upazila elections. The Election Commission sued the independent MP on October 15, accusing him of intimidating and threatening the government officials and breaching the code of conduct during the by-election for the post of chairman of Charbhadrason Upazila Parishad on October 10. Nixon is currently out on bail in the case. On November 23, 2019, 50-year-old Sheikh Fazle Shams Parash, son of Jubo League founder Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni, was elected the organisation's chairman at a session of Jubo League's 7th Triennial Congress. Sheikh Hasina entrusted Prof Parash, who teaches English literature at a private university, with salvaging the tarnished image of Jubo League even though Parash was never involved in political activities. Mainul Hossain Khan Nikhil, president of Dhaka North City AL, was elected the general secretary. Jubo League was founded in 1972 with the objectives of alleviating poverty and establishing the rights of the young people. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's nephew Moni was tasked with uniting the country's young people. On October 20, 2019, Jubo League Chairman Omar Faruk Chowdhury was relieved of his post amid allegations of corruption.

Samrat siphoned

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Rapid Action Battalion arrested Samrat, the then president of Dhaka South unit Jubo League, and Arman, ex-vice president of the unit, from Cumilla, raiding a house near the Indian border on October 6 last year. Samrat came under the spotlight after Rab busted his illegal casino business at different sporting clubs in the capital. He was expelled from Jubo League following his arrest.

Covid-free

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centres in Dhaka and in Chattogram. Though negative certificate for inbound passengers has been made mandatory earlier, many are not complying. The new decision will stop such practices, Habibur Rahman, spokesperson for the DGHS, who was with the DG during the visit, told The Daily Star. A circular in this regard may be issued within days, he added. Sources said the issue of making Covid-19 certificate mandatory was discussed in the cabinet recently. NEW DEATHS Twenty-one more people died from Covid-19 in the country during the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, said a DGHS press release. With this, the total number of deaths has now reached 6,194 and the death rate stands at 1.43 percent. Some 1,837 new infections were recorded in the meantime, taking the total figure to 4,32,333, added the release. Around 14,060 samples were tested across the country during the time. Meanwhile, 1,693 Covid-19 patients recovered in the 24 hours. The number of recoveries stands at 3,49,542 and the recovery rate is 80.85 percent. Of the 21 deceased, 17 were males. One was aged between 41 and 50, two were between 21 and 30, four between 51 and 60, and 14 others were above 60 years, said the release.