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"The government has destroyed every democratic institution and the electoral system by depriving people of their right to vote. The economy is in a bad shape while banks and the share market got depleted."

BNP STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBER SELIMA RAHMAN



"America is back, ready to lead the world."

US PRESIDENT-ELECT JOE BIDEN



"We must learn from the summer and not repeat the same mistakes, relaxing too fast."

EU CHIEF URSULA VON DER LEYEN WARNS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



Farewell, magical MARADONA

Death of a man, not his legend

AL-AMIN

AFP, Buenos Aires

Diego Maradona, one of the greatest footballers of all time, died Wednesday at the age of 60, plunging his sport and his native Argentina into mourning.

Renowned along with Pele as one of the greatest players ever to play the game, the Argentine World Cup-winning captain died of a heart attack, having undergone brain surgery earlier this month, a member of his entourage told AFP.

Maradona will forever be known for his "Hand of God" goal against England in the 1986 World Cup quarter-final in Mexico, when he appeared to use his hand to push the ball into the net before later swerving through the English defenders for a memorable second goal that sealed a victory.

Pele said Maradona had been a "dear

friend" and said he hoped they would "play together in the sky" one day.

Gary Lineker, who was in the England team defeated in 1986, tweeted that Maradona was "arguably the greatest of all time" but made a reference to that infamous goal by adding: "After a blessed but troubled life, hopefully he'll finally find some comfort in the hands of God. #RipDiego"

Lionel Messi, the Argentine considered one of the world's greatest modern-day players, said Maradona was "eternal".

Argentine President Alberto Fernandez immediately announced three days of national mourning in the South American country.

Shortly before the announcement that shocked the world, Argentine media reported Maradona had suffered a serious health setback on Wednesday

"The best of the lot, no question... I saw Maradona do things that God himself would doubt were possible."

FORMER BRAZIL STAR ZICO

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SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

39 more die, 2,156 infected in 24 hours

UNB, Dhaka

The country saw a spike in daily Covid-19 deaths yesterday as the health authorities registered 39 deaths in 24 hours till 8:00am.

A total of 2,156 new infections and 2,302 recoveries were recorded during the 24-hour period.

With the latest count, the total tally of infection and death reached 454,146 and 6,487 respectively, said the Directorate General of Health Services.

The death and recovery rates stood at 1.43 percent and 81.29 percent respectively. So far, 369,179 Covid-19 patients have recovered.

Bangladesh reported its first novel coronavirus cases on March 8. The number

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PROBABLE VACCINE RECIPIENTS

Frontliners to be first in line

First shipment from Gavi likely in Feb-June

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

With Bangladesh securing nearly 100 million doses of Covid vaccine from two sources by next year, the most pertinent question now is who will be vaccinated first.

No decision has been made yet but frontline healthcare workers are the ones likely to be vaccinated first as the country expects to receive the first shipment of vaccine doses from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, between February and June 2021, said officials of the health directorate.

Bangladesh will buy 68 million doses from Gavi under a global arrangement called COVAX facility and another 30 million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca

vaccine from Serum Institute of India via Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

The officials said the government is developing National Vaccine Deployment Plan determining the priority population for the vaccines.

Priority is likely to be given to the healthcare workers including doctors, nurses, health management and support workers, and technicians directly involved in treatment and other Covid-related activities, they mentioned.

This goes in line with the recommendations by the World Health Organisation and also the foundational principles of the COVAX collaboration, a

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THE VACCINE RACE IN NUMBERS

STAGE	NUMBER
PRE-CLINICAL STAGE	154
PHASE 1 TRIAL	21
PHASE 2 TRIAL	13
PHASE 3 TRIAL	10

School admissions by lottery this time

Applications to be taken online

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

School admission in the coming academic session will be based on lottery and the application process will be done online.

The decision has been made to avoid health risks amid the Covid-19 pandemic, Education Minister Dipu Moni said at a virtual press briefing yesterday.

She also said 50 percent quota, instead of the current 40 percent, would be reserved for students for admission to their local school in the capital. Besides, students in Dhaka will be able to select school from five under the cluster-based lottery system.

Dipu Moni hinted that the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and the Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC) examinations next year could get delayed by a month or two. Besides, the results of this year's SSC tests would be given priority in deciding the results of this year's HSC examinations, which could not take place due to the pandemic.

The minister then assured that the pending final exams at the National University and

technical institutions would be held soon following the health guidelines.

Speaking on the school admission, the minister asked all non-government secondary schools not to collect development, laboratory, library, and magazine fees from students while admitting them for the coming session.

LOTTERY
Dipu Moni said they decided to complete the admission process through lottery following consultation with experts, head teachers at different schools and officials from the education and the primary and mass education ministries.

She hoped the admission process would be over by January 15. Details about the process, including the lottery system, would be disclosed on December 7.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Syed Golam Faruk, director general of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, also said admission to the primary section of secondary schools would be done through lottery.

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PREPARING FOR 2ND WAVE

O2 supply still not optimised

MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

Although hospitals across the country struggled during the first wave of Covid-19 transmission due to a lack of central oxygen supply, the authorities said they were still relying on cylinder-based oxygen supply.

As the rate of Covid-19 transmission is rising by the day again, giving credence to fears of a second wave, experts said the efforts to arrange proper hospital treatment for infected people must be completed immediately and there is no scope to repeat mistakes.

In a meeting with journalists yesterday, top officials of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), with Director General Prof ABM Khurshid Alam in the chair, talked about their preparations regarding the second wave.

Asked how many district level hospitals have centralised oxygen supply

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THE VACCINE ROADMAP

Govt is now working on developing a National Vaccine Deployment Plan for Covid-19 and exploring different sources of vaccines.

GAVI, THE VACCINE ALLIANCE
Bangladesh will get 68 million doses of vaccines from Gavi for at least 20% of its population (34 million) within 2021. Each person will need 2 doses. Price of per dose estimated at \$1.60 to \$2.

SERUM INSTITUTE, INDIA
30 million doses of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine will come from Serum Institute of India (SII) through Beximco Pharmaceuticals. This will cost \$5 per dose including transportation cost. Tk 735.77 crore allocated to purchase vaccines from Serum.

SINOVAC
China's Sinovac requested Bangladesh to conduct phase-III trial of its vaccine in the country. It will cost \$3.5 million. If Bangladesh agrees to fund the trial, Sinovac will supply the vaccines. Double dose vaccine may cost between \$11 and \$16.

RUSSIAN SPUTNIK-V
Govt is communicating with Russia to get the Sputnik-V vaccines approved by the Russian Ministry of Health in August.

SANOVI/ GSK
Two Bangladeshi institutes have stated their desire to host phase-III clinical trial of Sanofi and GSK's protein based vaccine.

Pfizer
Govt wrote to Pfizer Inc. USA to secure their vaccine and technology transfer. However, this vaccine will require cold chain temperature of about -70 degree Celsius. Bangladesh has no cold chain capacity to ensure effective management for this kind of vaccines.



Doctors, nurses, health workers and technicians who are directly involved in treatment and other Covid-19 related activities are set to get priority in vaccination plan.

WHEN TO GET THE VACCINE

- First vaccine shipment is expected in Feb-June 2021
- First 30 million doses to be administered in 6 months (50 lakh doses per month)
- Total budget for this is Tk 317.8 crore

13.82 CRORE PEOPLE TO BE VACCINATED

PHASE-I
3% of the population (51.84 lakh) will be vaccinated, to be followed by another 7% (1.20 crore).

PHASE-II
Another 10% of the population (1.72 crore) will be vaccinated.

PHASE-III
Next 20% of the population (3.45 crore) will be vaccinated, to be followed by another 40% (6.91 crore).

SAUDI LABOUR REFORM

New initiative offers hope for migrants

JAMIL MAHMUD

As Saudi Arabia announced a new labour reform initiative to ease foreign workers' contractual restrictions, migrant rights activists and officials hope the move will improve the conditions of thousands of Bangladeshi workers in the oil-rich country.

The migrant workers, who are often subjected to various forms of abuse and exploitation, will be allowed to have more freedom in job mobility once the Labour Reform Initiative (LRI) comes into effect on March 14 next year, they said.

The reform initiative announced earlier this month would also lessen the restrictions on exit from and re-entry into the kingdom as it seeks to remove some elements of the "kafala" sponsorship system. The LRI would apply to all expatriates employed in the private sector.

The seven-decade-old "kafala" system ties migrant workers to one employer or sponsor, known as "kafeel", whose permission they need to change jobs, leave and re-enter into the country -- which rights groups have been criticising as exploitative and a form of modern slavery. "Most of the Bangladeshi migrant workers are expected to get the benefit since they are employed in the private sector," said Aminul Islam, labour welfare counsellor at the Bangladesh Consulate General in Jeddah.

"The initiative will be more fruitful in the migrant workers' immigration process," he told this newspaper over the phone.

Despite being legally eligible, Bangladeshi migrant

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FR TOWER EXTENSION

Rupayan chief, 15 Rajuk officials responsible

ACC probe finds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rupayan Housing Chairman Liakat Ali Khan Mukul and 15 former and current Rajuk officials are among those responsible for the illegal vertical extension of FR Tower in Banani, according to investigators.

In its 15-month probe, the Anti-Corruption Commission also found lessee of the tower Syed Md Hossain Imam Faruk and Managing Director of Quasem Industries Tasvir Ul Islam involved in the corruption. On June 25, 2019, months after a fire broke out at FR Tower leaving 25 dead and 73 others injured, ACC Deputy Director Abu Bakkar Siddiqui filed a case. He was later appointed to investigate the case.

He has recently submitted the investigation report, which was approved by ACC yesterday.

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BOOK REVIEW: NON-FICTION

In 'Azadi', Arundhati Roy explores the many layers of freedom

NAHALY NAFISA KHAN

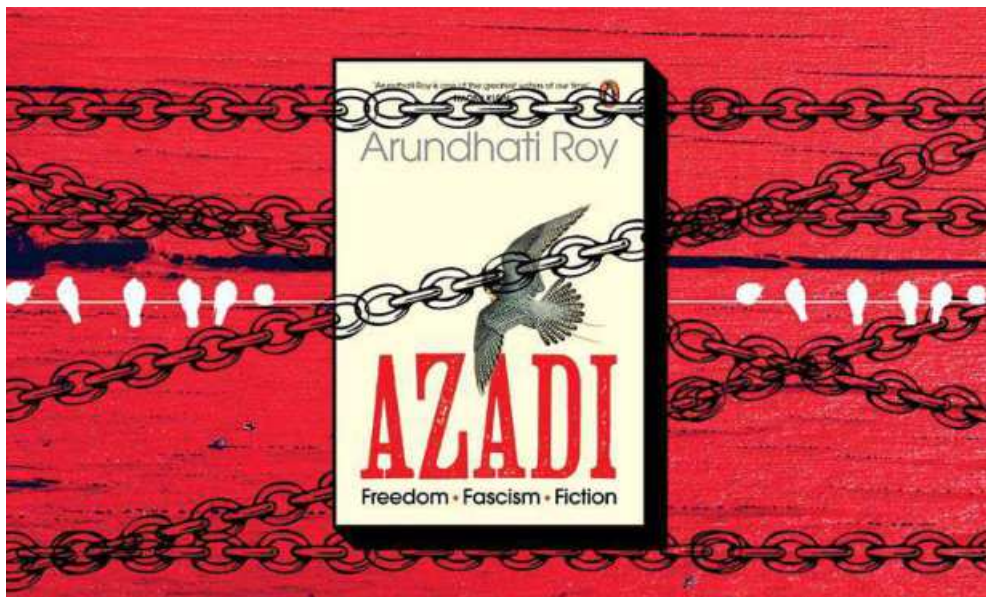
Arundhati Roy's latest, *Azadi* (Penguin India, 2020), is a collection of nine stand-alone essays, most of which were delivered as lectures or published as columns between 2018 and 2020. Published in early September, the book can be considered a documentation of the ongoing political crises in India, but it also reflects the current socio-political climate of the entire world, in which right-wing ideologies and populism are ever on the rise, and dissent is termed as sedition.

The sections on Indian politics highlight the obliteration of Jammu and Kashmir's special status when articles 370 and 35(A) of the Indian constitution were scrapped, after which Kashmir was driven to a communication lockdown with increased military occupation, and the Modi regime's introduction of the anti-Muslim Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) triggered protests all over India.

In such a world, where the concept and implications of freedom are evolving on a personal and international scale, Roy traces how "azadi"—the Urdu, originally Persian, word for freedom—found its way from the Iranian Revolution to the Kashmiri struggle for freedom and the feminist movement in the Indian subcontinent, and finally to the thousands of Indians protesting on the streets in favour of equal citizenship. And yet, "the Free Virus has made nonsense of international borders, incarcerated whole populations, and brought the modern world to a halt like nothing else ever could. It forces us to question the values we have built our modern societies on," she writes about the COVID-19, in her introduction. Her intention is to point out that even as religious, cultural and nationalistic differences are sought after to justify segregation, life—through language—often leaks through barriers, staking its claim in the form of slogans, art, and experiences.

And so Roy takes us on her personal journey through language. She describes how India's political reality shaped her writing of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), in which the characters all come from diverse backgrounds and dialects, representing pluralism against the very idea of "one nation, one religion, one language" propagated by the current Hindu-nationalist regime.

Elsewhere in the book, Roy highlights how the political reality of the subcontinent is interconnected. In the essay, "The Graveyard



DESIGN: SARAH ANJUM BARI

Talks Back", she writes, "Pakistan, Bangladesh and India are organically connected, socially, culturally, and geographically. Reverse the Hindu nationalists' logic, and imagine how it plays out for the tens of millions of Hindus living in Bangladesh and Pakistan."

In arguing that this common pattern of oppressing minorities was ingrained and strengthened by the blood-stained history of the 1947 partition, she questions whether the narrative of certain Muslims being "Indians by choice" effectively opposes hate-mongering right-wing tendencies, or strengthens the very rhetoric they preach, implying that Muslims have so many homelands, but Hindus have only India. "This plays straight into the binary of the Good Muslim-Bad Muslim, or the Muslim Patriot-Muslim Jihadi, and could inadvertently trap a whole population into having to redeem itself with a lifetime of regular flag-waving and constitution-reading," she writes.

In "Intimations of An Ending", Roy touches upon the NPR-NRC-CAA debate, calling out the current regime boldly for their communal policies and their politics of altering history to spread hate. But she is non-linear in her approach—in "The Language of Literature", she points out that, "The narrative of Kashmir is a jigsaw puzzle whose jagged parts do not fit together. There is no final picture." In a 2002 speech titled "Come September"

(which was later added to her 2019 essay collection *My Seditious Heart*), Roy admitted to the way in which she talks about power—the paranoia, ruthlessness and physics of it all. In *Azadi too*, as in her fiction, Arundhati Roy's writing underlines the importance of specificity, of allowing the reader to look down over a particular issue and notice the power dynamics at play. This enables her as an author to get into the complexities and nuances surrounding an issue, with specific names and dates, with bold opinions, so that readers know exactly what she is talking about and where she stands.

Some of the essays in this collection were delivered as lectures and speeches in different parts of the world, as we gather from the footnotes. The variety of locations and platforms indicates how far and wide she has travelled to speak out against political injustices. As a writer and an individual, Roy is wholeheartedly committed to the causes she stands for. Yet her prose is so poetic; it always feels like a conversation, never a monologue. She takes us through the grim realities that we live in, and she ends on a vaguely hopeful note, powered by the conviction, the rage and the pain we must feel within.

Nahaly Nafisa Khan is sub-editor of *Toggle*, *The Daily Star* and a contributor of *Daily Star Books*.

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

In 'Pachinko', a Record of Forgotten Lives

SHOAIB ALAM

Even in the most extraordinary of political times, someone must tend to the crops. Someone must weave clothes for the winter. These everyday tasks fall not to the revolutionaries who earn our tributes but to ordinary folk persevering through wars and famines without recognition. History, says Min Jin Lee in the opening line of *Pachinko*, has failed them.

In a sprawling family saga spanning four generations from rural 1910s Korea during Japanese occupation to bullish Japan of the 1980s, Lee offers a corrective. The 20th century's most notable events are footnotes in *Pachinko* (Grand Central Publishing, 2017). The spotlight is on the people that history has forgotten.

The novel centers on Sunja, the hard-working and illiterate daughter of a Korean boarding-house owner. Just as the Japanese are tightening their grip on the Korean peninsula, two men arrive to disrupt her meagre existence. With yakuza-connections, Hansu brings stary-eyed glamour into Sunja's privations, leaving when she reveals she is with child.

Isak, a kindly pastor, then transports Sunja from the backwaters to Osaka as his wife, saving her from dishonour and making her the Baek family matriarch. In Japan, Isak's idealism and naiveté burrow the family deeper in poverty as they weather the major upheavals of the 20th century, including the atomic bombings of Japan, where at least 40,000 Koreans died.

Pachinko's ensemble of immigrant characters brings to light the plight of ethnic Koreans in Japan who migrated or were forcefully brought over between 1910 and 1950. Their descendants, known as the *zaimichi*, continue to face discrimination and social isolation. "This place is only fit for pigs and Koreans," says Isak's older brother, Yoseb, when the couple arrives at the Osaka ghetto they will call home. For a Korean man, the choice is always shit, Yoseb thinks to himself in another moment of reckoning.

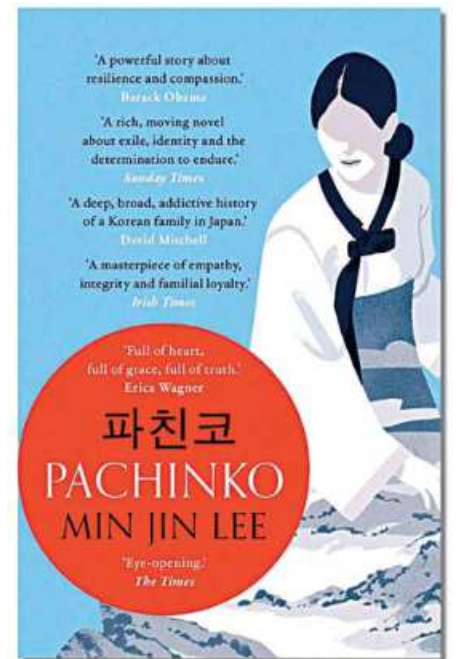
The immigrant's ache for dignity and belonging are captured in the family's second generation, Sunja's sons Noa and Mozasu. Each takes a different route through education, wealth, and denial of Korean heritage, only to find the deck stacked impossibly high. By the novel's end, the family has been in Japan for three generations. They are yet to be recognised as Japanese. Change, the novel concedes, takes time.

Written in the tradition of the 19th century novel, *Pachinko* is a triumph of interiority. Lee is deft with characterisation

and elegant in introducing and exiting characters seemingly at will. Her roving omniscient narrator flits between men and women, the rich and the deprived, Japanese and Korean, making every scene intimate and revealing.

The book is not without its clichés. Hansu is somewhat of a contrivance, too, carrying the two halves of the story on his back. But Lee knows how to sharpen the edges of her narrative with an observation, context, or commanding interiority, making familiar moments meaningful. Her careful pacing helps tremendously, slowing down and picking up speed as needed.

This is Lee's second novel, published a decade after her first. In this time she lived in Japan, interviewing Korean-Japanese people there, and wrote multiple drafts for what became *Pachinko*. Her in-depth research shines through here, giving us an intimate view of the cultural dissonance of contemporary Japan.



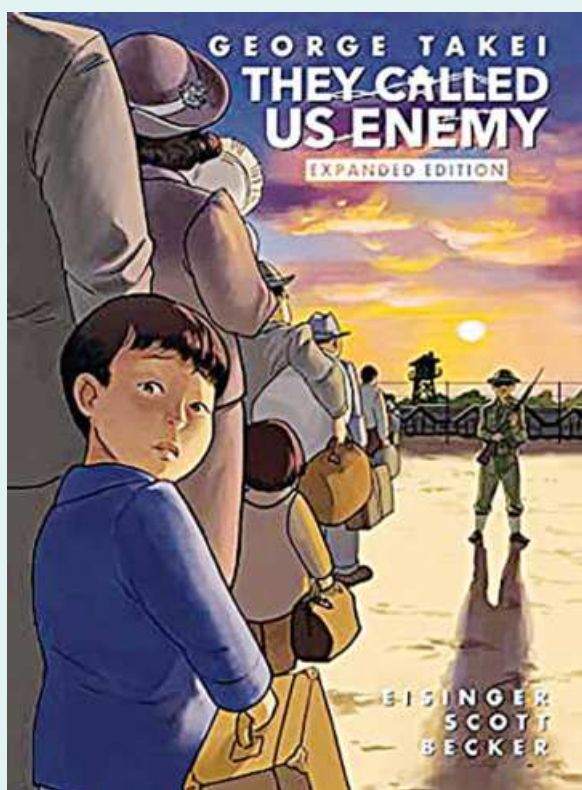
For a Bangladeshi reader, *Pachinko*'s key themes of belonging, racism, cultural erasure, and resilience against the odds resonate deeply. We have had our own tormented history with refugees in this country. With a million more joining in recent years, *Pachinko* offers a sobering glimpse into what the future might hold.

Shoaib Alam is a writer and chief of staff at *Teach For Bangladesh*.

BOOK REVIEW: GRAPHIC MEMOIR

The Trauma of Identity

ISRAR HASAN



George Takei's visceral and heart-wrenching graphic memoir, *They Called Us Enemy* (2019), dives deep into the cold, dark heart of America's perceived multiculturalism. We follow a four-year-old George and his family as they are forced into concentration camps during WWII—along with 120,000 law-abiding American citizens—because of their Japanese ancestry. In 1942, right after the attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan, President Roosevelt had signed an executive order stating that every person of Japanese descent on the

west coast should be rounded up and shipped to one of ten "relocation centers". This book evokes that history through jarring scenes of dislocation, heartbreak, and violence. In the signing of an order, thousands of children are turned from citizens to enemy "aliens" in a land that they had known to be theirs.

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THE BOOK REPORT

Into the World of Bengali Literature with Soumitra

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

Though both books and films transport us into the world of story-telling, shaping up our perspectives on life, most readers argue that the true essence of a literary work can never be captured in adaptation. Yet sometimes, by the sheer talent of the director and actors, some adaptations succeed in bringing the text to life.

Such was the career of Soumitra Chatterjee, iconic legend of Bengali film, who played more than 300 fictional characters, many of which were based on literary works. Chatterjee's portrayal of Satyajit Ray's Feluda is undeniably the most significant. Many actors over the years have played the famous detective, but the image of Feluda that readers perceived in their minds fit perfectly only with the version offered by Soumitra.

In the books, Feluda is known for pulling off disguises to catch culprits in their criminal acts—one of the most iconic instances was in *Joi Baba Felunath*, in which Feluda disguises himself as 'Machli Baba' to take revenge on his arch enemy Maganlal Meghraj in an intense bullet throwing act. This singular act portrays Feluda's sense of accuracy, his sharpness of mind and skills as a gunman, all of which were perfectly reflected in Soumitra's portrayal.

Be it with his intense stare or his bold confidence, Chatterjee's work in *Sonar Kella* (1974) and *Joi Baba Felunath* (1979)—both directed by Ray himself—were strong enough

to encourage the author to illustrate the sleuth based on Chatterjee's physique in the later editions.

The Satyajit-Soumitra duo went on to make several other films based on literary works. *Charulata* (1964), *Ghare Baire* (1985), and *Samapti*, all of them written by Rabindranath Tagore, saw Soumitra Chatterjee in lead roles.

Based on Tagore's short story,

"Nastanirh", *Charulata* told the story of Amal and Charu, played by Soumitra and Madhabi Mukherjee. Soumitra's portrayal of Amal, a talented, spontaneous and quirky writer, enchanted the audience as we found ourselves reflected in Amal's conflicting emotions. Amal playing the piano to the tunes of "Ami Chini Go Chini Tomare" combined both Ray and Chatterjee's magic, cement-

ing itself as one of the most iconic scenes in Bengali film history.

Elsewhere in Tapan Singh's *Jhinder Bandi* (1961)—considered one of the best black and white Bengali films of the time—Soumitra played a villain for the first time in a story inspired by Saradindu Bandyopadhyay's retelling of Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda*.

The ever-smiling Soumitra's portrayal of a cunning and mischievous Mayur-vahan amazed the audience, at a time when the actor was known for his roles as ordinary protagonists. Here, though, his smiles turned into arrogant smirks. During a scene of the King's coronation, Mayur-vahan's boisterous, scornful laughter played a key part in capturing the character's impudence and audacity.

Yet even as he proved his versatility through the negative role, Soumitra continued to dazzle in roles like Sarat Chandra's Devdas (1979), Ajay Kar's Shekhar in *Parineeta* (1969), and Ashim in Satyajit Ray's *Aranyer Din Ratri* (1970), based on Sunil Gangopadhyay's novel of the same name.

Soumitra's brilliance as an actor immortalised several iconic literary stories on the silver screen. His honest portrayal of these characters helped connect rich Bengali literature with the growing and thriving world of Bengali cinema—a gift that endures for generations of audiences even as we mourn his loss today.

Rasheek Tabassum Mondira is a contributor.



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

Smuggling amphetamine under the airport authorities' noses

We cannot allow Dhaka to become a drug trafficking route

In a report published in this daily yesterday, it was revealed that a group of chemical traders in Chennai had been smuggling amphetamine from India through Dhaka to several destinations, mostly in Australia and Malaysia, after linking up with some chemical importers at Mitford medicine hub. This smuggling route was operated smoothly by these unscrupulous traders for a year, until 12.32 kg of amphetamine powder was seized from the cargo village area of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on September 9.

It is a huge cause of concern that the banned amphetamine powder, which can be processed into the drug yaba, can be so easily brought into the country under false declaration and without the knowledge of courier companies. Investigations by the Department of Narcotics Control revealed that at least 600 kg of the powder was smuggled out of Bangladesh using courier services after its arrival from India via the Benapole border—a trade worth around Tk 600 crore.

How is it possible that illegal substances worth such a huge sum of money was trafficked, using Bangladesh as the central point of this smuggling route, simply because our airport does not have functioning 3D scanners? While the director of Hazrat Shahjalal Airport said more CCTV cameras and X-ray machines are being installed at the airport, he was unable to specify whether they were the 3D scanners required for detecting drugs, saying only that they are “modern”. Such lacklustre responses will not do—the continuous and constant trafficking of illegal goods through our biggest national airport is hugely damaging to our international reputation and merits a firm and immediate response.

We urge the concerned authorities to urgently investigate any airport personnel or employees of the courier services who may have been involved with this smuggling syndicate. The airport authorities must ramp up their security scanning and the courier services must also play their part in ensuring that such illegal trades do not continue. Drug trafficking syndicates are never easy to dismantle, but there must be serious and concerted efforts from all agencies involved to make our borders less porous when it comes to illegal trade. Ultimately, the government needs to follow the money and ensure that the finances for these illegal substances are cut off at the source.

Bangladesh bottom-ranked in Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs!

Access to loan and leadership skills training is needed

We are shocked to learn that Bangladesh has bottom-ranked among 58 economies in the Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs for 2020, meaning that women entrepreneurs here face the toughest of challenges in doing business. Bangladesh scored 36.4 out of 100 points in the index, while our neighbouring country India scored 50.99 points. The ranking is done based on an analysis of 12 indicators and 25 sub-indicators spanning advancement outcomes, knowledge assets and financial access, and supporting entrepreneurial conditions, according to Mastercard, a global technology company in the payments industry. They mentioned in their report that women entrepreneurs in the economies with the lowest scores “continue to be held back by deeply rooted socio-cultural as well as economic and financial constraints such as lack of work opportunities, government support, and access to funding and capital.”

While women in business are progressing globally, it is most unfortunate that Bangladeshi women entrepreneurs are still facing so many constraints in doing business. They are economically marginalised and few of them have tertiary-level education. Their access to government support and funding is also very limited. Moreover, our general social values also stand against women wanting to pursue business as a profession. Women have to overcome all these challenges in order to do business, which their male counterparts hardly face.

While women's representation in the business and economic landscape remains low compared to men across the regions, especially in terms of business leadership, the situation is particularly bad in Bangladesh. There are only a handful of business leaders in the country who are women because many women do not have access to the necessary support mechanisms to prove their potential in becoming a business leader. Access to capital is a major constraint for women entrepreneurs.

We need women-friendly business policies to change this situation. The social and economic barriers faced by our women who want to become business entrepreneurs should be removed by providing them with necessary funding and training, and also by raising awareness to change the negative attitudes towards a woman trying to set up a business. We know that the government provides loans to women trying to set up small and medium businesses. However, women face many challenges in the process of getting the loan starting from writing the application. So, the process of getting SME loans should be made easy for them. Besides, private organisations should also come forward in providing women the support they need to become entrepreneurs.

Why are so many children still dying of pneumonia?

It is a preventable disease and can be treated with low cost



NAZNIN TITHI

It is hard to believe that three children still die of pneumonia every hour in Bangladesh, according to a recent *Prothom Alo* report. Pneumonia is still one of the major causes of child deaths in the country, despite the government's vaccine coverage being more than satisfactory—the current vaccination rate for pneumonia is 97 percent.

The WHO estimates that every year around 8 lakh children die of pneumonia across the world, 90 percent of them in the African and South Asian countries. While most deaths occur among children under the age of two, around 153,000 children die within the first month of their life. Such a high number of deaths from this disease is particularly shocking because it is preventable with vaccines and treatable with low-cost medicines.

Studies have revealed that child deaths from pneumonia are not decreasing at the expected rate in Bangladesh. According to the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018, child deaths from pneumonia was 12 per 1,000 live births in 2011, and currently it is eight among 1,000 live births.

So unless we take extreme measures to reduce pneumonia-related child deaths, it would be impossible for us to bring down our overall child mortality rate. With such a high number of children dying of a preventable disease every year, achieving the SDG goal 3.2 by 2030 (bringing down the child mortality rate to as low as 2.5 percent) will also remain a distant dream for us.

Now, the question is, why are we failing to prevent these deaths despite having a good vaccination coverage against pneumonia? According to Dr Sabbir Ahmed, Advisor, Pneumonia Centenary Commitment, Save the Children in Bangladesh, “the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV), which is included in the EPI programme and is widely given to our children, has a good vaccine coverage, but it only protects children from the leading bacterial cause of pneumonia-pneumococcus, while various other organisms may also cause pneumonia either singly or in combination.”

So, how do we prevent other organisms from causing the disease? Samir Kumar Saha, executive director at Child Health Research Foundation, says, “We do not know whether an infection is caused by a

virus or a bacterium. We need to conduct research to know it, but sadly, no research initiatives have been taken so far to understand this.” (*Prothom Alo*, November 12, 2020)

If we still cannot tell which germ is causing the infection in children, how can they be treated? Where is the research to find out the reasons behind such high prevalence of pneumonia in our children? Our health budget being so low, research activities seem to be out of the consideration of the government. This has to change. When our children are dying from preventable diseases, we need to know why and we need to find a way to save them at all costs.

Then comes the question of treatment: why can't our hospitals provide proper treatment to pneumonia-infected children? Apparently, most of the

it's too late. According to an icddr study, 52 percent of children who die of pneumonia are never taken to any hospital. While 45 percent of them die at healthcare centres, three percent die after being treated at home. What this means is, more information about preventing pneumonia should be made available to people in rural areas.

At the beginning of this pandemic, another problem faced by our hospitals and health complexes was revealed: the absence of an oxygen supply system. It was revealed at that time that not only the hospitals at the upazila level but a majority of hospitals at the district level also did not have any oxygen supply system. We learned that the government had taken some initiatives to address the issue but we do not have any updated information on this. Needless to say, all



When our children die from preventable diseases, we need to know why and we need to find a way to save them at all costs.

PHOTO: ICDDR,B

hospitals are not even properly equipped for childcare. According to the Bangladesh Health Facility Survey 2017, 95 percent of hospitals and healthcare institutions in the country do not have all of the 10 basic instruments required to treat children, as suggested by the WHO. These include the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) guideline, staffers trained under the guideline, child scale, thermometer, growth chart, medicine, ORS, zinc tablets/syrup, amoxicillin syrup/suspension, and mebendazole. When hospitals do not even have these basic tools, how can we expect them to provide treatment for pneumonia?

Early diagnosis is crucial to prevent pneumonia in children. But parents, particularly in rural areas, have very little idea about the disease and so they often take their children to the hospital when

the government health facilities must have uninterrupted oxygen supply to treat both children and adults for pneumonia and other respiratory diseases.

Unfortunately, no matter how hard we try to eliminate pneumonia through vaccination and treatment, children will still be prone to catching the disease if they remain malnourished. Lack of proper nutrition is a big issue in fighting pneumonia and other deadly diseases in under-five children. Thus, besides ensuring high coverage of vaccines and timely treatment at the community level, we need to encourage exclusive breastfeeding of children for six months. Taking appropriate complimentary infant and young children feeding programmes is similarly important to fight malnutrition, thereby reducing their chances of developing pneumonia.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Protecting child workers during the pandemic



JINIYA AFROZE

It is already apparent that the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be uneven, with poorer countries bearing the brunt of the fallout. This includes the 1.2 million children in Bangladesh who are engaged in the harshest forms of child labour. In such uncertain times, these children—and millions of others elsewhere—are even more vulnerable to exploitative and hazardous work.

The reason is simple. When major global retail outlets cancelled orders due to lockdown-related cutbacks, the production of low-cost fashion in much of the world came to a standstill, leaving many garment workers in the Global South without an income. Since March, Bangladesh's exports of leather goods have declined by 22 percent. The country's footwear-manufacturing industry, the world's eighth largest, has also been affected, with exports down by 50 percent since the pandemic began.

With leather-goods producers facing cancelled orders and restrictions to slow the transmission of Covid-19, the unregulated informal sector has become much more competitive, with factory owners targeting children as cheap labour. In the informal leather sector, children often work long hours for little or no pay, frequently doing work that is physically and psychologically harmful and dangerous jobs during the production process. But despite the risks, most children rely on such employment to support themselves and their families.

Now, tanneries are slowly resuming production, and raw materials are being channelled to factories filling new international orders, leading to a relative scarcity of materials for domestic production. This creates another opening for leather producers in the unregulated

informal sector. Their ability to step in to meet domestic demand depends on further exploitations of children.

Bangladesh does have laws and policies to address hazardous and exploitative child labour. But policy gaps exist—the Bangladesh Labour Act, for example, does not cover the informal sector.

Here, international brands and corporations have an opportunity to help.

conditions. And a transparent system is needed for tracking the sources of raw materials and ensuring that children are not used in bonded labour or working in hazardous conditions.

While plenty of initiatives to protect child workers have been undertaken in recent decades, they often fall short. Tracking the long supply chain is difficult, so a culture of violence at its origin persists, sustained by structural



File photo of children at work in a hazardous condition.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Global retail outlets must recognise not only the immediate financial impact of cancelling orders, but also the unintended consequences for both the formal and informal sectors.

This means approaching the problem holistically, with established brands and their customers being well informed about where, how, and by whom goods are produced. Brands need to take responsibility for ensuring ethical behaviour throughout their supply chain. Stricter monitoring is necessary to guarantee that all suppliers, international and local, meet the same standards in terms of labour codes and working

inequalities that constant global demand for cheap products embeds in the production process.

Having to comply with a monitoring regime would prevent suppliers from subcontracting their work to informal, often unregulated companies in which workers, including many children, labour in harmful and hazardous conditions. Responsible brands could also implement the “positive deviance” approach, publicly sharing their ethical business strategies and practices, which may encourage other brands to investigate their own practices in turn.

Furthermore, relevant government

Early diagnosis is crucial to prevent pneumonia in children. But parents, particularly in rural areas, have very little idea about the disease and so they often take their children to the hospital when it's too late.

We also need to give more focus on maternal health. The nutritional needs of the expectant mothers should be met properly for the wellbeing of both the mother and the child. A malnourished mother cannot give birth to a healthy child. Women living in the villages and the remote areas should have access to proper antenatal care.

It must also be mentioned here that the deteriorating air quality in Bangladesh, especially in the capital, is greatly contributing to children developing pneumonia and other air-borne respiratory diseases. In the rural areas, the fumes created by traditional cooking practices in the households contribute a lot to air pollution, which affect children the most. In order to reduce air pollution in and around the capital, the illegal brick kilns on the outskirts of the city must be shut immediately, as directed by the HC. Other factors contributing to air pollution, such as construction dust, chemicals emitted from vehicles, open burning of solid waste and chemicals, etc., must also be checked. And to improve the air quality in the rural areas, people must be made aware of air pollution and have access to clean and safe fuel for cooking. With improved air quality, the onslaught of pneumonia in children will surely lessen.

A recent report by Save the Children and Johns Hopkins University highlighted the need for more collaborative efforts to fight pneumonia. It said that nearly 140,000 child deaths from pneumonia and other related diseases could be averted in Bangladesh over the next ten years with well-coordinated efforts.

Will we act now?

Naznin Tithi is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.

agencies, civil-society groups, and private-sector organisations must focus on enforcing existing policies and protecting children's rights. Both international and local brands need to be held accountable regarding their duty to care for children. All businesses should adhere to a minimum-age requirement, maintain standard working hours, and guarantee safe workplace conditions. To ensure compliance, businesses employing children must have a multi-stakeholder consultation system in place, including representatives from the government, civil society, human-rights organisations, and academia, as well as social workers.

Finally, to protect children from harmful work and modern slavery in industries like leather goods requires listening to children themselves. Children are rarely involved in workplace decision-making, especially during shocks like the Covid-19 pandemic, when they are more likely to be subjected to hazardous conditions. Learning from them about their experiences at all stages of the production process can be pivotal in improving their well-being.

The pandemic has exposed the intricacies of global supply chains and the vulnerability of the people working within them. Even in normal times, children are vulnerable to exploitation by unregulated, informal firms, which will pick up business where other firms cannot. But now this risk is greater than ever.

Understanding global supply chains and the impact of sudden changes on the vulnerable people who form their links is crucial. Advocates and policymakers must devise and implement robust accountability systems to uphold the rights of the millions of children—in Bangladesh and globally—who must work.

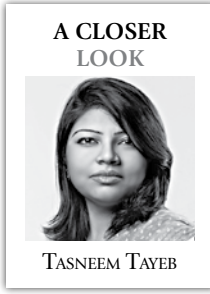
Jiniya Afroze is Country Coordinator for Bangladesh at the Child Labour: Action-Research-Innovation in South and South-Eastern Asia (CLARISSA) consortium.

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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is an emblem of patriarchy in the guise of tradition



TASNEEM TAYEB

A CLOSER LOOK
Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (Banbeis) report from last year suggests that in 2018, girls formed 54 percent of the total number of students at the secondary level. In 1999, it was 43 percent. In another indicator of progress in women's life, maternal mortality has also reduced significantly. According to World Bank, the country's maternal mortality was 434 per 100,000 live births in 2000, which plummeted to 173 per 100,000 live births in 2017. The World Bank data further indicated improvements in female labour force participation, which in 2020 stands at 36.42 percent, up from 24.73 percent in 1990.

While these are successes worth acknowledging, our development is severely hampered by violence against women and girls, especially sexual violence, which has intensified in recent times. According to an estimate of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), sexual violence against women doubled between 2010 and 2019. Let's take the number of rape incidents for example: in 2010, the number stood at 940, which more than doubled to 1855 in 2019. Rape is just one of the many forms of sexual violence women and children are forced to endure every day.

Marital rape, meanwhile, is an unacknowledged form of sexual violence unleashed on women, and unfortunately on girls too. Hundreds and thousands of women are forced to endure rape by their own husbands. And why? Because Section 375 of the Penal Code states, "Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife

not being under 13 years of age, is not rape."

But why would a girl be married at 13 in the first place? "... if a marriage is solemnised in such a manner and under such special circumstances as may be prescribed by rules in the best interests of the minor, at the directions of the court and with consent of the parents or the guardian of the minor, as the case may be, it shall not be

consent is alien.

Often these young girls are subjected to forced coitus and sexual perversions, leading to significant damage to their reproductive health, not to mention the mental trauma they endure. The tragic story of 14-year-old Nurnahar, who died in October this year, after suffering from gynaecological complications following sexual intercourse with her 34-year-old husband and subsequent

bleeding. Despite being a woman—who must have understood what the little girl would have endured—the mother-in-law chose to overlook Nurnahar's trauma, and instead blamed her for her misfortune. Although the girl's family has reportedly filed a complaint with the local police station, chances of justice being served in this case are slim. She was 14 after all—meaning she wasn't raped by legal definition, even if she was.

There are men—fathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers, in-laws, cousins, friends, acquaintances, strangers—who inflict sexual violence on girls and women every day. And then there are women—mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers, female relatives and friends—who discourage other women and girls from raising their voice against such brutality. It is this systematic suppression of women's voices by their own family and close associates, and sometimes by other women, that is emboldening the perpetrators of sexual violence.

The archaic and myopic definition of rape remains another major enabler of this heinous crime. The definition of rape in our law is confined to penile-vaginal penetration. So, if a man forcefully inserts an object into a woman through the vaginal opening, it would not be considered rape, because it has not been a penile penetration. But we have seen incidents of women being subjected to sexual abuse with objects. And how are those cases classified?

Although the government has increased the highest punishment for rape to the death penalty, it is not expected to result in significant change, as the rate of disposal of rape cases remains extremely low. An Amnesty International report citing data from the government's One Stop Crisis Centre suggests that between 2001 and July 2020, only 3.56 percent of cases filed under the Women and Children

Repression Prevention Act 2000 have resulted in a court judgment, and only 0.37 percent of cases have ended with convictions. The Amnesty International report further added, "Local women's rights organisation Naripokkho examined the incidents of reported rape cases in six districts between 2011 and 2018 and found that out of 4,372 cases, only five people were convicted."

While these statistics and realities portray the problems that are enabling sexual violence against women, the bigger problem lies in our perspective.

Sexual violence against women is symptomatic of a patriarchal society refusing to act in its best interest. It is happening because of a lack of empowerment, because in an equitable society, this cannot happen. We are living in a society that, unfortunately, still sees a woman as an object that can be dominated, sexually and otherwise. And it is through this sexual dominance over women that the men in our country portray their power and ego.

And this should be a major concern for the policymakers, because this is a reflection of a fundamental disequilibrium: women's empowerment. The ties between economic growth and women's empowerment merits broader discussion, but suffice it to say, their connection is well-established. If we cannot empower women with sovereignty over their own bodies, how do we hope to give them control over their own destiny and that of the nation?

To truly end sexual violence against women, we have to break the cycle of patriarchy masquerading as tradition. We have to rise above the petty urge of the ego that wants to dominate, not just for vanity or the slogan of an equitable society, but for our own growth as a nation.

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is: @TayebTasneem



To truly end sexual violence against women and girls, we have to break the cycle of patriarchy masquerading as tradition. PHOTO: KAZI TAHSEEN AGAZ APURBO

deemed to be an offence under this act." This is clearly stated in Section 19 of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, which fails to specify which scenarios qualify as "special circumstances." So, with no clear indication on what special circumstances mean, our girls remain vulnerable to the curse of child marriage and sexual exploitation at the hands of their husbands, who have been taught that wives are their possessions to do with them as they please, and to whom the concept of

lack of treatment, is a case in point. When the teenager reported that she was suffering from genital bleeding, instead of immediately consulting a gynaecologist, the husband kept having sex with her, causing injury and agonising pain. She was given medicine from a local *kabiraj*, and only when it was too late did the family decide to seek medical help. The girl succumbed to her injuries. The mother-in-law suggested that she was possessed by demonic spirits which caused the

What does a stable sovereign credit rating mean for Bangladesh?

MD ABDUL WASI

ON November 11, Fitch Ratings, a highly reputed international credit rating agency, affirmed a stable outlook on the sovereign credit rating of Bangladesh. At the same time, other nations in South Asia, specifically those that have comparable economic conditions, have either received a negative outlook or remained at a lower rating than us, as shown by Fitch. Therefore, it raises the question of whether we fared better under the current global pandemic conditions relative to other neighbouring nations.

In line with the opinion of this global rating agency, one can say that we have been successful, to a large extent, in maintaining our economic progress. To briefly explain, a credit rating is an assessment of the creditworthiness of a borrower (in this case a sovereign nation). Maintaining a stable outlook, particularly in the Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) of the sovereign, speaks to the resilience of its external finances and insignificant changes to the government debt quality. While we have received similar ratings in the past few years, maintaining the same stable outlook during the ongoing global pandemic is a noteworthy outcome.

In hindsight, one can argue that although we have maintained a stable outlook, the sovereign rating itself is

not considerably high when compared to other sovereign ratings globally. This argument is consistent; however, a relatively low rating is also expected in developing countries. A more important aspect in this analysis would be the change in ratings (i.e. the second order effect) around the negative macroeconomic shock induced by Covid-19. Contrary to the general expectation, based on the current stable rating outlook, we can infer that the quality of our sovereign debt has not deteriorated during the pandemic. This finding, thereby, can have potentially important implications for the broader economy as an unchanged sovereign rating can help maintain investor confidence in our sovereign debt instruments.

Another noteworthy aspect of this latest rating outlook is that our country ceiling of the ratings has also remained unchanged. This is an important phenomenon because, generally, rating agencies tend to apply a sovereign ceiling doctrine whereby during a sovereign downgrade, firms that have the same rating as the sovereign are also downgraded. This exercise is done to ensure that the ratings of the firms within the domestic economy do not pierce the sovereign rating ceiling. Therefore, given the stable sovereign rating outlook, our presumably large domestic firms (including banks and other state-owned entities) that have

the same rating as the sovereign are also unlikely to undergo a downgrade in their ratings, which can be important for their local and foreign business activities, unless their fundamentals decline.

To rationalise the stable rating outlook, we can utilise the GDP forecasts by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the current year of 2020. In the month of June, ADB had forecasted a positive GDP growth for Bangladesh, whereas there was a negative forecast for most other countries in ADB's comparative economic forecasts for South Asia. Today, a few months later and almost towards the end of the year, Bangladesh is in the leading position in terms of the GDP growth rate forecasts for 2020 relative to all other countries that are included in these comparative economic forecasts. This evidence lends support to the notion that despite bearing the brunt of the economic slowdown triggered by the global pandemic during the second and third quarters of the year, our GDP growth forecasts still materialise. Again, this is a considerable result, especially as other countries in South Asia face more difficulty in dealing with the economic impact of this ongoing pandemic.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that this trajectory of the GDP growth is not for the current year exclusively. The data from the ADB suggests that

Bangladesh experienced the highest GDP growth rate in 2018 and 2019 amongst all the other countries that are included in the comparative economic forecasts data for South Asia. Therefore, it is evident that our economic growth has been sustainable, and this is probably the reason why we have been able to relatively absorb the shock caused by the current global pandemic. Furthermore, I do acknowledge the health concerns and the economic losses faced by various members of the society because of this pandemic. However, this is also a global crisis and, as we know, best efforts are being made to resolve it.

Finally, a small anecdote can shed further light on our discussion above. Fitch Ratings has downgraded the credit rating of South Africa on November 20, 2020. This is mainly due to the impact of the pandemic on the country's economy and, surprisingly, this rating is now equal to that of Bangladesh. These two countries are at different stages of economic development, where South Africa is more developed; nonetheless, their ratings are currently on a par. This anecdote highlights how the pandemic has hurt all economies, even more developed ones, and therefore our economy's resilience under such dire economic conditions further substantiates the positive economic outlook.

In summary, the current global

pandemic has adversely affected all economies. Thereby, one can expect a similar negative impact on our economy as well. While it is true that a number of businesses have been affected, the current stable (unchanged) status of our sovereign ratings also signifies the overall fiscal strength that our domestic economy has gained over time. This is further

This finding, thereby, can have potentially important implications for the broader economy as an unchanged sovereign rating can help maintain investor confidence in our sovereign debt instruments.

emphasised by the positive trend in the economic indicators, for example the GDP growth rate shown by international organisations such as the ADB. Hence, while our goal is to work towards further development, it may be worthwhile to incorporate the indications that we receive from reputable global agencies about our economy in this process.

Md Abdul Wasi is a lecturer of finance at North South University in Dhaka (currently on leave).

QUOTABLE Quote

EUGENE O'NEILL
(1888-1953)
American dramatist.

God gave us mouths that close and ears that don't... that should tell us something.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Really stoked
- 6 Dominant
- 11 Carried
- 12 Principled
- 13 Stand up
- 14 Duck hunter's cover
- 15 Junior, to senior
- 16 Blend
- 18 PC key
- 19 Enjoy the slopes
- 20 Lot sight
- 21 Appear
- 23 Door sign
- 25 Immoral act
- 27 Heating choice
- 28 Fancy neckwear
- 30 Capital on a fford
- 33 1963 Paul

DOWN

- 1 Humbles
- 2 Sullen
- 3 Bride of July 1981
- 4 Print units
- 5 Judges
- 6 Moving at a relaxed pace
- 7 "Damn Yankees" role
- 8 Shrek's love
- 9 Plane's place
- 10 Birch cousin
- 17 Squeezee (out)
- 22 Amp plug-in
- 24 Eastern "way"
- 26 Perceives
- 28 Down Under denizen
- 29 Toe count
- 31 Joined
- 32 Cantankerous
- 33 Hirsute
- 35 Inflicted
- 38 Cartoonist
- Thomas
- 42 Court

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

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

C	A	B	S			M	A	R	I	S					
O	R	A	L			S	I	L	I	C	A				
M	I	L	E			E	N	A	M	E	L				
B	A	D	D	R	E	A	M								
						D	A	D	J	O	K	E	S		
A	R	T	E	R	Y					N	A	P			
M	O	O	R	E						C	H	O	S	E	
P	S	A								C	O	A	T	E	D
S	A	D	S	T	O	R	Y								
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T	A	M	A	L	E					I	D	E	A		
E	X	I	L	E	S					D	O	E	S		
D	E	A	L	S						E	R	R	S		

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

WATER POLICY AND PUBLIC RIGHTS

The Daily Star, Nijera Kori and ICCO Cooperation jointly organised an online discussion titled "Water Policy and Public Rights" on October 27, 2020. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.



TANJIM FERDOUS
National Consultant,
United Nations in
Bangladesh and
Moderator of the
session

The rural population in our country have been facing various issues in regards to the accessibility of water. Our discussion today will bring attention to these issues related to the management of the water bodies in the rural areas and its effects on our marginalised population.



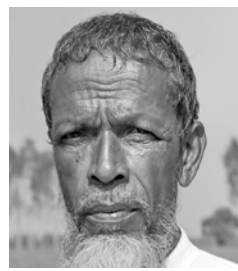
KHUSHI KABIR
Coordinator, Nijera
Kori

Water is an essential resource for every living being. Bangladeshi culture is also highly interspersed around water with most of our famous songs and poems being written about them.

In the past, ponds played a huge role in rural life and every house in a village had an attached pond. The presence of these ponds was a necessity but along with that, they also had a social role to play. The purpose of these ponds ranged from being a supply of fresh water for a household to fish farming. Overall, our rural society had a working system for supplying themselves with water. This system was disrupted as we started to implement development projects without considering their effects on the marginalised population. The ponds that used to supply drinking water began to be used for fish farming which forced the women to walk long distances to fetch drinking water.

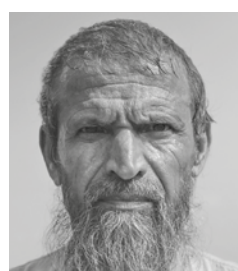
Accessibility is another issue that is affecting our rural population. All policies should be made keeping the needs of the people in mind. In 2010, the United Nations officially accepted the right to safe drinking water as a basic human right. We must divert our focus from individual economic development and consider the development of the population as a whole to ensure that no one is left behind.

The aspects of governance and accountability need more focus. Privatisation of water will not help the people but will instead cause more suffering, and damage the environment. The balance in our environment has been lost mainly due to privatisation. We need to reiterate clearly that having access to water is a basic right.



MD AZIZAR RAHMAN
Pirganj, Rangpur

The environment of Bamnir beel is good for people's health. No matter how hard a person works, they can come here afterwards and breathe in the fresh air to feel refreshed. Nobody wishes to leave this place. We have big dreams for this place, which is why we are working tirelessly on many initiatives for the area. If the canal in this area was flowing, then thousands of tonnes of paddy could have been cultivated. We have fish in excess here; even fishermen from neighbouring villages come to catch fish from this beel.



ASHRAF ALI
Pirganj, Rangpur

A canal nearby was closed down recently. This has caused us quite a lot of damage. Some of us formed groups and then issued a statement against this. The canal being shut down has led to the water flow in this beel being disrupted. The crops of at least 1,521 acres of land have been destroyed. We appealed to the government to get the papers for the land. Officials assured us they would fix the issues soon, but nothing has been done yet. The honourable MP did not do anything either. Since we are

landless and only have this beel for water, people do not care about us.



SUMITRA RANI
Saghata, Gaibandha

Beel Bosta is a large beel. It has nine sections. The influential people take possession of the Jalmahal (open water bodies). The fishermen are left helpless. The fishermen are living in a dire situation. Our children are not receiving education, there is a shortage of food, and there is no proper healthcare. My demand to the government is that the Jalmahal be given to the fishermen and their families.



RAHMAT ALI
Raiganj, Sirajganj

Illegal occupation of water bodies is a major concern. The community in Raiganj is dependent on the Sonadanga Beel for their livelihoods but illegal occupants of this Beel are constantly terrorising us. When our beel was grabbed, we went to government offices and found out that 85 bighas of the beel were government khas land. The grabbers had made fake papers to occupy the land. Nijera Kori has helped us immensely in our legal fight to win back this water body.



AYESHA BEGUM
Dumuria, Khulna

The Bhadra River is connected with about 22 villages and the people in these villages use the river for fish farming. Some influential people got a lease of this river and started polluting it by constructing a dam. We grew up catching fish and picking water lilies and vegetables out of the river, but the water smells too foul for any of that now. We have protested many times and demanded action from the government, but instead, we were charged with lawsuits.



SYEDA RIZWANA HASAN
Director, BELA

"Water Policy and Public Rights" constitutes access to safe water for the public and it is a collective right. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 states that we must ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. We are aware that the UN has two covenants. The articles 11 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights cover the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. In 2002, the UN recognised that the right to water itself is an independent right since it is one of the most fundamental conditions for survival.

In Costa Rica, the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court declared a constitutional right to drinking water, building on the right to health, life, a clean environment, food, and decent living conditions. The article 27 of the South African Constitution states that "Everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water." In accordance with resolution 64/292, the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognises the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledges that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realisation of all human rights.

Bangladesh is a land of rivers. It is situated at the confluence of the three major rivers, Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna. Together these rivers cover an area

of 14.4 million hectares. About 25 percent of the water required for irrigation comes from rivers, canals, and other reservoirs. 16.2 million farmers depend on wetlands and 12.68 percent of our GDP comes from agriculture. For the people of Bangladesh, proper access to river water is crucial for their survival because fish provides 60 percent of the animal protein intake in Bangladesh. According to article 18(A) of our constitution, the state shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to preserve and safeguard the natural resources, biodiversity, wetlands, forests, and wildlife for the present and future citizens. On the other hand, article 14 covers the protection of our workers and article 16 covers rural development related issues. The provisions of our basic necessities are discussed in article 15.

At first glance, it may seem that the people of Bangladesh have no shortage of water. The per capita availability of water in our country is 7,568 cubic metres which is much higher in comparison to our neighbouring countries. But, the problem lies in the fact that not every citizen has equal access to this resource.

The National Water Policy (NWP), 1999 addresses some of the crucial challenges faced in relation to water management. Some of the topics covered by this policy include accessibility of water, users' responsibility, siltation and erosion, deterioration of water quality, decentralisation, and privatisation. Apart from the NWP, we have various other policies for water management. These include National Shrimp Policy, 2014; National Policy for Safe Water Supply and Sanitation, 1998; National Water Management Plan, 2001; and so on. According to the policies, water management must be decentralised. But, in reality there is no decentralisation. There is also no representation of women in the committees.

Four villages under Chattogram's Potia Upazila are running dry as groundwater is becoming depleted due to extraction by eight intensive industries. These industries include bottled water industries, food processing industries, textile industries, and many others. 350 tube wells set up by the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) had no water. Four canals have been polluted by these industries, most of which do not have an Effluent Treatment

we are also indifferent towards marine fisheries.

So far, no initiative has been taken to strengthen our institutions and the UN Convention has still not been signed. The sustainability of our development projects has been grossly undermined because of all the things we have left incomplete.

The government has still not been able to resolve waterlogging issues despite the public informing them of potential solutions. Every three years, Bhabadaha suffers from severe waterlogging. Bhabadaha's example shows how appalling the state of Bangladesh's water management is. This dire state leaves the commitment to public rights unfulfilled and is grossly inadequate.



TANZIMUDDIN KHAN
Professor, Department
of International
Relations, Faculty
of Social Sciences,
Dhaka University

There is no shortage of laws for the management of water resources in the country. The main issue lies in governance. There have been major shifts in water resource management after the NWP was enacted since it included the factor of governance issues. It must be recognised that the state is the custodian of the general public, and the people have a right to water as a resource. We have to rely on different water sources and a freshwater ecosystem, to ensure access to water. Clear policies are required on what the role of the government is in this regard. Water governance is not separate from state governance. If the state is undemocratic and tries to escape accountability, it cannot protect the rights of its people. The existing laws will only be implemented when the state recognises the general people as a part of them. Therefore, the state requires structural change. The only way to ensure access to water for all is for the state to recognise the rights of the underprivileged and poverty-stricken population. Positive discrimination is necessary for those who are not empowered.

The UN Convention on watercourses of 1997 is essential to us since we are a lower

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Recognise access to water as a constitutional right
- » Decentralise the water management system
- » Create a proper governance and accountability mechanism for water management
- » Ensure participation of women and other marginalised groups in water management
- » Stop privatisation of water
- » Discourage distribution and use of bottled water
- » Regulate the leasing policies of water bodies by law
- » Ratify the UN Convention on International Watercourse 1997

Plant (ETP). A case was filed for this under the Water Act, 2013, but despite repeated orders, the government failed to provide information regarding the status of groundwater.

Despite multiple policies and laws, our water bodies are still consistently getting polluted and the citizens are forced to utilise the dirty water for their daily needs. 17 percent of agricultural land has been allocated for saltwater shrimp farming without any environmental impact studies being conducted.

We have a constitutional basis to acknowledge the right to water as a public right. Our present legal and policy recognition in favour of water is quite limited. Furthermore, the entire water management system is highly centralised consisting of negligible female representation. As a result, this management system cannot be considered pro-people. We also lack various legal and policy-related safeguards that could eliminate the possible barriers to accessibility. We are often faced with accessibility issues that arise due to unavailability, depletion, pollution, and contamination of water; and this access is inequitable. Compliance with standards is never monitored.

Leasing policies in Bangladesh are not regulated by law and this creates a huge gap since policies are not enforceable. We do not have any criteria for objective Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) or Social Impact Assessments (SIA). Moreover,

riparian state. Yet, our country has still not ratified this convention. Since we are a lower riparian country, we have to rely on neighbouring countries for access to water. The state must ensure that we receive a steady flow of water from the neighbouring countries, and this should also be included in policies.

A major limitation of integrated water management system is that we do not take into account the fact that groundwater, surface water, or rainwater management are all different. The context of various spatial features is not considered when planning for integrated water management. Categorisation should be done during planning.

In the manufacturing process of bottled water, three litres of water are required to produce a one-litre bottle. Therefore, the distribution and use of bottled water should not be encouraged.

Rivers should be given due importance when it comes to water resource management. There is a 2016 High Court ruling which recognises rivers as living beings. This recognition should be reflected in water policies. There has been a trend of privatisation of water in Bangladesh. Many different countries, such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Bolivia, have been trying to do the same since the mid-1990s. All of these countries failed to privatise water and ultimately bestowed the responsibility of water management upon the government. Bangladesh must learn from their experiences.



MANISUL ISLAM
Director, Center for
Natural Resource
Studies (CNRS)

Water can be viewed in various ways - water for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), water for ecosystems and so on. We have been working to establish a law for wetland sanctuaries, but to no avail. However, the government has announced some sanctuaries through a standing order, which is a step in the right direction.

There is an issue with freshwater in the periphery of the Sundarbans where some canals and rivers are leased. These can be freed from the lessees through the collective efforts of the local government and people.

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) has taken up many renovation projects and has been constructing new dams. Coastal Embankment Improvement Project Phase 1 (CEIP-1) is a project they have been working on with the support of the World Bank. This project is focused on creating polders and improving irrigation & drainage systems. The aspect of participation from the general public through water management groups and association is included in this project. The recommendations from the public will be used to improve the irrigation & drainage systems. Unfortunately, the involvement of the public was initiated 2.5 years after the project began. In the meantime, all the necessary structures have already been made. Therefore, there was no input from the local people when creating these structures. If we look at the macro plan, there is scope for many micro-level plans such as mitigation of waterlogging, expanding agricultural land, increasing cropping intensity and many more. However, these plans are no longer been accepted since the structures have already been established. This means there are flaws in the process and in the policies as well. These loopholes are being misused during implementation. A proper governance and accountability instrument would be helpful in this regard.

The Government Jalmahal Management Policy, 2009 does not have a proper definition for fisher. It stated that whoever owned fishnets was a fisher. However, during the monsoon, 90 percent of families in rural setting have fishnets. They cannot all be fisher. The second issue with policy is that, even though we are trying to give fisher the responsibility for Jalmahal management, the process is not inclusive. Poor fisher cannot afford the eight to 12 lakh taka of leasing money that is required. There are also yearly management costs of around 50 to 80 lakh taka. These payments have to be made up front. This is not at all feasible for fish farmers in Bangladesh.



SHAMSUL HUDA
Executive Director,
Association of
Land Reform and
Development (ALRD)

Access to water is a fundamental human right. Many countries have recognised it as a constitutional right, but Bangladesh has yet to do so. We have extensive water policies and but their implementation is very poor. A basic reason for this is that the policies are created by government officials and there is a culture of prejudice. We require an all-encompassing water policy that takes into account the diversity in our water bodies. Specific policies are also necessary for particular regions based on the unique features of their water bodies. Every policy should include a safety clause as well. We should create a database consisting of information regarding specific regions and their water bodies along with an account of the number of livelihoods dependent on those water bodies. Every process should be transparent and have scope for accountability.

Most of our water bodies come from external sources and we are not properly receiving water from these sources due to certain discrepancies. We cannot expect to establish our rights on these water sources until we start to fix our own management system and put an end to the misuse of water.

WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS

Bangabandhu T20 Cup
Khulna v Rajshahi
Live from 1:30pm
Chattogram v Dhaka
Live from 6:30pm

TEN 1

UEFA Europa League
Lille v AC Milan

Live from 11:55pm

Rangers v Benfica
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

TEN 2

UEFA Europa League
CSKA-Sofia v Young Boys
Live from 11:55pm
Napoli v Rijeka
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

SONY SIX

Lanka Premier League
Colombo Kings v Kandy Tuskers
Live from 8:00pm
UEFA Europa League
Cluj v AS Roma
Live from 2:00am (Friday)



TOUCHED by the hand of God



PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS/TWITTER

SAMAMA RAHMAN

"I am black or white. I'll never be grey in my life."

Among the many observations that the world made about Diego Maradona, the one spoken by the man himself may hold truest.

He scored the winner with the most beautiful goal in World Cup history in the 1986 semifinal against England, but scored the equaliser minutes earlier with what he famously described as: "a little with the head of Maradona, and a little with the hand of God".

After reaching dizzying heights as a youngster in South America, he moved to Barcelona for a world record fee in 1982. But after suffering a broken ankle against Atletico Bilbao in his first season, Maradona, who would face xenophobic and racist insults against Bilbao in the second game, snapped. He initiated a brawl and was sold to Napoli, a club from one of the poorest

cities in Europe at the time and in the middle of a financial crisis. When asked what he expected, he replied: "Peace. The peace that I never had at Barcelona. And, above all, respect."

The locals, who were said to have loved Napoli more than their children, welcomed the most expensive player in the world with aplomb and a team that had never won Serie A would claim it twice, adding a Coppa Italia and a UEFA Super Cup by 1990.

When Maradona's love for the excess saw him become close to the boss of the Comorra crime family, Carmine Giuliano, Naples did not bat an eye. His cocaine addiction would also be overlooked and Maradona would be mobbed by bystanders wherever he went, all vying to declare their affection.

In 1990, Maradona would play through injury and captain Argentina to the World Cup final



in Italy, eliminating the hosts in the semifinals and fueling the hatred that those outside Naples harboured. The final ended in a 1-0 defeat to West Germany.

He would fail a drug test for cocaine shortly after and would leave Napoli in 1992 after a 15-month ban. He then fired

an air rifle outside his home in Buenos Aires at journalists and photographers, injuring four in February 1992. The 1994 World Cup would feature a further failed drug test and signalled the end of an illustrious career but headlines about the man, myth and legend would continue.

His managerial career was as colourful and eventful as his playing days, with trips to Mexico, UAE and even a change at managing the La Albiceleste at the 2010 World Cup. His friends included everyone from Freddie Mercury to Fidel Castro to Magic Johnson. A running war-of-words with Pele and his antics at the 2018 World Cup in Russia will also remain highlights.

Mauricio Pochettino, a youngster rooming with Maradona at the time of his attack on the journals, maintains: "I promise you, if he arrived here and opened the door we'd all be in love with him."

For all of the times that he has let the world down, his charm holds a unique timelessness. He will never be black or white, there is far too much of a consequence to painting him in either light. But now, finally, he will be at peace. And that is all he truly ever asked for.



"One day we'll kick a ball together in the sky above. I have lost a dear friend, and the world has lost a legend. One day, I hope, we will play soccer together in the sky."

PELE

"He leaves us but does not leave, because Diego is eternal. I keep all the beautiful moments with him and send my condolences to all his family and friends. RIP."

LIONEL MESSI

Ctg face Dhaka after opening-day thrillers

Rajshahi to take on Khulna in day's first match

SPORTS REPORTER



The thrillers that the first two matches of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup produced on the opening day on Tuesday provided

much-needed succour for cricket fans as it marked the proper resumption of competitive cricket in the country since it was rocked by the Covid-19 outbreak in March.

There was drama, agony and, most importantly, some good cricket from all four teams, which

raised the bar for the coming days.

Gazi Group Chattogram will be play their first game against Beximco Dhaka in today's second game and will definitely need to hit the ground running and be prepared for some action-packed cricket.

Loaded with some of the country's most highly rated players in the likes of Mustafizur Rahman, Mominul Haque, Soumya Sarkar, Liton Das, Mosaddek Hossain and Taijul Islam, Chattogram looks to be a good unit. Led by Mohammad Mithun, Chattogram also has

a fine blend of youth and experience from the domestic circuit.

But having the best team may not be enough, as was proved when young Najmul Hossain's Minister Rajshahi managed to thump a rather strong Dhaka, led by Mushfiqur Rahim, while defending 169.

Rajshahi's Mahedi Hasan put in a fine all-around performance where, first hitting a fifty and then bowling a magnificent last over, in which he bowled five dot balls to Muktar Ali, who had just scored 21 in the 19th over. It was his intelligent bowling and



PHOTO: STAR

Beximco Dhaka captain Mushfiqur Rahim will look for a victory after an opening-game defeat against Minister Group Rajshahi.

expert execution that condemned Dhaka a two-run defeat when they needed nine to win off the last over.

Young skipper Najmul will be oozing with confidence when they take on another big team on paper in the day's first game, the Mahmudullah-Riyad led Gemcon Khulna, who had narrowly escaped a defeat against Fortune Barishal on the opening day.

On the day that Shakib Al Hasan returned to competitive cricket, it was teammate Ariful Haque who stole the show as Khulna needed 22 off the last over while chasing 153. The hard-hitting right-hander smashed four sixes off Mehedi Hasan Miraz to clinch a scintillating victory.

Back to today's second game, Chattogram skipper Mithun said what matters most is the team that plays well on the given day.

"Before the opening day of the tournament, everyone was trying to figure out which one is the strongest team on paper. But after watching the game on the other day, it was clear that playing well on the given day actually matters. The wicket looks pretty good and if it remains the same there will be good cricket as the tournament progresses," Mithun told reporters yesterday.

From Dhaka's point of view, they will definitely look to come back strongly today and Muktar Ali will be one of the key players for them after picking up three wickets with his medium pace and almost winning the match against Rajshahi with his 16-ball 27.

Dhaka skipper Mushfiqur needs to lead the team from the front as it was his dismissal for 41 runs on the opening day that was probably the turning point.



(L-R) Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das, two of the most destructive openers in Bangladesh cricket, will pair up for Gazi Group Chattogram in their first match of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup against Beximco Dhaka today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

ICC must deliver world events

Says new chairman Greg Barclay

REUTERS, Wellington



New International Cricket Council (ICC) Chairman Greg Barclay told Reuters on Wednesday his organisation must deliver their pinnacle events over the next three years or there will be serious financial consequences for the sport.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced the ICC to reschedule three of their world tournaments, and Barclay, confirmed as chairman of the global governing body on Tuesday, said they were contracted to deliver them within the current broadcasting agreement.

"We have got to deliver the world events that are to come and those that are postponed," Barclay told Reuters by telephone on Wednesday of the agreements that expire in mid-2023. "Not just for the cricketing outcomes but there are commercial concerns as well."

The men's 2020 Twenty20 World Cup in Australia and 2021 women's World Cup in New Zealand have been moved to 2022, while the men's 2023 World Cup in India has been pushed back to later that year.

"If we fail to deliver all of those events then we will be penalised by the broadcasters and we won't receive the last of the ongoing payments," added Barclay. "That, in turn, is going to affect the ICC's ability to invest in its own programmes and enable it to make distributions to members. Unfortunately a lot of the ICC members are heavily reliant on those disbursements."

Barclay replaces interim chairman Imran Khwaja. Commercial lawyer Barclay has served as New Zealand Cricket's representative on the ICC board for the last six years.



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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The scourge worsens amid pandemic

ASK data says 205 women killed by their husbands this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The pandemic and the subsequent lockdown led to more cases of domestic violence, said speakers at a virtual discussion organised by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) yesterday.

Incidents of domestic violence are rarely reported in the media, with only the most extreme cases finding coverage, but even the scant reporting showed a large spike since the beginning of March.

Statistics presented by ASK show the rise of reported cases from 29 in March to 81 in July.

Dowry-related violence also rose from 167 last year to 184 this year -- this number however goes only up till October.

In addition, according to ASK data, 205 women were murdered by their husbands this year.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, pointed out that the lockdown has provided clear proof that women are not safe in their own homes.

"Through our work we found out that during the lockdown more women reported being victims of domestic violence and many new cases were of those who had not been victims before. Once the lockdown was lifted, the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, rights activists and general women demonstrated by bringing out a torch procession during an event, under the banner of Feminists Across Generations, also known as FemGen Alliance, with the slogan "Mukhtir Michhil" or "March for Freedom". The photo was taken yesterday on Satmasjid Road in the capital's Dhanmondi area. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

White House co-op 'sincere'

Says Biden, presents security and foreign policy team

AGENCIES

President-elect Joe Biden said Tuesday that communication from the Trump administration to help with his transition has been "sincere" since the General Services Administration ascertained his election win on Monday.

"Immediately, we've gotten outreach from the national security shop to just across the board," Biden told NBC News' Lester Holt in his first interview as President-elect.

"And they're already working out my ability to get presidential daily briefs, we're already working out meeting with the Covid team in the White House and how to not only distribute but get from a vaccine being distributed to a person able to get vaccinated."

"So I think we're gonna not be so far behind the curve as we thought we might be in the past," he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Foreign minister, secy test positive

Trip to OIC meet in Niger cancelled

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen have tested positive for coronavirus just before their scheduled visit to Niger to attend the foreign minister-level meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

They were tested as required before the overseas travel and found positive Tuesday night. They had no symptoms before the test, according to the foreign ministry.

As per the doctor's recommendations, they are now staying isolated at their residences.

A foreign ministry statement read that the scheduled visit to Niger by AK Abdul Momen and Masud Bin Momen has

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Mega-shark raised its young in nurseries



AFP, Paris

The largest sharks ever to have roamed the oceans parked their young in shallow, warm-water nurseries where food was abundant and predators scarce until they could assume their title as kings and queens of the sea.

But as sea levels declined in a cooling world, the brutal mega-predator, *Otodus megalodon*, may have found fewer and fewer safe-haven coastal zones where its young could safely reach adulthood, researchers reported in The Royal Society journal *Biology Letters* yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Mob beats 2 'robbers' dead in Narsingdi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

An angry mob beat two escaping "robbers" to death in Narsingdi's Shibpur upazila early yesterday.

Among the dead is Sohel Mia, 30, a resident of Kamalpur village in Kishoreganj's Kuliarchar upazila. The identity of the other deceased couldn't be confirmed immediately.

Quoting villagers, Inspector (investigation) Abul Kalam of Shibpur Model Police Station said a group of 10-15 robbers, armed with local weapons, robbed cash and gold jewellery from the house of one Harun in the upazila's Joynagar village around 1:30am.

Alerted by night guards about the fleeing robbers, a group of locals in the neighbouring Murgiber village intercepted them around 3:30am. At one

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Bangabandhu asks Adamjee workers to increase production

November 26, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

EXPEDITE REPATRIATION

The governments of Bangladesh and India regretted Pakistan's failure to comply with the joint Indo-Bangladesh proposal to repatriate all families of Bangladesh nationals in Pakistan purely on humanitarian grounds, according to a foreign ministry announcement in Dhaka today. Earlier, the two governments had announced their decision to repatriate all families (children and women) of Pakistani civilian internees and prisoners of war now detained in India.

In response, the government of Pakistan announced its decision to permit as a first step 10,000 Bangalee women and children to leave Pakistan for Bangladesh. The two governments have requested Pakistan to inform the Swiss Embassy in Islamabad of the travel arrangements of families of Bangladeshi nationals from Pakistan at the earliest possible time.

BANGABANDHU ASSURES ADAMJEE WORKERS
 Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today urges workers of Adamjee Jute Mills to increase production and assures them that he would personally look into the problems of the mills. A large crowd of Adamjee Jute Mill workers came to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Hindu families living in fear of land grabbers

Local influential tries to drive them away from own land

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Three Hindu families, with members who fought in the Liberation War, are now living in fear of attacks by land grabbers in Biroi village of Gafargaon, Mymensingh.

The families are facing threats of eviction from their ancestral lands.

On September 28, the criminals assaulted the family members and beat them up. Some of the family members then fled the area. They have come back recently with police protection.

Paritosh Chandra Singha, 60, said his family and the families of his two brothers have lived in their ancestral land all their lives. Four of his family members were freedom fighters.

"After the Liberation War, we exchanged 27-decimal of land out of a 51-decimal plot with a neighbour named Rajab Ali," said Paritosh.

Around 15 year ago, Rajab's son Abdul Awal Bacchu sold the land to a local influential person named Mostafa Mia, 40.

Immediately after taking possession of that 27-decimal land, Mostafa started

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

37 killed as bus, truck crash in Brazil

AFP, Sao Paulo

At least 37 people were killed and 15 injured yesterday when a bus and a truck crashed in southeastern Brazil, police said.

The bus, which was carrying workers at a textile factory, collided with the truck early in the morning on a highway outside the town of Itaguai, in Sao Paulo state, police said.

The death toll, initially reported as 32, was expected to rise further, state police said in a statement.

"We know there are more victims in the wreckage of the vehicles,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Construction workers working on a high-rise building without any safety gear, ultimately risking their lives, in Mohammadpur's Tikkapara area. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Virus load soars in US

LA shuts restaurants; Europe eases lockdowns

AGENCIES

Officials warned Americans to stay home for the Thanksgiving holiday as a restaurant dining ban in Los Angeles was due to come into force yesterday, while parts of Europe eyed looser coronavirus lockdowns over the festive season.

The three-week order in America's second-biggest city will begin as California faces record Covid-19 cases, and its health secretary urged people to avoid large family gatherings.

"It's as important to say 'no' even when it comes to the closest people in our family," doctor Mark Ghaly said, adding he had barred his mother from a planned celebration.

The US government's health protection agency has, for the first time, called on Americans not to travel for an annual holiday which usually sees families get together over turkey, yams and cranberry sauce.

With the US confronted by soaring numbers of deaths and new cases, plans to deliver a vaccine to Americans are accelerating.

More than six million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine will be available in the first week after it is cleared for emergency use -- which is likely next month -- and 40 million by the end of December, according to officials.

There were more than 86,000 coronavirus hospitalisations in the US on Tuesday, a record, as well as 167,000 new cases and more than 2,000 deaths.

As America grappled with its crisis, some European

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

PRAYER TIMING NOVEMBER 26

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-05	12-45	3-45	5-21	7-00
JAMAAT 5-40	1-15	4-00	5-24	7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION