



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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"If we do not respond to climate change, we will continue to have these emergencies on our shores."
NEW ZEALAND PM JACINDA ARDERN AFTER DECLARING CLIMATE EMERGENCY



"To date, we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election".
US ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM BARR



"... We see Malaysia sometimes positive but see them pushing back Rohingya boats. I think whole international community should work together."
EU AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH RENJSJE TEERINK ABOUT THE ROHINGYA CRISIS



ROHINGYA RELOCATION TO BHASAN CHAR

All set with UN views put aside

UN says it has not been involved in preparations, has 'limited info' on the overall relocation exercise



PORIMOL PALMA

While the United Nations and other development partners still wait for an independent assessment of the Bhasan Char housing project, the government prepares for relocating some 2,500 Rohingyas to the isolated island within a couple of days.

The move has triggered concerns among the UN and the development partners.

Talking on the issue, experts said relocating Rohingyas to Bhasan Char without the UN consent could risk the good reputation Bangladesh earned by sheltering the Rohingyas.

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NATURAL DISASTERS

Work going on for 5-layer protection

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, back from Bhasan Char

Uri grass is growing naturally along the shore of Bhasan Char. This type of grass provides protection to the shore and only grows in areas where there is no possibility of erosion, according to officials of the housing project there.

The project officials, however, are not merely relying on this protection. They are now working to put in place a five-layer protection system to save the island from natural disasters.

The Bangladesh government has spent around Tk 3,100 crore to develop the island, build infrastructure and a protection system against extreme climate events under a project delegated to Bangladesh Navy.

A number of international non-government organisations questioned the safety and

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Bhakurta canal in Keraniganj has been orange for the last two years as water from Dhaka Wasa's iron removal plant has been getting into the waterbody. Local fishermen say they cannot get a decent catch in the canal anymore. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

People like PK Halder must face music: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

However powerful the corrupt and money launders like Proshanta Kumar Halder alias PK Halder are, they must be brought to book, and they cannot be spared under any circumstances, the High Court observed yesterday.

The court also said the government agencies concerned are bound to protect public properties in accordance with the law and the country's constitution.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Sohel came up with the observation while virtually hearing a suo motu rule issued by it questioning the inaction of the authorities concerned in arresting Halder and bringing him back to the country.

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SONARGAON RESORT, ECONOMIC ZONE

HC raps 2 firms for grabbing wetlands

Says earth-filling by Unique Group concerns illegal, orders wetlands be restored in 6 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday slammed two private companies owned by businessman Md Noor Ali for grabbing and filling up water bodies, wetlands and farmlands to set up a resort and an economic zone in Narayanganj's Sonargaon upazila.

In the verdict on a writ petition, the HC observed that the land grabbing by Unique Property Development Ltd (UPDL) and Sonargaon Economic Zone (SEZ) in six moujas near the banks of the Meghna was unfortunate. It was done bypassing the relevant laws and directives from the HC and the Supreme Court.

The court declared illegal the activities of the two firms in the six moujas of Sonargaon and ordered the Department of Environment (DoE) and the local administration to take steps to restore the wetlands and farmlands there in six months.

Citing from government documents,

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it said the firms -- both concerns of Noor Ali-owned Unique Group -- filled up water bodies, wetlands and agricultural land in Pirojpur, Jainpur, Chhoyhissa, Char Bhabonathpur, Batibandha and Ratanpur moujas, first in the name of setting up a resort and then a private economic zone.

Noor Ali is a freedom fighter and the nation does not expect this from him, mentioned the HC bench of Justice Md Ashraf Kamal and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil.

The court directed the DoE and the local administration to probe the incidents of land grabbing and earth filling by the UPDL and the SEZ or any other organisation or individual and also give compensation to the affected land owners.

It noted that 2,350 bighas of farmlands and wetlands have been grabbed in the six moujas.

A company has to apply to Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) for establishing an economic zone in line with

Cabinet okays direct vaccine purchase

DGHS starts antigen testing from Saturday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday approved in principle a proposal of the Health Services Division to procure Covid-19 vaccine directly from any organisation through negotiations without following any bidding process.

"The cabinet body approved a proposal of the Health Services Division [under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare] to procure Covid-19 vaccine worth over Tk 5 crore by applying the direct procurement method," said Abu Saleh, additional secretary of the cabinet division.

He was briefing reporters after a meeting of the cabinet committee.

Abu Saleh, however, said, "This committee has just given the approval in principle to meet the emergency needs of the state. But when any procurement deal will be final, it'll come to the Cabinet Committee on Public Purchase for its final approval."

He said the approval was given in

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Vaccination starts next week in UK

Britain clears Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine for use in world first; EU warns against hasty decisions

AGENCIES

Britain approved Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine yesterday, jumping ahead of the United States and Europe to become the West's first country to formally endorse a jab it said should reach the most vulnerable people early next week.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson touted the medicine authority's approval as a global win and a ray of hope amid the gloom of the novel coronavirus which has killed nearly 1.5 million people globally, hammered the world economy and upended normal life.

Britain's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) granted emergency use approval to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which they say is 95% effective in preventing illness, in record time - just 23 days since Pfizer published the first data from its final stage clinical trial.

The world's big powers have been racing for a vaccine for months to begin the long road to recovery, and getting there first may be seen as a coup for Johnson's government, which has faced criticism over its handling of the crisis.

"It's fantastic," Johnson said. "The vaccine will begin to be made available across the UK from next week. It's the protection of vaccines that will ultimately allow us to reclaim our lives and get the economy moving again."

The European Union's drug watchdog and lawmakers warned against hasty approvals of Covid-19 vaccines yesterday, after Britain granted emergency authorisation to the experimental shot of Pfizer and BioNTech.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA), which is in charge of approving Covid-19 vaccines for the EU, said its longer procedure to approve vaccines was more appropriate as it was based on more evidence and required more checks than the emergency procedure chosen by Britain.

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Legal action if rallies held sans permit

Says DMP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police has imposed a ban on organising assemblies, rallies, mass gatherings, and use of loudspeakers at these programmes in the capital without prior permission.

A DMP press release yesterday said legal actions would be taken against any violation of the ban.

The ban came at a time when different religious groups held public rallies opposing establishment of Bangabandhu's sculpture in the country.

"It is being noticed recently that various socio-political and religious organisations are announcing programmes like assemblies, rallies and public gatherings in Dhaka without permission from the authorities concerned. Movement of traffic is being disrupted due to various obstacles created on roads because of these programmes," says the release.

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People try to straighten a crumpled truck cab and free the driver trapped inside at Ghoramara in Sitakunda on Dhaka-Chattogram highway yesterday. The truck had rear ended another truck on the highway. The driver suffered injuries, including a broken leg.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

23 YRS OF PEACE ACCORD

CHT still plagued by myriad ills

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The hills have remained restive due to land disputes, extortion, killings and feuds between and within the region's political parties 23 years into the peace accord in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Officials and a section of locals blame this on regional political groups trying to establish supremacy in the hill tracts. Rights organisations and another section of locals, meanwhile, see the treaty not being fully implemented as the reason.

They also said when the peace accord was signed, people of the hilly districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban thought their lives would change for the better and the bloodshed would come to an end.

"The core issues of the treaty were not implemented. That's why frustration among people of the hills is growing and the law and order situation is deteriorating," Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, told The Daily Star.

He said implementation of the provisions of the peace accord would improve the law and order situation and also reduce the frustration.

When asked about the violence by armed groups in the hilly districts, he said, "It is the responsibility of the law enforcement agencies to check it."

There has been a spate of killings -- 115 -- since the start of 2019 till October this year, along with 49 abductions during the same period, according to information obtained from the security forces and various intelligence agencies.

Most of the people killed were members of the four regional parties -- Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati

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BANGLADESH
UPDATE2,198
New cases in 24hrs4,69,423
Total cases6,713
Deaths3,85,786
RecoveriesGLOBAL
UPDATE1,491,289
Deaths64,417,268
Total cases

JUSTICE FOR RAPE

Compensation as important as prosecution

Say speakers at webinar of BLAST, UN Women, The Daily Star

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While prosecution of rapists is essential, it is just as important to ensure redress for survivors of rape and other gender-based violence through compensation, said speakers at a webinar last night.

The discussion titled "No Justice without Reparation: Why Rape Survivors Must Have a Right to Compensation", was jointly organised by Bangladesh Legal Aids and Services Trust (BLAST), UN Women and The Daily Star.

Tagbir Huda, research specialist at BLAST, said UN in 1993 gave a declaration of elimination of violence against women in four stages -- preventing violence, protecting them, ensuring justice and redress through compensation.

"However, in Bangladesh, the issue of compensation is hardly discussed in our policies and laws," said Tagbir.

Under the Women and Children Repression Act 2020, the perpetrators are fined along with the punishment, but the amount goes to the state, Tagbir said.

The courts have the right to provide the amount to the survivors, but it is not mandatory, and survivors have been ensured compensation in only seven percent of the cases, he added.

Fowzul Azim, senior district judge, who is also the chief research officer of the Law Commission, Bangladesh, said although in laws protecting women from gender-based violence there are reparations for survivors, these have not been made effective yet.

"For example, under the Women and Children Repression Act 2020, a survivor can receive compensation against 10 offences, ranging from Tk 10,000 to Tk one lakh, fixed by the court. The amount should be extended," said Fowzul.

Besides, since there is no specific guideline on how the payment will be made, it becomes difficult for the judges

to hand the money.

Fowzul also urged that in cases where the perpetrators do not have the ability to pay, the state must take the responsibility.

Dr Abul Hossain, project director of multi-sectoral programmes for violence against women, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), said MoWCA, with Centre for Policy Dialogue and CARE Bangladesh, did a survey on gender-based violence (GBV) survivors to determine the cost of violence but unfortunately they found it difficult to measure the cost.

"Although the cost of physical violence can be measured, you cannot measure the lifetime mental trauma of survivors," he said.

Dr Hossain however said there are compensation packages for GBV survivors from MoWCA's Women and Children Repression Cell, from where they can avail initial support.

Rita Das Roy, capacity building manager of GLZ, focused on how incidents of rape or other forms of violence create lifelong trauma and hamper survivors' confidence, education, productivity, and ultimately isolate them.

It is the responsibility of the state to ensure their compensation, she said.

Shoko Ishikawa, of UN Women, said if women truly have the right to live free of violence, it is the obligation of every state to make sure that their rights are fully protected.

"These key principles and obligations are stressed in international laws as well as by the treaty bodies, such as the Committee Against Torture, Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and Bangladesh is a party to all these treaties.

BLAST executive director, advocate Sara Hossain moderated the webinar.



A hawker sets up shop in Gulistan to sell repaired and refurbished feature and smart phones yesterday. He also sells parts for repairing broken phones. Despite the prices of entry-level phones dropping over the years, many still cannot afford those while some decide to keep their old ones going.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

All set with UN views put aside

FROM PAGE 1

They were also not sure how funding for meeting the needs of the Rohingyas would be managed following their relocation. They stressed that any relocation must be safe, dignified and voluntary.

A UN source said the UNHCR requested the Bangladesh government late last year to allow a technical team to the island in Noakhali's Hatiya, but it did not receive any response.

"We have no clue as to why the team was not allowed there," the source told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Tk 3,100-crore housing project, funded with public money, was taken after some 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military campaign in Myanmar's Rakhine and took shelter in Cox's Bazar since August 2017. They joined some 300,000 other Rohingyas, who had fled previous waves of violence in Rakhine.

Destruction of forests and hills and risk of landslides in Cox's Bazar prompted the authorities to choose the temporary housing site on Bhasan Char, which is around 37 miles off the coast of Bay of Bengal.

The project implemented by Bangladesh Navy has 120 cluster villages that are capable of accommodating one lakh Rohingyas.

Government sources yesterday told this paper that the authorities were preparing to shift the first batch of around 2,500 Rohingyas to the island from Cox's Bazar camps within a couple of days.

Around 66 tonnes of food and other necessary household items were taken to the island as of November 29, the sources said.

The houses have been built four feet above the ground with concrete blocks. The entire housing site is protected by a 13km-long flood embankment. There are also 120 cyclone shelters, which are planned to be used as schools, medical centres and community centres.

Government officials said there were large swathes of land that could be used for livestock and fish farming if the Rohingyas were relocated there. The

refugees in the Cox's Bazar camps have a very little work to do now.

UN and several international aid agencies have, however, been opposing the relocation plan, saying Bhasan Char is an isolated island and people there would be dangerously exposed to cyclones.

At one point last year, the UN wanted to send an independent technical team to Bhasan Char to visit the project. Accordingly, a request along with terms of reference was submitted to the government.

In a statement yesterday, the UNHCR -- the UN refugee agency -- said it had not been involved in preparations for the relocation or the identification of the refugees and has limited information on the overall relocation exercise.

Since the government announced the project, the UN has offered to engage in constructive consultations aimed at better understanding of the relocation plan, the UN said, adding that it remains willing to continue dialogue in this regard.

The UN has consistently maintained that any relocations to Bhasan Char should be preceded by comprehensive technical protection assessments for reviewing the safety, feasibility and sustainability of Bhasan Char as a place for refugees to live.

It said it also spoke of the framework for protection and the assistance and services they would be able to access on the island. The United Nations is prepared to proceed with the technical and protection assessments, if permitted by the government, it said.

"These assessments would be the concrete next step in determining whether the UN can engage operationally with the government's Bhasan Char project.

"If so, further work would be needed in order to develop plans and budgets, in consultation with the government and national and international NGO partners, as well as with the international donors whose support makes the Rohingya humanitarian response possible in Bangladesh."

Meanwhile, European Union Ambassador to Bangladesh Rensje Teerink said the underlying important issue was that a UN technical mission to Bhasan Char was pending.

"We always said let's first see what mission brings. If the mission says it is totally safe and sustainable for these people to be relocated, then we can look how we can support this process. At the moment, we feel it is a bit premature because the missions have not taken place on the Bhasan Char," she said at a talk hosted by the Diplomatic Correspondents Association of Bangladesh yesterday.

Asked about the relocation move by the government when the UN waits for a visit by its technical team for assessments, COAST Trust Executive Director Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said Bangladesh risks losing the reputation it earned by sheltering the Rohingyas and the good relationship with UN.

"Our government should engage in dialogue with the UN on Bhasan Char. The UN also should understand the challenges Bangladesh faces and facilitate the relocation. If necessary, more facilities can be added to what is there in Bhasan Char now," he told The Daily Star.

It will be difficult for the government to arrange food for the 1,00,000 Rohingyas and meet their other humanitarian needs if the international community is not involved in the process, he said.

"Can we manage it without the support of the international community?" he asked.

This correspondent tried to contact Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Dr Md Enamur Rahman, the ministry's Secretary Md Mohsin and Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Shah Rezwana Hayat over phone yesterday for comments on why the UN team was still not allowed to visit Bhasan Char.

None of them, however, could be reached.

Work going on for 5-layer

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protection system in the island as the government decided to relocate a group of Rohingyas there.

"We have developed a protection system after analysing the weather models of the last 176 years," Commander Md Anowerul Kabir, deputy project director of Ashrayan-3 project (the official title of the Bhasan Char project), told The Daily Star on Monday.

Strong concrete pillars have been installed along the 2.5km long sea shore of the island to weaken strong currents as its first line of defence. This protection dyke, called "Screen Break Water", would weaken sea waves by 75 percent, said officials.

Gravels of diameters one to two inches have been dumped beside the pillars. This would weaken the sea currents by another 25 percent, they added. Besides, geo bags have been dumped on the layer of gravels to make sure that the island is protected even better.

Commander Kabir said they adopted a scientific protection system and there was no scope for erosion of the shore.

A natural defence mechanism has also been used in the island by planting mangrove saplings. Around one lakh saplings were planted in the island last year. Steps have been taken to plant another 10 lakh saplings, said project officials.

A former forest department official, who has 25-year working experience in mangrove forests, is helping project officials plant the saplings.

Construction of the main embankment is going on around 100 feet away from the sea shore. The embankment will be 19 feet high from the ground and 12-km long around the new settlement.

"We will plant grass along both sides of the embankment to make it stronger," said Commander Kabir.

Mangrove afforestation is going on to protect the island from cyclones and storm surge.

About possible waterlogging, Kabir said they have already built a modern drainage system in the island and there will be around 18 sluice gates in the embankment.

Seeking anonymity, a project official said they were planning to develop a dredging system in the island and that they have already wrote to the authorities concerned in this regard.

"We would dump the dredged up soil on the island which will create another layer of protection," said the official.

Each of the 120 cyclone shelters in the island are built on a plinth 12 feet above the ground. Each shelter can accommodate 1,000 people and 200 cattle.

Md Fakir, a cowboy living in the island for nine years, said Bhasan Char used to go under water during high tides.

"We did not see water entering the island in the last three years after the navy officials started the development work and built an embankment here," he added.

and one medical college from Saturday.

"Initially, we are starting antigen-based rapid testing at nine district-level hospitals and at one medical college from Saturday. It will be expanded to other districts from the next week," said Habibur Rahman, the director of Management Information System (MIS) at DGHS.

The hospitals are in Panchagarh, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, Patuakhali, Meherpur, Munshiganj, Jashore, Sylhet, Madaripur and Brahmanbaria districts. Shaheed Shamsuddin Medical College Hospital in Sylhet is the other hospital.

38 DIED, 2,198 INFECTED
Meanwhile, 38 people died with Covid-19 in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release of the DGHS.

With this, the total number of deaths rose to 6,713 while the death rate stood at 1.43 percent.

Another 2,198 cases were recorded in the same 24 hours taking the total number of positive cases to 469,423, added the release.

Against a number of 15,972 tests conducted in those 24 hours throughout the country, the positivity rate was 13.76 percent, while the overall positivity rate stood at 16.74 percent.

In the previous day, the positivity rate was 14.79 percent.

At least a total of 2,562 Covid-19 patients have recovered in the same 24 hours.

With this, the total number of recoveries rose to 385,786 while the recovery rate stood at 82.18 percent.

Among the 38 dead yesterday, 25 were males.

One aged under ten years, one between 21 and 30 years, three between 31 and 40, four between 41 and 50, four between 51 and 60, and 25 above 60 years old, added the release.

Cabinet okays

FROM PAGE 1

compliance with the Provision 76 of the Public Procurement Rule-2008.

Earlier on November 5 last, the government signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Serum Institute of India (SII) and Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd to collect three crore doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca SARS-CoV-2, AZD1222 vaccine.

On Monday, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam said that the approval from the Economic Affairs Committee is required as per section 76 of the Public Procurement Rules since it will be bought from a single source.

On the next day, Health Secretary Abdul Mannan said the country would receive the vaccine hopefully by February next year or earlier.

"We hope we will get corona vaccines very soon. Hopefully by the month of February [2021] or earlier... Until then, however, wearing a mask is the only way to live and prevent transmission," Abdul Mannan said while addressing as chief guest in a World AIDS Day 2020 event in Dhaka.

The finance ministry on November 16 initially allocated some Tk 735.77 crore for the Health Service Division to procure the Covid-19 vaccine.

Apart from the vaccine from SII, Bangladesh will buy 68 million doses from the Cavi under a global arrangement called COVAX. The first shipment of vaccine doses from SII, the Vaccine Alliance, is likely to be delivered between February and June next year, said officials of the health directorate.

ANTIGEN TESTING STARTS FROM SATURDAY

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) is going to start antigen-based rapid testing for coronavirus at nine district hospitals

ROHINGYA CRISIS

US to keep supporting Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US would continuously support Bangladesh through humanitarian assistance and political engagement for a solution to the Rohingya crisis.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R Miller made the statement on Tuesday while attending a virtual view exchange meeting with the Editors' Council of Bangladesh.

According to a press release of the US embassy in Dhaka, the US also wants to ensure safe, voluntary, sustainable, and dignified repatriation of the refugees back to their home.

Some 750,000 Rohingyas fled brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State in 2017, but none of them returned saying the environment in Rakhine was not conducive.

The US donates the largest stake of humanitarian assistance to the Rohingyas and will continue to work with Bangladesh and the international community for a sustainable solution to the problem, Earl R Miller said.

He also said that his country is committed to working with Bangladesh to fight Covid-19 and expand trade and other areas of cooperation including clean energy and countering terrorism.

He highlighted the strength of US-Bangladesh relations and expressed confidence that this partnership will continue on its positive trajectory, deepening and expanding in 2021 as Bangladesh celebrates its 50th anniversary of independence.

Miller also paid tribute to Bangladeshi journalists and media outlets for their tireless efforts during the ongoing pandemic to ensure the public has accurate, life-saving information about coronavirus.

7 Myanmarese held with 2.8 lakh yaba pills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Coast Guard detained seven Myanmar nationals with 280,000 yaba tablets from a boat in the Bay of Bengal in Teknaf's Katabunia area early yesterday.

Tipped off, coastguards conducted a raid in Shah Pari Dwp area and chased down a boat entering Bangladesh territory from Myanmar, said Lt Commander M Hamidul Islam, media officer at Coast Guard headquarters.

The coastguards found seven Myanmar citizens smuggling the contraband tablets into Bangladesh. They seized the yaba tablets stashed in two containers on the boat, the official added.

The detainees, yaba tablets, and the boat were handed to Taknaf Model Police Station.

Amnesty slams Egypt 'execution spree'

AFP, Beirut

Amnesty International yesterday denounced a "horrifying execution spree" in Egypt, saying dozens of people had been put to death in the past two months.

The UK-based rights group said that "in October and November alone, the Egyptian authorities executed at least 57 men and women", adding that this was almost double the number for all of last year.

"The Egyptian authorities have embarked on a horrifying execution spree in recent months... in some cases following grossly unfair mass trials," Amnesty's regional research and advocacy director, Philip Luther, said in a statement.

Legal action

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The DMP ordinance stipulates that an organisation must obtain prior permission from the DMP for staging such programmes and using sound devices so that the authorities can keep the people's civic rights protected, maintain law and order and control the movement of traffic, it added.

If a deviation occurs, the authorities cannot ensure security of the participants of processions or rallies. Besides, some quarters get the opportunity to cause damage to lives and properties and deteriorate law and order through organising rallies, read the DMP release.

On November 13, a rally was held at Dhupkhola ground in Gandaria under the banner of "Touhid Janata Oikya Parishad" to oppose the installation of a sculpture of Bangabandhu on the occasion of Mujib Borsho.

On the same day, Hefajat-e-Islam Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque publicly opposed setting up of Bangabandhu's sculpture at the BMA Auditorium in the capital.

Speaking at a recent programme in Chattogram, Hefajat chief Junaid Babunagari also threatened to pull down and destroy all the sculptures no matter which party puts those up.

HC raps 2 firms for grabbing wetlands

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the Bangladesh Economic Zone Act, 2010, after obtaining clearance certificates from the DoE and other authorities concerned, it said.

Noor Ali's firms can submit afresh applications to the BEZA for permission to establish an economic zone in Sonargaon in accordance with the law, it added.

The HC bench delivered the verdict following a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) in 2014 challenging the activities of the UPDL to set up a resort in Sonargaon.

The court kept the writ petition as *continuing mandamus* so that any aggrieved person can move a prayer before it for necessary orders on the issue in the future.

Earlier on November 24, the bench verdict December 2 for delivering its verdict after the final hearing on the writ petition.

Vaccination starts next week in UK

FROM PAGE 1

Asked about the British approval of the Pfizer vaccine, the agency said: "EMA considers that the conditional marketing authorisation is the most appropriate regulatory mechanism for use in the current pandemic emergency."

The approval of a jab for use almost exactly a year since the coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China, is a triumph for science, Pfizer boss Albert Bourla and his German biotechnology partner BioNTech.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization said it had received data from Pfizer and BioNTech on the Covid-19 vaccine and was reviewing it for "possible listing for emergency use", a benchmark for countries to authorise national use.

President Vladimir Putin yesterday ordered Russian authorities to begin mass voluntary vaccinations against Covid-19 next week as Russia recorded 589 new daily deaths from the coronavirus.

Russia will have produced 2 million vaccine doses within the next few days, Putin said. Russia said last month that its Sputnik V jab was 92% effective at protecting people from Covid-19 according to interim results.

'NO CORNERS CUT'

The US drugmaker said Britain's emergency use authorization marks a historic moment in the fight against Covid-19. Pfizer announced its vaccine breakthrough on November 9 with stage III clinical trial results.

"This authorization is a goal we have been working toward since we first declared that science will win, and we applaud the MHRA for their ability to conduct a careful assessment and take timely action to help protect the people of the UK," said CEO Bourla.

Britain's medicines regulator approved the vaccine in record time by doing a "rolling" concurrent analysis of data and the manufacturing process while Pfizer raced to conclude trials.

"No corners have been cut," MHRA chief June Raine said in a televised briefing from Downing Street, adding that the first data on the vaccine had been received in June and undergone a rigorous analysis to international standards. "Safety is our watchword."

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said hospitals were ready to receive the shots and vaccination centres would be set up across the country, but he admitted distribution would be a challenge given

with the HC which on October 25, 2016, modified its 2014 order, allowing the company to go ahead with its project.

Bela on November 3, 2016, filed a petition with the SC which stayed the October 25 HC order and upheld the 2014 HC order. The apex court asked the HC to hear and dispose of its 2014 rule.

Later, Bela filed a contempt of court petition with the HC on January 16, 2017, as the UPDL started work in the moujas for establishing an economic zone in violation of the HC directives.

On August 14, 2018, Bela moved to the SC for necessary directives to stop land grabbing and earth filling in the six moujas.

The apex court then ordered Noor Ali to refrain from filling up farmlands and wetlands near the Meghna in the moujas. It also instructed the Narayanganj deputy commissioner to take necessary measures to that effect.

storage at temperature typical of an Antarctic winter.

Pfizer has said the shots can be kept in thermal shipping boxes for up to 30 days. Afterwards, the vaccine can be kept at fridge temperatures for up to five days.

Other frontrunners in the vaccine race include US biotech firm Moderna, which has said its shot was 94% successful in late-stage clinical trials, and AstraZeneca, which said last month its Covid-19 shot was 70% effective in pivotal trials and could be up to 90% effective.

FREE TO ALL

Coronavirus vaccines will be optional and free to all citizens and residents of Kuwait, the Gulf state's prime minister said yesterday, in comments reported in al-Qabas newspaper. Prime Minister Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah was speaking at a meeting of various ministers.

Italy will give all its citizens free vaccinations against coronavirus starting with doctors and care home residents once the jabs are approved, its health minister said.

Japan will give free coronavirus vaccines to all of its residents under a bill passed yesterday, as the nation battles record numbers of daily cases, reports AFP.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION LAW

Mostly ineffective, a decade on: research

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legal experts and rights activists yesterday expressed concerns over the effectiveness of the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010, a decade after it was promulgated.

Implementation of the law has been very weak in most districts of the country, according to a recent study commissioned by ActionAid Bangladesh. Findings of the study were shared at a virtual roundtable yesterday.

Prof Taslima Yasmin, associate professor of law at Dhaka University, conducted 60 qualitative interviews -- including of 20 survivors, and a number of legal service providers, law enforcement officers and other personnel linked to domestic violence cases this year, and analysed around 90 case records for her study titled "Exploring the obstacles in accessing justice for survivors of domestic violence: How effective is the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010".

"For example, 19 of the 20 survivors never heard of the DVPP Act, under which they could get remedy for violent incidents," said Prof Taslima, while sharing her findings at the event.

"Even when they went to seek remedy from law enforcement agencies or administrative officers, they were not informed that they can get remedy under the law," she added.

The study also found that victims only go to seek remedy when the physical torture reached severe levels, or until they were denied access to the conjugal residence, or the husband remarried.

"Although a victim can go to court to file a petition under this act, the official data provided by the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court of Bhola and Sherpur showed no petition filed under the act during the past 10 years,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



The Dhaka-Aricha highway near Aminbazar is not only harmful to the lungs, as dust covers the entire location, but pedestrians are also in immediate danger of road accidents. Due to poor visibility, anyone jaywalking through the road, in this case a woman with a child, would fail to see how far fast-moving vehicles are from them, while drivers may also be blindsided by the dust. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Mixed use of land to harm Dhaka: BIP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

City planners of Dhaka yesterday demanded that the authorities concerned revise its decision of using land of Dhaka city in an indiscriminate way, as mixed use of land will harm the city.

According to draft of Detailed Area Plan (DAP) for the capital, different kinds of use in different floors of a building is allowed, said members of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) in a press conference at its office.

At the press conference, members of BIP spoke at length about the flaws in the DAP draft, which has been formulated by consulting firms Sheltech and DDC under a work order by Rajdhani Uন্নayan Katrapakkha (Rajuk).

"A building situated beside a 20 feet to 80 feet wide road will be eligible for different kinds of mixed use (like commercial use and residential use) based on floor area, which will create an anarchy in using a building," said Adil Mohammad Khan, general secretary of BIP.

He said though they have mentioned it as conditional in the draft, they did not mention the conditions specifically which

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Dhaka airport gets its first full-body X-ray scanners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) for the first time has installed four full body X-ray scanners at the pre-boarding security checkpoint at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA).

With this new technology, security officials will be able to detect any hidden or unwanted materials on or inside the body of outbound passengers, Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul Ahsan, director of HSIA, told The Daily Star.

Under a project of Japan International Cooperation Agency, CAAB procured the scanners from Japan, he said.

Conventional scanners can only detect metallic objects, but X-ray scanners can detect non-metallic objects too.

Although the machines have already been installed, they will go into function after five to six months.

"Due to the pandemic, trainers of those scanners are yet to come to Dhaka from Japan. After the situation becomes a bit normal, they will come and train our people to operate the machines," Touhid told this correspondent.

Authorities will continue using manual scanners like metal detectors and archways, despite setting up the new technology, sources at HSIA said.

Buet interested to join cluster admission test

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), which had earlier shown reservation about joining centralised admission test, is now interested.

Buet, in a letter to University Grants Commission (UGC), said it is willing to join the cluster of engineering universities for the entrance test.

So far, authorities of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology and Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, in principle, decided to join the cluster system.

"We have received a letter from Buet authorities, and they have expressed desire to join the cluster admission system in the engineering cluster," UGC member Prof Mohammed Alamgir told The Daily Star.

"We will forward the letter to authorities of other engineering universities that have, in principle, decided to join," he said.

He said UGC would soon sit with

vice chancellors of all agricultural and engineering universities to know their current stance on the cluster admission test. He hoped all universities would join the new system.

Buet Pro-vice Chancellor Prof Abdul Jabbar Khan said the academic council, in principle, has decided to join the cluster system. "We will need to discuss the matter in the academic council again," he said.

On January 23, UGC announced that it would go for a uniform admission test for 2020-2021 academic year. Later in February, it was decided, in principle, that universities would hold admission tests following a cluster system.

Five leading universities -- Dhaka University, Buet, Rajshahi University, Jahangirnagar University and Chittagong University -- had shown reservations it.

On Tuesday, it was decided that 19 public universities will enrol students through a centralised admission test for the next academic session.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



PHOTO COURTESY: BENGAL FOUNDATION

One can enjoy "Baseer: An Eloquent Mind" from their home through the virtual tour.

Experiencing Baseer in VR

Bengal Foundation launches online virtual tour of eminent artist's exhibition

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY, A & E Desk

Bengal Foundation launched their very first virtual tour of an ongoing exhibition titled 'Baseer: An Eloquent Mind' for the online audience. The online platform for the full-fledged gallery tour has been designed by Artcon, a specialised agency that covers all modes of services in the art field.

'Baseer: An Eloquent Mind' is now underway at Bengal Shilpalay in Dhanmondi. It will remain open to all till January 16, 2021, from 3pm to 8pm. The venue is closed on Sundays.

Although the coronavirus crisis brought many obstacles for artists in the country, they are slowly adapting to virtual avenues. A R K Ripon, Founder of Artcon, stressed on the possibilities opened up by new techniques that can enrich the art market. The cutting-edge technology for the virtual tour offers features such as 360-degree view, hot spots that allow viewers to move close to or far from the artworks, stereoscopic view on VR headset and the dollhouse effect.

"Virtual tours not only project what is in the exhibition but also connect us to other networks through hyperlinks. The QR codes provide audio and text content in multiple languages and the viewership is unlimited," he explained, "A special feature lets viewers experience this exhibition both in day and night modes. The mood of the exhibition is captured with it."

Murtaja Baseer (1932-2020) worked in many mediums, such as drawing, printmaking, watercolour, oil paint, mixed media and mural. His greatest mastery was in oil paintings. Covering a period from the fifties to the present, the exhibition includes the artist's photographs, letters, sketches, collages, posters, paper cuttings and key paintings from several private collections, many of which are being exhibited for the first time.

Director General of Bengal Foundation, Luva Nahid Choudhury, expressed her enthusiasm for the virtual tour.

"An immense amount of research and energy was invested in the creation of the exhibition. Showcasing the works of one of the most influential modern artists of Bangladesh is even harder. The virtual tour allows us not only to archive the exhibition as a whole, but also to travel beyond borders," she said.

With increased restrictions on public gatherings, the use of augmented reality has emerged as a solution to the immediate crisis. It can create opportunities for collection and purchase of artworks from different parts of the world. However, it also comes with certain requirements such as a high speed internet connection, suitable gadgets and an understanding of the virtual platform for users to enjoy the experience fully.

Seven to die for murdering freedom fighter

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday sentenced seven people to death for killing and burning the body of freedom fighter Atik Ullah Chowdhury in December 2013.

The convicts are: Gulzar Hossain, Md Asif, Shihab Ahmed, Ahsanul Kabir Emon, Tajul Islam, Jahangir Khan, and Rafikul Islam. Jahangir and Rafikul are in jail.

Judge Abu Jafar Md Kamruzzaman of Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 of Dhaka handed the sentence in presence of three accused.

The tribunal also acquitted another accused Shampa, as her involvement with the killing was not proved.

On July 2, 2015, the tribunal had framed charges against eight accused.

The punishment of the fugitives will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender, the judge said.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments, while the court recorded statements of 11 prosecution witnesses including the complainant of the case.

During the investigation, Shampa and Asif gave confessional statements before the magistrates on different dates.

Establish the 99th Brigade promptly

JS body urges defence ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday strongly recommended that the defence ministry completes work of the project for establishment of 99 Composite Brigade for overall safety of Padma Multipurpose Bridge project as soon as possible.

The parliamentary standing committee on the defence ministry said this in a meeting at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Ruling Awami League MP and committee chairman Mohammad Subid Ali Bhuiyan presided over the meeting.

Defense Secretary Dr Md Abu Hena Mostofa Kamal informed the parliamentary watchdog about the progress of different issues including providing rations to retired members of the armed forces in lieu of allowances, introduction of "One Person, One Rank" in the Armed Forces and increase in insurance for pilots.

The meeting reviewed the latest status of Bangladesh Armed Forces activities in UN peacekeeping missions, construction of BNA Bangabandhu Complex, progress of Patenga Chittagong (2nd amendment) project, and establishment of 99 composite brigade for overall security of Padma Multipurpose Bridge project.

The committee also discussed the need to increase the number of women peacekeepers in missions to achieve the goals set by the United Nations.

Committee members Muhammad Faruk, Md Motahar Hossain, Nasir Uddin and Begum Nahid Izahar Khan participated in the meeting, along with senior officials of the army, air force, navy and defence ministry.

Four indicted in Sagira murder case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against four accused in connection with the killing of Sagira Morshed in the capital 30 years ago.

The accused are Sagira Morshed's brother-in-law Hasan Ali Chowdhury, his wife Sayedatul Mahmuda alias Shahin, brother-in-law (wife's brother) Anas Mahmud alias Rezwana and the alleged hitman Maruf Reza.

The four, now in jail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after KM Emrul Kayesh of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka read out the charges to them.

Meantime, the judge granted bail to Sayedatul Mahmuda on grounds that she would submit her passport to the court.

The judge fixed January 11 for starting trial of the case.

On July 25, 1989, 34-year-old Sagira was shot dead on the road, while going to Viqarunnisa Noon School to pick up her daughter Sahar.

Her husband Abdus Salam Chowdhury filed a murder case against unknown people with Ramna Police Station the same day.

But trial of the case had been stayed for the last 28 years following a High Court order.

PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK PROJECT

All sleepers to be made in Faridpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujon yesterday inaugurated a factory at Faridpur's Bhanga, which will supply sleepers for Padma Bridge Rail Link Project (PBRLP).

China Railway Group Limited (CREC), the construction contractor of the project, set up the factory to supply more than 3.7 lakh sleepers for the rail line.

"Sleepers are being produced here maintaining quality using machines," the minister told reporters after visiting the factory. CREC has brought technology and machines from China, he said. "We will decide upon consultation with CREC whether the factory can be used for producing sleepers for Bangladesh Railway after completion of the project."

BR is implementing PBRLP to connect the capital with Jashore with a 169km rail line for Tk 39,246 crore, with Exim Bank of China providing Tk 21,036.70 crore as loan. CREC built the factory on BR's land and will have to pay rent for it, a BR official said. However, the rent-related issues have not been settled yet, he said wishing not to named.

Wang Kun, project director for CREC, said they have set up the factory to dispel uncertainty over global procurement of sleepers amid pandemic, and to produce sleepers quickly maintaining quality.

Around 200 locals were given training for the works and the factory will be able to produce up to 500 sleepers daily.

The factory started producing sleepers from August on a limited scale, and the railways minister yesterday formally inaugurated it.



Pigeon fancying never seems to go out of fashion, and why would it? Seeing a flock of birds flying in circles under the clear sky should bring peace to anyone's heart. Many who start out as hobbyists eventually go into business of raising and selling the birds for others to experience their beauty. This picture was taken from the capital's Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Man sentenced to life term jail for rape 12 years ago

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, C13

After 12 years, a Chattogram court yesterday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for raping a girl after making false promises of marriage in 2008.

The convict, Md Saddam (30) from the port city's Patharghata area, has been on the run since the case was filed in 2008.

Judge Md Moshir Rahman Khan of Chattogram Women and Child Repression Prevention Tribunal-1 gave the verdict, said Public Prosecutor Advocate Jesmin Akhter. She further said the court also fined the perpetrator Tk 20,000.

According to the case statement, Saddam, who was 18 at the time, raped the victim, who was his neighbour, luring the 14-year-old by making false promises of marriage on February 7, 2008.

The victim was rescued from Saddam's residence and was admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital's One-stop Crisis Centre.

Later, the victim's mother filed a case, accusing Saddam on February 11 that year.

After investigating, police pressed charges against Saddam on March 27, 2008, while a court framed charges in the case on November 4, 2008.

Advocate Jesmin said nine witnesses testified in the case out of 10.

Wahida Khanom passes away

CITY DESK

Wahida Khanom Chowdhury, mother of Md Abdul Halim Chowdhury, managing director and CEO of Pubali Bank Ltd, passed away in Dhaka yesterday, says a press release.



The Board of Directors of the bank and all levels of executives, officers and employees have expressed deep shock at the death.

Buet interested

FROM PAGE 3

There would be three exams under the cluster -- one each for students of science, humanities and commerce groups -- based on HSC syllabus. "It was also discussed that these tests will be held when the intensity of Covid-19 reduces," the VC said.

Till last year, 32 of the 39 public universities held separate admission tests, as seven agricultural universities held a "uniform admission test.

UGC has long been suggesting modifying the existing admission process, saying it is too expensive and coaching-oriented.

Mostly ineffective

FROM PAGE 3

while the Barishal Chief Judicial magistrate Court received only one this January," said Prof Taslima.

From unofficial sources, the study found that there were mostly one or two petitions filed in other districts, except where local NGOs played an active role -- such as in Jashore, Sylhet and Dinajpur.

Besides, both victims and lawyers generally prefer more straightforward penal sections. In terms of execution of the protection orders, survivors believe it is difficult to monitor and if they go to the court again with this issue, they are not welcomed, said Prof Taslima.

Another important factor is since the number of shelters for women is insufficient and there is a lack of livelihood options, many survivors are forced to return to the perpetrators.

Recent studies on domestic violence also found that although women mostly prefer to go to union parishad members or chairmen to seek remedy, they had to face victim-blaming, or were sent back to their perpetrators after an unlawful mediation by local administration, without ensuring proper remedies.

Although under the DVPP Act, survivors are supposed to come to local enforcement officers (of the Department of Women Affairs) first, organisations working on preventing violence against women and girls found these officers unavailable for immediate support, and even if they were available, they were unclear about their responsibilities, Sara Hossain said.

She suggested providing training to field workers to provide basic information to the victim about the law, as well as psychosocial counselling to victims.

ActionAid Country Director Farah Kabir said, "We often do advocacy about absence of law and that certain issues would be resolved if there was a relevant law. The law to prevent domestic violence was formulated 10 years ago, so it was important to see what the condition was after it was implemented."

Special Police Super of Criminal Investigation Department Rumana Akhter, noted researcher Meghna Guhathakurta and journalist Shahnaz Munni spoke at the event, broadcast on Facebook by Bangla daily Prothom Alo.

Mixed use

FROM PAGE 3

will make Rajuk's approval system weaker.

Adil said the draft also mentions that by giving a certain amount of penalty, anyone can turn a residential plot into commercial plot in a planned residential area, which will reduce the livability of Dhaka city.

This mixed use will have to be in a limited scale, and will have to be balanced with the residential area's character, he said. Adil -- who read out the keynote paper -- said in the draft, flood flow zone has been mentioned as an overlay zone, and they mentioned its land use as agriculture zone.

He demanded to keep it as a flood flow zone like earlier, saying otherwise it will conflict with Wetland Conservation Act, 2000. "We will have to project our flood flow zones, and no terminology will be acceptable which will be conflicting with the Wetland Conservation Act, 2000," said BIP president Prof Akter Mahmud.

He also demanded to mark all water bodies and canals in DAP, and making a separate map on all ponds in Dhaka city.

About protection of farmland, Adil said the draft DAP has given permission of turning agriculture land as single habitation, and at one point given conditional permission for eco-resort, agriculture-based industry, and single ownership-based home. This single or multiple-habitation permission is conflicting with planned urbanisation, said Adil.

BIP proposed enlisting 2,200 structures that the court has declared protection for as heritage sites in the DAP.

The number of heritage buildings of Dhaka is steadily declining, as businesses and other entities continue to encroach and demolish the structures, they said.

Prof Akter also demanded upgradation of Rajuk and increasing its capacity so that it can do its main work -- development control -- properly.

Pandemic paused their education

FROM PAGE 12

Classes have remained suspended in these schools since March 17. The closure has been extended until December 19.

"We cannot offer online classes as we need to adopt individual teaching techniques for each student. Each student has a different set of needs," said SWID Director Nurul Islam said.

He said they usually give some basic training to parents so that they can impart lessons to their children at home.

Nurul Islam estimates that there are around 45,000 students at non-government special schools and some 2,000 at government ones.

Special schools assess the needs of a student and prepare a separate teaching process for them. In mainstream schools, the students with special needs attend classes with other students.

REMOTE LEARNING NOT FOR THEM

The government first launched teaching through TV and then introduced classes over radio for primary school students and asked educational institutions to begin online classes.

But online classes are not accessible to those with learning disabilities and visual or hearing impairment.

"In schools, the students with disabilities usually face problems like lack of ramps, proper classroom environment, and unavailability of trained teachers. But they are facing a different set of challenges now," said KM Enamul Hoque, deputy director of Campaign for Popular Education.

TV and online education, developed as a temporary solution, do not focus on children with special needs, he added.

Many of these children are at risk of dropping out, he said.

Jahangir Alam, coordinator and thematic expert of Disability and Inclusive Development at the Centre for Disability in Development, said teachers impart lessons on TV and online classes using various graphs, pictures or video presentations.

But visually impaired students or those short of hearing cannot benefit from such classes, he said, adding that the students might be forgetting what they had learnt previously.

Sign language interpreters and subtitles must be added to the TV classes. He said.

'WE ARE WORKING ON THE ISSUE'

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education is trying to make remote learning friendly for students who need special attention, said its Director General Prof Syed Md Golam Faruk.

"We will try to include sign language interpreters in TV education by next January," he told The Daily Star.

According to the Directorate of Primary Education, the number of students with disabilities last year was 1,24,056 at primary schools and madrasas. Some 69,046 of them were girls. At least 37,186 were physically handicapped, 13,901 had poor eyesight and 6,083 were short of hearing.

In secondary schools, there were 65,985 students with disabilities. Of them, 23,975 were girls, 22,561 were physically handicapped, 15,455 were visually impaired and 5,261 were short of hearing.

"It is true that we have not been able to bring all students under the coverage of online and TV education. But we are working on the issue," she said.

Shahzaman Mozumder Bir Protik

FROM PAGE 12

"What I am wearing today" featured a different tailored suit every day and offered advice on contrast, colours, and even informed the public about proper dressing rules and etiquette.

"I think I was always interested in being well-dressed, but never had the resources to do much about it. Posting on the blog started soon after I joined IBM. Everyone there used to wear a blue suit and it was around that time that I went to Bangkok and got myself a couple of tailored suits. Ever since, a question remained with me. Why was the second largest manufacturer of apparels in the world -- Bangladesh -- not in tune with the styles and process behind tailor made clothing? And it is that very question that started all of this," Shahzaman said in an interview to Star Lifestyle in 2016.

Shahzaman Mozumder founded Dapper Bespoke in 2014. He did not belong to the fashion industry, but held impeccable knowledge about all the nitty-gritties of constructing a suit and styling it.

Along with a trusted tailor having 25 years of experience, he strode forward to capture the local fashion scene, giving it an unprecedented dimension.

Bangladesh will work

FROM PAGE 12

He refers to five lakh Bangladeshis kept interned in Pakistan and her role in debarring Bangladesh from entry into the United Nations.

BANGABANDHU OFFERS PRAYERS AT MASS GRAVE

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today offers prayers at the mass grave by the riverside in Jhalakati where skeletons of hundreds of people killed by the Pakistani army have been accumulated. The prime minister asks local leaders to send the skeletons of the dead heroes to the National Museum now under construction at Savar near Dhaka.

The prime minister is expected to return to Dhaka tomorrow morning after completing his four-day official tour of coastal areas.

NAP(B) DEMANDS INTERIM GOVT BEFORE POLLS

The conference of National Awami Party (Bhashani) today demands the dissolution of the present government three months before the forthcoming elections and formation of an all-party interim government to conduct a free and fair election in the country.

SOURCES: December 4, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq

More than 2,500 die in US

FROM PAGE 12

The virus has killed at least 1,489,816 people since the outbreak emerged in China last December, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP yesterday.

S'pore allows sale

FROM PAGE 12

But so-called clean or cultured meat, which is grown from animal muscle cells in a lab, is still at a nascent stage given high production costs.

Bangabandhu sculpture

FROM PAGE 12

Khaja Mia and senior officials of the ministry were present at the meeting.

Hasan said there exists a historical relation between Bangladesh and Turkey. There are also many similarities as regards values and culture, he added.

The minister said, "You all know that Turkish president Erdogan has been invited to join the function of the Mujib Birth Centenary. He has also agreed to come if the situation becomes favourable amid Covid-19 situation."

Turan said the sculpture of Bangabandhu will be set up in Ankara and sculpture of Kemal Ataturk on Kamal Ataturk Avenue in Dhaka.

Arrest warrant issued

FROM PAGE 12

was issued by the court after Police Bureau of Investigation filed a report on October 29, 2020 with the court detailing the "crime".

The report details that Dewan was doing a "Pala Gaan" session with fellow artist Shah Alam Sarkar, where the topic being debated was "Living Beings versus The Greatest".

The event was held on February 1, 2020 at a private residence in Kalihati upazila in Tangail.

Pala Gaan is a form of folk music where an extempore musical battle takes place between two bauls.

"Upon investigating videos of Rita's songs, we have found evidence of the crime. The words she chose to debate the issue hurt the religious sentiments of the audience," said PBI Inspector Sheikh Md Mizanur Rahman, adding that she had committed a crime under section 28 of the Digital Security Act.

Section 28 (1) of the Digital Security Act states that "if any person or group intentionally or knowingly with the aim of hurting religious sentiments or values or with the intention to provoke, publish or broadcast anything by means of any website or any electronic format which hurts religious sentiments or values, then such activity will be considered an offence".

"The complainant [Advocate Imrul Hasan] was at home when he came across the video, and was extremely angry and hurt," says the report. "And upon finding no way out, the complainant went to Kadamtali Police Station to file the case."

Dewan's lawyer Abdullah Al Noman slammed the issuance of the warrant. "The court could have summoned her to appear in front of it, she is not escaping anywhere," he said.

Novelist Swakrito Noman, known for authoring fiction and non-fiction books on cultural history, and who has been vocal about the prosecution of Dewan and other artists on social media, criticised the move to arrest the baul singer.

Noman, who authored "Chhotoder Purbobongo Geetkar Golpo", said, "Pala gaan takes an issue and debates the negatives and positive sides of the matter. It does not mean they believe in what they are saying -- they are only performing. At the end of the musical performance both actors come to an agreement. Rita's words cannot be taken out of context," he said.

"Pala gaan" has a rich history of critically questioning everything and having philosophical discussions about religion, Noman said.

Several historians and artists were contacted for comment on the issue, but they declined to say anything due to fear of reprisal.

Following the filing of the case, Rita released a video apologising for hurting religious sentiments and explaining her standpoint.

Selim Proddhan amassed

FROM PAGE 12

illegal casino business, allegedly amassed the wealth from online casino business, say investigators.

Referring to be unnamed, an ACC officer told The Daily Star that in his 2011-12 income tax return, Selim mentioned that he owns 40 percent share, worth about Tk 6.9 lakh, of Japan-Bangladesh Security Printing and Papers Ltd.

However, Japan-Bangladesh Security Printing and Papers in its 2011-12 income tax return mentioned that Selim's paid-up capital was Tk 69 lakh and his share money deposit was about Tk 23.55 crore.

"Selim concealed the information of Tk 23 crore in his tax returns," the source said.

Verifying the documents, it is also revealed that the Japan-Bangladesh Security Printing and Papers made Tk 29.33 lakh profit in 2010 and Tk 1.46 crore in 2011. But Selim mentioned that he took Tk 8 crore loan from it.

"It is completely baseless," the ACC official said, adding that Selim could not produce any documents against his claim of taking loans.

Selim disclosed Tk 11.31 crore investment in FDR, share market and saving certificates, but could not show the source of money.

The ACC also found Selim has illegal immovable properties worth about Tk 49.46 lakh and deposits of about Tk 9.84 lakh in different bank accounts.

"His illegal wealth could be about Tk 35.41 crore," he said.

In the probe, the ACC also found that Selim deposited Tk 5.49 crore with Bangkok Bank and United Overseas Bank (Thai) and withdrew Tk 5.58 crore.

Investigators have been able to trace two cash deposits worth about Tk 1.22 crore and four cash withdrawals worth about Tk 2.74 crore from Selim's four accounts with Siam Commercial Bank, United Overseas Bank and Bangkok Bank between October 7, 2013, and October 10, 2016.

On September 14, 2016, KT Corporation deposited about 3.15 crore with Selim's Global Trading and Property Ltd's account at United Overseas Bank as telecommunication consultancy fees.

Selim is the owner and shareholder of seven companies where he has investment of about Tk 10.04 crore.

Bag with fake

FROM PAGE 12

The official, however, did not disclose anything about the youths' appearances or any connection of the incident with any extremist group.

"Both youths are 24-25 years old. They were wearing T-shirts and one of them had a cap on. One had a beard," Sudip Kumar Chakrabarty, deputy commissioner of police (Gulshan division), told this paper.


About the incident, DC Sudip said two vehicles were entering the annex building through the entrance on the opposite side of the embassy around 3:30pm.

"The on-duty security guard saw two youths standing near the gate and wanted to know the reason. One of them was holding a black bag. One was locked into an altercation over why they will not be allowed to stand there. They then threw the bag at the security guard and ran away," he said.

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**Request/Invitation for Expression of Interest
From Construction Firms for Infrastructure Works**

DAI Global, LLC has been engaged with the Fleming Fund country grant project in Bangladesh, to strengthen the National Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Antimicrobial Use (AMU) surveillance system in an integrated way with the One Health approach in the Human Health, Animal Health and Aqua-culture sectors in Bangladesh.

In coordination with relevant govt. authorities and partnership with icddr, CVASU and LSTM, the project is planning to carryout refurbishment/ renovation of three AMR referral laboratories and nine sentinel laboratories throughout Bangladesh. Assessments of these labs indicate that minor to moderate in most sites and extensive refurbishments in couple of sites will be required. The potential and/or successful construction firm that will be contracted, will: a) Carry out the renovation works under a unit price contract through a competitive bidding process; and b) Warranty the works for a period of at least one year from successful handover of the same.

DAI invites eligible construction firms to submit prequalification applications expressing their interest. Upon evaluation of the applications and physical verification of past works done by the construction firms, DAI will prequalify construction firms for submission of the bids (detailed technical and cost proposals) for the said renovation works anticipated to begin in late January or early February, 2021. **Submission Deadline** for responding to this Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) is **20th December 2020**. Interested construction firms are invited to collect the detail REOI document at the earliest by requesting to the email address **BGD_FF_Procurement_In@dai.com**. OR alternatively, the REOI document is available on **www.bdjobs.com** Tender/EOI section.



Notice for IPO Lottery Conduction Program


The management of **ROBI AXIATA LIMITED** expresses its profound gratitude to the esteemed investors for successful completion of subscription of the IPO of the company. Robi takes great pleasure to announce that the application for shares has been oversubscribed by **5.74** times against Public Offering of BDT 3,877,424,000 out of total issue size of BDT 5,237,933,340 (out of total issue BDT 1,360,509,340 from employees of Robi under Employee Share Purchase Plan). The management of Robi also gratefully acknowledges the co-operation and services rendered by Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC), Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), Bangladesh Bank, Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms, Dhaka Stock Exchange Limited (DSE), Chittagong Stock Exchange Limited (CSE), Central Depository Bangladesh Limited (CDBL), underwriters, banker to the issue and issue manager. As per press release dated 16 July, 2020 of Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission, the IPO lottery conduction program of Robi for allotment of shares will be held on **digital platform on Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 10:30 A.M.** Robi cordially invites all the esteemed investors to log in to **robilottery.com** to watch the live lottery program and to participate in the seed collection for conducting the lottery as well.

Company Secretary
Robi Axiatia Limited

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Al-Razi Complex (12th floor), 166-167 Shaheed Syed Nazrul Islam Sarani,
Purana Paltan, Dhaka-1000

NOTICE OF THE 20th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given to all Shareholders' of Global Insurance Limited that the 20th Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders' of the Company will be held on **Saturday, 26th December 2020 at 11:00 a.m.** virtually by using **Digital Platform** through the Link: **http://globalins20th.digitalagmbd.net** to transact the following business:

Agenda:

- To receive, consider and adopt the Directors' Report, the Audited Financial Statements of the Company and the Auditors' Report thereon for the year ended 31st December, 2019.
- To declare Dividend for the year ended 31st December, 2019 as recommended by the Board of Directors'.
- To elect Directors' as per Articles of Association of the Company.
- To approve appointment of Independent Directors.
- To appoint Auditors' for the year 2020 and fix their remuneration.
- To appoint Auditors' for Corporate Governance Compliance Audit for the year 2020 and fix their remuneration.
- To transact any other business with the permission of the Chair.

By Order of the Board of Directors'
Sd/-
Md. Omar Faruk
Company Secretary

Dated, Dhaka
02nd December, 2020

Notes:

- The Record date:** 16th November, 2020. The Shareholders' whose names appeared in the Share Register/Depository Register of the Company on the record date will be entitled to the dividend approved in the AGM.
- Any Shareholder of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the Annual General Meeting may appoint a Proxy to attend and vote on his/her behalf. Proxy form duly filled, signed by the Shareholder and stamped with BDT.20.00 must be submitted through e-mail- **globalins2000@gmail.com** at the Registered Office of the Company at least 48 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.
- The Annual General Meeting is reserved only for the shareholder or his/her Proxy. They are requested to join the meeting with Laptop/Pc/Mobile.
- Pursuant to the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission order No. SEC/SRMIC/94-231/25 dated 08 July, 2020, the AGM will be virtual meeting of the respected shareholders, which will be conducted via live web cast by using digital platform.
- The members will be able to submit their question/ comment electronically 24 hours before the AGM.
- For logging into the system the members need to put their BO ID/ Folio number and other credentials as proof of their identity through the **http://globalins20th.digitalagmbd.net**
- Members are requested to log in to the system well ahead of the meeting at 11:00 a.m. for the AGM on Saturday, 26th December, 2020.
- For any IT related matters for access in the virtual meeting the respected member may contact at 01712651345 and for share related matters at 01712221347.
- The soft copy of Annual Report 2019 will be sent to the e-mail address of the respected shareholder and the same will also be available in the Company's website at **www.globalinsurancebd.com** as per Condition No. 9 (2) of the BSEC/CMRRCD/2006-158/208/Admin/81, dated 20 June 2018.
- Members may also please note that no gift/gift coupon/food box/benefit in cash or kind shall be distributed/paid at the AGM as per BSEC Circular No. SEC/CMRRCD/2009-193/154 dated October 24, 2013.

The 'Birangona' we never knew

S DILIP ROY WITH FIROZ A MUZAHID

It was a Saturday noon in 1971 when Jahiron Bewa's world came tumbling down.

The ordeal that unfolded that day and continued throughout the next three days left a deep-rooted scar in the mind of the 25-year-old woman, now 74.

"I can never forget the unspeakable horror that was unleashed on me. It comes back when I close my eyes. Memories of those days are still vivid," said Jahiron.

All these years, she bottled up the pain to herself and turned away from those who asked about her trauma. "But I won't live much longer and now I think that time has come for me to let everyone know what the war did to me," she said.

The War of Independence was raging on elsewhere at the time and the Pakistan army had just set up a camp near the Teesta railway bridge -- about 500 meters from their village named Teesta Pangatari in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

But until that day, Jahiron had a simple life, revolving around her husband and their two children -- a 10-year-old daughter and a two-year-old son.

She could not remember the exact date. But she remembers clearly that her daughter was visiting her grandfather's house and her husband, Kazim Ullah, was also not home when she saw people fleeing as the Pakistan troops were entering the village.

Jahiron, while nursing her toddler, had to make a quick decision. As she could not think of leaving her loved ones behind for her own safety, she decided to hole up inside the house until her husband and

daughter returned home.

But the Pakistani intruders broke in to the house. Tossing her baby onto the ground, three of them raped her. While they dragged her out of the house, she pleaded to take the baby with her. But her plea could not soften the minds of the soldiers.

They took her to their camp and there they committed brutal sexual and physical assaults on her for three days, reminisced Jahiron with agony in her eyes.

But after she was released from the camp, her husband Kazim refused to take her back. Several days later he retracted from the decision, but Jahiron was never the same person.

Reeling from the trauma, she withdrew herself from everyone around her. She spent most of her days crying and she could not even tend to her breastfeeding child.

Later, Jahiron and Kazim had two more children together, but their relations never healed, she said adding that she had to endure repression and abuse from Kazim until he passed away 20 years ago.

Their children are now all grown up, but they are busy taking care of their own families.

Neglected by the children, the frail elderly woman now survives on old age allowance of the government and a meagre income from working as domestic help.

The government did not yet recognise Jahiron as Birangona (war-heroine) -- the women and girls who had been raped systematically by the Pakistan occupation forces and their collaborators during the Liberation War of Bangladesh.



Illegal selling of birds is rampant on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Debpara bazar area of Habiganj's Nabiganj upazila. Below, Rab in a drive seizes birds from poachers in the upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Illegal sale of birds goes unabated on Dhaka-Sylhet highway

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

Illegal selling of birds are going on unabated on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Habiganj.

During a recent visit to Debpara bazar area in Nabiganj upazila of the district, this correspondent found that the sale of birds was going on rampantly on the highway.

The price of a heron is at Tk 250 while a duck is sold at Tk 400. Apart from that, rare birds are too pricey in the highway area, he added.

Bird hunter Saju Mia said he has been selling birds on the highway



He added that they set traps at 40 spots in Hail Haor and other haor areas this time, poaching birds. Besides, they use airgun to catch birds.

These birds are sold at different rural haats and bazars including Debpara bazar in the highway area, he said.

On October 11, Habiganj's Baniachang Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Masud Rana fined a hunter named Abdul Hamid for poaching birds with a trap in Dali Maholla Haor area near Habiganj-Baniachang road.

Sajen Mia, a resident of the area, said Hamid sets traps near his

house to catch birds. He has been involved in the illegal hunting and sale of birds for long.

The UNO said, he saw the hunter poaching birds with traps while passing through the road on October 11. He then seized 15 birds from Hamid. The poacher was fined at Tk 1,000. He later released the birds.

Major Ahmed Noman Zaki, camp commander of Rab-9 Srimangal Camp, said a team of elite force, on secret information, raided Nabiganj area on Dhaka-Sylhet highway on September 18 last year and recovered birds.

They also arrested five bird

poachers from the area, he said.

The hunters poached the birds in haor and then brought them to the highway for sale, said the Rab official, adding that they also arrested four bird poachers from the highway at Debpara bazar on October 13.

A mobile court later fined the four arrestees, said Assistant Commissioner (land) Sumaiya Momin in Nabiganj.

She added that all the rescued 21 birds were white herons. The herons were being sold at high prices. The herons were later released into the open sky.

If anybody is found poaching and selling birds illegally in the areas, punitive action will be taken against them, said Sumaiya.

Dr Jahirul Hoque Shakil, a prominent professor of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology and a life member of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), said according to the Wildlife Conservation and Security Act, hunting and killing of any kind of birds is a punishable offence.

"I think that the illegal act goes unabated in the Sylhet division and other parts of the country due to lack of awareness and proper execution of the law," he said.



Jahiron Bewa -- the unrecognised Birangona of Teesta Pangatari village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Superintending Engineer, RHD
Road Circle, Patuakhali
Phone, Fax No. 0441-64457, 0441-65114
E-mail: se.rhdpatuakhali@gmail.com

Memo No. 35.01.7895.193.07.001.20-1076 Date: 01.12.2020

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concerned that the following tender have been published through e-GP Portal.

Sl. No.	Tender ID & Package No.	Name of works	Last selling, closing date & time
01.	518853 & 01/e-GP/PRC/BRD/Supply/2020-2021	1st Class Bricks, Stone Chips, Coarse Sand, OPC Cement & Asphalt Materials Supply for Departmental maintenance work at Different Roads of Barguna Road Sub-Division under Barguna Road Division during the year 2020-2021.	21-12-2020 at 17.00 & 22-12-2020 at 12.30

The interested persons/firms may visit the website www.eprocure.gov.bd to get the details of the tender. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Abu Sayeed Md. Nazmul Huda
ID. No. 005201
Superintending Engineer, RHD
Road Circle, Patuakhali

GD-1921

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Project Director
Establishment of 100 Technical School and College (TSC) in Upazila
Directorate of Technical Education
Agargaon, Dhaka 1207
Web: www.techedu.gov.bd

Ref. No. 37.03.0000.070.007.203.020.447 Date: 01 December, 2020

e-Re-Tender Notice

Sl. No.	Tender Ref.	Tender ID No. (From e-GP Portal)	Tender description	Publication date and time	Opening date and time
1	37.03.0000.070.007.203.020.446-Date: 29.11.2020	515709	Supply and Installation of Computer Lab Equipments for 25 Technical School and College at Different Upazilas	03-Dec-2020	20-Dec-2020

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender please register on e-GP System (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders.

(Signature)
01.12.2020
Dr. Md. Sirajul Islam
Project Director (Joint Secretary)
Email: 100ts.pd@gmail.com

GD-1920

3 workers die from electrocution in Oman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Three Bangladeshi workers, including two siblings, have died from electrocution while fixing a water pump in Oman on Tuesday.

The deceased are Mohammad Mostafa, 50, and Nur Hossain Nasir, 40, sons of Haji Fakhrul Islam of Satashdron village in Subarnachar upazila, and Alamgir Hossain, 35, son of Bahar Uddin of Miarhat area in the same upazila, one of Mostafa's relatives Zia Uddin Farooq said, adding that the incident occurred 8:00am local time.

Farooq said Mostafa went to Oman about 20 years ago.


Five years later his younger brother Nasir also followed him to the Middle East country and joined his Mostafa at the same company as an electrician.

Alamgir, who joined the same company in Oman about six years back, was staying together with the two siblings in the city of Al Wafa.

On Tuesday morning, Alamgir first entered into a deep-well for carrying out installation works of a water pump while Mustafa followed him later on.

Failing to get any response from the duo for long, Nasir also went inside the deep well and came in contact with live electricity.

Being informed by the co-workers, a firefighting unit rushed to the spot and recovered their bodies.



শেলটেক SHELTECH Since 1988

SHELTECH WINTER FESTIVAL 2020

1st - 31st December

Time: 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Venue: Sheltech Tower, 55, West Panthapath, Dhaka - 1205.

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*Conditions Apply

For More Details..

16550

Health safety precautions are rigorously maintained at our premises.

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DEMOCRACY PROTESTS IN HONG KONG

3 leading young activists jailed

AFP, Hong Kong

Leading Hong Kong dissident Joshua Wong was jailed alongside two other young activists yesterday for taking part in last year's huge democracy protests as the crackdown on Beijing's critics gathers pace.

Wong was prosecuted alongside close friends and fellow campaigners Ivan Lam and Agnes Chow over a rally outside the police headquarters.

"It's not the end of the fight," the 24-year-old said on Twitter in a message conveyed by lawyers shortly after his sentencing. "We're now joining the battle in prison along with many brave protestors, less visible yet essential in the fight for democracy and freedom for (Hong Kong)," he added.

The trio -- some of the city's most visible and vocal critics of Beijing's rule -- pleaded guilty to inciting an unlawful assembly and other charges.

Magistrate Wong Sze-lai said prison was "the only appropriate option" for a protest that besieged the police headquarters as she handed Wong a 13.5 months sentence. Chow, who turns 24 today and burst in tears in court, received 10 months. Lam got seven months.

Hong Kong was convulsed by seven straight months of huge and often violent rallies last year in which millions took to the streets.

Beijing has refused demands for universal suffrage and authorities have pursued democracy supporters with criminal cases and a tough new security law.

The tactics have stifled the movement and restored a semblance of calm.

But the finance hub remains deeply polarised with many still seething against Beijing's growing hold on the semi-autonomous city.



People pay their respects at the site where a car crashed into pedestrians in Trier, yesterday. Five people including a nine-week-old baby were killed and up to 15 injured on Tuesday when a speeding car ploughed into a pedestrian area in the western German city of Trier. Prosecutor Peter Fritzen later told a news conference the suspect had drunk a significant amount of alcohol, and authorities were not working on the assumption that there was any Islamist militant motive to the incident. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel's coalition government inches towards collapse

Israel's precarious coalition government was set to move closer towards collapse yesterday with lawmakers expected to approve a preliminary measure to dissolve parliament, raising prospects of elections next year. In a primetime televised address on Tuesday, Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz, the key coalition partner of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said his centrist Blue and White party would back a bill to dissolve the Knesset, Israel's parliament. But the parliamentary vote on an opposition proposal marks only a first step. A bill to dissolve the Knesset will require three additional successful readings before new elections must be called.

Japan residents to get free Covid-19 vaccine

Japan will give free coronavirus vaccines to all of its residents under a bill passed yesterday, as the nation battles record numbers of daily cases. The country has secured Covid-19 vaccines for 60 million people from pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, and for a further 25 million people from biotech firm Moderna. It has also confirmed it will receive 120 million doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine. Japan has seen a comparatively small Covid-19 outbreak overall, with around 2,100 deaths and 150,000 cases, and has not imposed the strict lockdowns seen elsewhere.

New Zealand's Ardern declares 'climate emergency'



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern declared a "climate emergency" yesterday, telling parliament that urgent action was needed for the sake of future generations. Lawmakers passed the largely symbolic emergency declaration by 76 votes to 43 after Ardern urged them to back the move. Britain's parliament became the first in the world to declare a climate emergency, passing the motion in May last year, followed closely by more than a dozen nations. Ardern last year committed New Zealand to become carbon neutral by 2050 and to generate all its energy from renewable sources by 2035.

Israel sends Palestinians over \$1b in withheld funds

Israel has released more than \$1 billion in funds withheld from the Palestinian Authority, a Palestinian minister said yesterday, weeks after coordination was renewed between the two sides. In May, the Palestinians stopped coordination with Israel, with PA leader Mahmud Abbas saying it was in response to Israeli plans to annex parts of the West Bank.

SOURCE: AFP, DAWN

No proof of decisive voter fraud

Says US attorney general on presidential polls; Trump remains defiant

AFP, Washington

The US attorney general rejected Republican claims of significant voter fraud in the presidential election on Tuesday, adding to the pressure on President Donald Trump to give up his quixotic effort to overturn Joe Biden's clear victory.

Bill Barr's comments confirmed the conclusions of the Department of Homeland Security, US intelligence and independent poll watchers that the 2020 election was, in the language of government officials, the "most secure in American history."

"To date, we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election," he told the Associated Press.

Barr's interview came as Trump persisted in claiming, without evidence, that fraudulent voting practices and systems in key states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania and Georgia had robbed him of a second term.

In tweets Tuesday afternoon, Trump highlighted testimony being offered

in a public hearing on the election in Michigan, which has already certified Biden's win in the state, and a separate Republican-organized event in Virginia. "People are coming forward like never before. Large truck carrying hundreds of thousands of fraudulent



(FAKE) ballots to a voting center? TERRIBLE - SAVE AMERICA!" he wrote.

In several legal filings -- all rejected by the courts -- the Trump campaign has sought to invalidate millions of votes for Biden based on claims that lacked any evidence.

According to official vote tallies, Biden earned 6.2 million more votes than Trump and captured 306 state-by-

state Electoral College votes, well above the 270 needed to win the presidency.

But Trump's campaign has strived to delay the popular vote tally from being finalized before the Electoral College meets on December 14 to certify the election winner.

His attorneys, led by Rudy Giuliani, have made numerous allegations ranging from ballot-box stuffing and fake ballot printing, to thousands of dead people having voted, to vote-counting machines being programmed to favor Biden.

Separately on Tuesday, staunch Trump supporter and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell gave his clearest acknowledgment yet that Biden would move into the White House next month. Discussing stalled negotiations over a stimulus package to jump-start the virus-battered US economy, McConnell said: "There's likely to be a discussion about some additional package of some size depending on what the new administration wants to pursue."

WHO recommends masks indoors if ventilation poor

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization yesterday recommended wearing facemasks when indoors with other people, if the ventilation has been deemed inadequate, in an update to its Covid-19 guidance on masks.

The new recommendations apply in areas of known or suspected cluster or community transmission of the new coronavirus.

"WHO advises that the general public should wear a non-medical mask in indoor (eg shops, shared workplaces, schools) or outdoor settings where physical distancing of at least one metre cannot be maintained," the new guidance says.

"If indoors, unless ventilation has been assessed to be adequate, WHO advises that the general public should wear a non-medical mask, regardless of whether physical distancing of at least one metre can be maintained."

The UN health agency also urged people not to wear masks during vigorous physical activity, and not to use masks with valves, saying they bypassed the filtration function of the facemask.

In its fourth update on mask guidance during the pandemic -- the last was in August -- the WHO called for wider use in healthcare settings, especially in areas plagued by infection clusters or community transmission.

In such cases, the WHO recommended "universal masking for all persons (staff, patients, visitors, service providers and others) within the health facility (including primary, secondary and tertiary care levels; outpatient care; and long-term care facilities)".

It also called for the wearing of masks by inpatients when physical distancing of at least one metre cannot be maintained or when patients were outside of their care areas.



Thai PM wins legal battle to stay in office

AFP, Bangkok

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, under pressure from months of street protests, yesterday survived a legal challenge over his living arrangements that could have seen him thrown out of office.

The kingdom's nine-member constitutional court ruled that Prayut was not guilty of conflict of interest by living in an army residence after leaving the military.

"The status of General Prayut Chan-O-Cha as prime minister and defence minister remains unchanged," the head judge said.

The court ruled that Prayut's status as prime minister entitled him to live in the house even though he stepped down as army chief in 2014.

The ruling, though widely expected, is likely to inflame the protest movement that has shaken Thailand since July calling for Prayut, who came to power in a coup, to quit.

As the judgment was read out, pro-democracy protesters massed for a fresh rally at a major intersection in northern Bangkok.

The judge said the military had changed the status of the residence from an army house to an guest house in 2012 "so technically, the defendant's no longer living inside an army house".

The main opposition party Pheu Thai brought the legal challenge, which if it had succeeded would have forced Prayut and his cabinet out of office.

CHT still plagued by myriad ills

FROM PAGE 1

Samiti (PCJSS Santu Larma faction), PCJSS (MN Larma faction), United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and UPDF (democratic).

According to law enforcement officials and intelligence agencies, hundreds of armed youths working for the factions of the two main parties -- PCJSS and UPDF -- are responsible for crimes like killings, extortion and abduction in the three hilly districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban.

An attack on a member of one group is met with retaliation from the rival faction with no one ever claiming responsibility, said locals and intelligence agencies.

This violence has put the lives of 16 lakh people of the CHT -- comprising 13,189sq km and home to 11 ethnic communities -- in danger.

Rangamati district Superintendent of Police (SP) Md Alamgir Kabir said the problem with prosecuting these crimes -- murder, abduction or extortion -- is that there are no witnesses.

"The conviction rate is hardly satisfactory because of the lack of

witnesses. They are always afraid to testify," he said.

He said the hilly terrain was a barrier since some of the witnesses would have to come forward from remote areas of Rangamati.

"Language barrier is another problem. But the main problem is fear of reprisal," he said, adding that locals are scared of saying anything on record about extortion and atrocities of the political cadres.

"On the surface the hill tracts would seem to be peaceful and you will never see extortion up front since everything is done through mobile money transactions," said a Chakma businessman at Shuvolong Bazar.

He said if anyone disclosed details of the transactions, they would surely face serious reprisals.

According to intelligence sources, the hill districts generate about Tk 300-400 crores in extortion yearly.

They said from January 2019 to September 2020, a total of 105 extortionists were arrested by law enforcement agencies and more than Tk 40 lakh was recovered.

"They change their methods

frequently, which makes it difficult to trace them. Now they carry out online transactions, which are even harder to trace. A cyber-crime unit of police is working here to monitor them," SP Kabir said.

Former state minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Dipankar Talukdar said the four armed groups are basically the "extortionists".

"The negative attitude of the PCJSS are the barrier for implementation of the peace accord treaty. Armed groups have to surrender the illegal arms to smoothen the implementation of the peace accord," he told The Daily Star.

Contacted, Rangamati Deputy Commissioner (DC) AKM Mamunur Rashid said intra-party conflicts of the regional groups to establish supremacy is the reason for killings and extortion in the hilly areas.

This correspondent tried to contact PCJSS and UPDF for their comments but could not reach any of their members. An e-mail was sent to PCJSS, but there was no reply.

The peace accord was signed on December 2, 1997 between the PCJSS and the Bangladesh government.

People like PK Halder

FROM PAGE 1

The bench asked the Anti-Corruption Commission and the government to submit the documents relevant to the issuance of an arrest warrant for Halder by a lower court, confiscating his assets and cases filed against him before the HC by December 9.

The court also fixed December 9 for holding further hearing and passing an order on this issue.

During yesterday's hearing, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told the bench that the commission has applied to Interpol through the home ministry to arrest Halder.

The Interpol has sought a court order on issuing the arrest warrant against Halder and accordingly the ACC has applied to a senior special judge's court in Dhaka to issue an arrest warrant against Halder, he said, adding that the ACC is yet to receive the order of arrest warrant from the Dhaka court.

The lawyer added that the authorities concerned have confiscated 53 bank accounts and unmovable properties worth Tk 43 crore of Halder.

Issuing the suomuto rule, the HC bench on November 18 wanted to know what steps have been taken to arrest Halder, who fled the country after allegedly siphoning around Tk

10,200 crore from some non-banking financial institutions, and to bring him back to the country.

The court ordered the authorities concerned of the government and the ACC to explain in 10 days the steps taken to arrest and bring Halder back home.

In the rule, the court also asked the authorities to show causes as to why their inaction and failure in arresting and bringing Halder back home should not be declared illegal.

On October 21 this year, another HC bench directed the law enforcement authorities to arrest Halder immediately after his return home.

According to Canadian media reports, Halder is now staying in Toronto. He is director of P&L Hal Holding Inc, a Canadian corporation.

The three other NBFI's from which Halder allegedly embezzled crores of Taka are People's Leasing and Financial Services, FAS Finance and Investment, and Bangladesh Industrial Finance Company.

In an investigation, the central bank found that Tk 1,596 crore was transferred from ILSL in violation of the rules through 48 accounts of various organisations related to the directors and shareholders of the firm,

according to BB officials.

Halder came to the limelight during the anti-casino drives last year. The ACC opened investigation into the involvement of 43 people, including Halder, in the illegal casino business.

The government issued a travel ban on him on October 3 last year. He managed to flee the country. The ACC on January 8 this year filed a case against Halder on charges of illegally amassing wealth worth Tk 275 crore.

Following a petition filed by two depositors, the HC on January 21 directed the Bangladesh Bank and all private banks to freeze the accounts of Halder, his five relatives, Bank Asia's former managing director Erfanuddin Ahmed and Halder's aide Uzzal Kumar Nondi for allegedly misappropriating funds.

The HC ordered the government to seize the passports of 20 people, including Halder, his wife Susmita Saha and his brother Pritish Kumar Halder.

The court also directed the authorities not to allow transfer ownership of any of their movable and immovable properties, including stock, cash and cars, to any persons or entities until the disposal of the case.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Development Bank (BDBL) featuring a list of 18 items under the heading 'বন্ধকী সম্পত্তির নিলাম বিক্রয় বিজ্ঞপ্তি'. The items include various types of loans and assets for sale, such as agricultural land, residential plots, and commercial properties, with details on interest rates and terms of sale.

THE BOOK REPORT

'Saogat' magazine and the gift of critical thought

EMRAN MAHFUZ, TRANSLATED BY SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Bengal was rife with the struggle for identity and socio-political upheaval, particularly in the Bengali Muslim communities. The tensions inspired magazines and periodicals devoted to intellectual thinking—in the months between April and June of 1819, the monthly *Digadarshan*, the weekly *Shamachardarpan* and *Bengal Gazette*, and the quarterly *Bangiyo Musalman Shahitya Patrika* were first published, all written in Bangla. It was against this backdrop that *Saogat* came out on December 2, 1819, conceived by the visionary journalist and editor, Mohammad Nasiruddin.

From Chandpur to Kolkata: An Origin Story Nasiruddin began working from a young age—first as a betel nut trader, then as a ticket collector at a rail station, and finally as an insurance officer. Yet his heart remained in the realm of literature. He nursed an urge to act against society's prejudices and ignorance, and knew that publishing a newspaper from within the Muslim society would help create a breathing space for progressive discourse. In 1917, he left Chandpur for Kolkata to turn this vision into reality.

But the Muslim individuals to whom he proposed his idea balked at the prospect. None were keen on bringing out a publication that would contain art and fiction like the magazines printed by Hindus. Nasiruddin persevered, travelling back and forth between Chandpur and Kolkata, until finally he came across barrister Abdul Rasul, who became a stalwart supporter.

The first November-December issue of *Saogat*, an illustrated literary magazine, came out in the Bengali year of 1325 in Kolkata, and as its editor, publisher, and founder, Mohammad Nasiruddin changed the nature of intellectual discourse in Bengal. The first issue contained pieces by Jaldhar Sen, Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, Satyendranath Datta, and Mankumari Basu. Begum Rokeya wrote her poem "Saogat" under the pseudonym of RS Hossain.

Through *Saogat*, Nasiruddin advocated for the education of Muslim, Hindu, Brahmin, and Christian girls and women, who had long suffered under patriarchal social codes. The magazine would become a pioneer in publishing images of Muslim women on print—an unthinkable act at the time. Soon, writers like Kazi Nazrul Islam, Begum Rokeya, Abul Mansur Ahmad, Shamsunnahar Mahmud,



PHOTOS: BANGLADESH ON RECORD

Sufia Kamal, and many others were engaged in this project of generating liberal discussion and dissent in the Bengali Muslim community. Beyond just a print platform, *Saogat* became a stage for the cultivation of the arts, and a space where new and veteran writers gathered for the quintessential Bengali knack for *adda*.

The Dhaka Chapter

1947. An atmosphere of chaos and strife. Bengal was now divided, and religious fanaticism triumphantly rode the air. Hailing from East Bengal, Nasiruddin found it strenuous to continue working in Kolkata in such an environment. In 1950, he returned to Patuakhali.

Two years later, in the middle of 1952, Dhaka was pulsating with the spirit of the language movement. *Saogat* had become defunct by then. When a group of young writers led by Hasan Hafizur Rahman met up with Nasiruddin, insisting that the magazine could pave the way for critical thinking in Dhaka in the way that it had in Kolkata, the journalist found himself, once again, inspired. *Saogat's* first issue in Dhaka came out in November-December of 1953. Unfortunately, it failed to recreate the impact seen in Kolkata, and paled against the popularity of Nasiruddin's second brainchild, the *Begum* magazine.

A Force against the Current

By virtue of its stance on freedom of thought and speech, *Saogat* consistently attracted criticism from the conservative factions of society. Nasiruddin was branded anti-Islamic

and a Kafir, among other labels. But the editor refused to relent. In *Shougat O Amar Jibonkotha* (Protichinta publishers), he wrote, "My personal life doesn't hold anything remarkable. Whatever I have accomplished, everything is indebted to *Saogat*. I was born in a very ordinary household. I published *Saogat* by the sheer strength of my own perseverance and character."

Between 1793 and 1828, a law relating to non-taxable property was enacted, which spelt losses for both Hindus and Muslims. One of the reasons as to why the Muslims lagged behind was their distaste towards the English language, which replaced Persian not long after in 1835. Muslims abhorred the British rule and as a result, unlike the Hindus, were unable to secure better government jobs.

Many individuals and organisations worked tirelessly to fight this status-quo. Platforms like the *Bongiyo Muslim Shahitya Potrika* (Muslim Bengali Literary Paper), the Muslim Literary Society of 1926, and the Bengali Muslim Renaissance Society of 1942 played significant roles. Organisations like *Saogat* and *Shikha* heralded readers towards progress amidst the tug of war between Bengali Muslim nationalism and Brahminism, which was strangling people's freedom of thought. For sowing the seeds of such pioneering thought and practice, *Saogat* and its like have left us with an enduring debt.

Emran Mahfuz is a poet, writer, and researcher. Shah Tazrian Ashrafi is a contributor

BOOK REVIEW: NON-FICTION

Dissent through the Ages in the Indian Subcontinent

ISHRAT JAHAN AND SELIMA SARA KABIR

Eminent scholar and Emeritus Professor of History at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Romila Thapar, in her latest book, *Voices of Dissent* (Seagull Books, 2020), explores important perspectives on dissent located in the historical and contemporary context of the Indian subcontinent.

Dissent—and thereby the freedom to say what one wants to say—as a basic right has become uncommon with the rise of populist powers and the shrinking of civic spaces. Over this time, in the long and complicated history of the subcontinent, the forms of dissent have evolved accordingly. Professor Thapar's book traces "the larger historical context of the manifestations of dissent in various forms at distinctive times in the Indian past. The latter part of the essay is an attempt not only to relate the past to the present but also to suggest that some forms of dissent are continuities from the past." In the first few chapters, the book sketches out dissent as it has played out in the religious landscape through key periods in ancient and medieval India. In the next sections, Professor Thapar focuses on anti-colonial dissent, and finally into current day India, exploring the sort of criticism of the government that is now labelled "anti-national".

Thapar cites examples of dissent from pre-colonial times to contradict the rising theory that dissent is a borrowed Western concept. By documenting both violent and non-violent examples from the Maurya, Gupta, and Mughal periods, she confronts us with the idea that dissent is an inevitability. And there are always simple, inclusive ways to respond.

Our current systems, however, do not recognise all groups as equal. Those in authority demarcate boundaries between the 'self' and an 'other', and this breeds biases, it shapes how we personally and socially view these boundaries that are constructed more from fear, rather than knowledge, of the "other".

The book points out that history has always served the function of justifying the present. This is usually done by the people in power who push certain values and

ideologies onto our pasts and place the past on a pedestal, all to make history fit their policies. Thapar draws on her own knowledge as a historian as well as well-accepted sociological theory to establish this position. She expertly locates her own biases and circumstances to give us a clear idea of her arguments. "To ignore the contribution of dissenting ideas to [...] reformations [...] is to ignore the impressive presence of dissent in assessing the cultivation of religion in India and in the underpinning of many social forms," she writes.

What makes this book of interest to us living in Bangladesh is the fact that it



COLLAGE: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

traces the history of dissent from before the subcontinent was divided. This history, therefore, is not just Indian; it is our shared history.

One should not expect to find an easy solution to issues of dissent as they are today in this book. Instead, books like *Voices of Dissent* serve the purpose of making systematic problems and challenges more visible. They seek to guide readers towards an understanding of where the roots of our present pains and injustices lie, so that we can go on to find sustainable and effective ways to respond.

Ishrat Jahan and Selima Sara Kabir are early stage researchers who write in their spare time.

INTERVIEW

Romila Thapar on Why Dissent is Inevitable

ISHRAT JAHAN AND SELIMA SARA KABIR



In an interview with Daily Star Books, historian and author Romila Thapar expands on her arguments in *Voices of Dissent*. She discusses how dissent has evolved through time in the Indian subcontinent, how multi-voiced communities can coexist, and reading material that

offers a deeper understanding of dissent in region.

Read the interview online, on The Daily Star website, on fb.com/DailyStarBooks, @thedailystarbooks on Instagram, and @DailyStarBooks on Twitter.

THE SHELF

Reading into Disability: A List

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY 2020

STAR BOOKS DESK

Notions of "able" bodies and "differently abled" bodies are subjective categories that we, as a society, have drawn across our communities. The books in this list offer stories and insight into how one can better understand the experiences of persons with disabilities, and how the world can create a more inclusive environment.



DISABILITY VISIBILITY: FIRST PERSON STORIES FROM THE 21ST CENTURY (Vintage Books, 2020) Alice Wong Non-Fiction

A series of personal essays by authors, artists, activists, lawyers, and politicians with disability explores the modern day experience of disability through the lens of identity, pop culture, theatre, and social prejudices.

WHAT CAN A BODY DO? HOW WE MEET THE BUILT WORLD (Riverhead Books, 2020) Sara Hendren Non-Fiction

In anecdotes drawn from working with people with disability, Sara Hendren describes how simple things like chairs, kitchens, street signs, and other elements of infrastructure can make sure that the world fits its inhabitants, instead of the other way around. Hendren points out cheap and sustainable models for such an endeavour, and offers critical insight into how the very definitions of normalcy that we depend on are subjective.

What Can a Body Do? How We Meet the Built World Sara Hendren

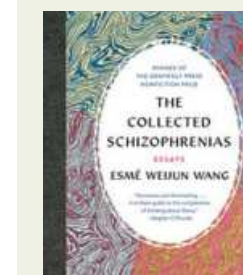


UNBROKEN: 13 STORIES STARRING DISABLED TEENS (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2018) Marieke Nijkamp Fiction

Twelve authors with disability write stories of friendship, love, war, travel, and more in this fiction anthology, all catered towards a young adult audience. The characters in each story reflect the author's respective experiences with physical or neuro-diverse disability.

THE COLLECTED SCHIZOPHRENIAS (Gray Wolf Press, 2019) Esmé Weijun Wang Non-Fiction

Wang's essays—intimate in tone and scope—combine her sharp analysis with a personal experience of being diagnosed with schizophrenia. She discusses the medical community's struggles while labelling an illness, the limitations of institutions and higher education in dealing with PTSD and Lyme's disease, and her own jarring episodes with hallucinations. The book delves deep into the author's own psyche, and in the process offers readers a deeper understanding of the experience of mental conditions.



BODYMAP (Mawenzi House Publishers, 2015) Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha Poetry

The six sections of this poetry collection explore ableism, cultural imperialism, and anti-capitalism filtered through the lens of queer people of colour with disability. The Sri Lankan poet devotes an entire chapter, "Crip World", to how society perceives mental illness and other forms of physical disability, and the injustices that become embedded in the social fabric because of repressed prejudices.

Drug trade continues unabated

The police must step up their efforts

LARGE volumes of yaba have been pouring into the country via Teknaf, and the anti-narcotics drive in that area is said to have lost its teeth since the death of Maj (ret'd) Sinha in police firing on July 31. Seizures of the pink pills declined by almost half in the months of August and September compared to that in the two months before the Sinha killing. According to a report in this daily, this slump is a combined result of police transfers—an entire batch of Cox's Bazar district police, including the superintendent of police, was replaced—and frustrations in the local police force for "taking the blame".

While the anonymous police officials who spoke to *The Daily Star* are right to point out that many members of other forces and agencies dealing with narcotics in Teknaf have also made financial gains from the illegal trade, it is not possible to brush aside the floodgate of allegations against the police force that have surfaced in the wake of the Sinha killing either. The frustrations felt by subordinate officers, while they may be genuine, seem like little cause for failing to do their duty—the volume of the drug trade is currently so high that yaba prices have dropped significantly, not just in Teknaf and surrounding areas, but in the capital as well.

It is of great concern when the local police, who have in the past been behind the seizures of large consignments of yaba in Cox's Bazar and Chattogram, fail to recover any drugs in August and September, when in the same period, Rab officials are able to discover and confiscate significant consignments of yaba in the same areas. In fact, the DS report detailed that no policemen were even seen at the four entry checkpoints in Chattogram city for around 20 days from August 1, and that no anti-drugs activities by police were noticed in Cox's Bazaar since August. What does this say about the sincerity of our police officials, and how will this indifferent attitude help to salvage the bad reputation that the police have earned after the extrajudicial killing of Sinha?

Our police force must remember that their responsibility is to serve the people of Bangladesh, not to serve their own interests. We urge them to not shun their responsibilities, since confiscating drugs at the point of entry are a crucial part of stopping this trade. At the same time, the government also must take a more holistic approach to the scourge of drugs in Bangladesh, and ensure that the trade of drugs, and the finance behind it, are cut off at the source.

NRCC should take the lead in saving our rivers

It should coordinate and monitor the actions taken by other agencies concerned

IT is most unfortunate that different powerful quarters, including politicians and lawmakers, have been continuously grabbing our rivers and waterbodies despite several directives given by the High Court and demand by environmentalists as well as the common people of the country to save them. Reportedly, a bridge was built on Dhaleshwari river in Savar recently which is harming the river, as huge sediments are accumulating on both sides of the riverbank because of road construction on both sides of the bridge. This has also created scope for land grabbing by unscrupulous people. On December 1, *The Daily Star* reported how a ruling party MP filled up more than 54 acres from the Buriganga river and wetland to construct a power plant and a private economic zone in Basila, creating obstacles to the water flow of the river, which is a clear violation of the Water Act. A probe led by the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) revealed these illegal activities. The commission's chairman also said recently that no structure can be set up on land along rivers and if anyone tries to harm the rivers, they will take strict action.

While it is reassuring to see the NRCC's determination in saving our rivers from powerful grabbers, the fact is that the commission alone cannot do it if other government agencies do not take responsibility and play their part. All the government agencies concerned, including the BIWTA and Bangladesh Water Development Board, should work together and the NRCC should take the lead role in coordinating and monitoring their work. The commission should not only make recommendations but should also have the power to take action against the grabbers. Moreover, they should demarcate all our rivers with help from other authorities concerned.

In 2009, the High Court gave a landmark verdict and put in details the measures that should be taken to recover our ailing rivers from land grabbers and save them from pollution. It gave directives to measure the river areas based on the Cadastral Survey (CS) record. In 2019, the High Court declared the National River Conservation Commission the legal guardian of all the rivers of the country and ordered the government to amend the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) law and incorporate stringent provisions for imprisonment and hefty fines for the offence of river grabbing and to effectively empower the NRCC. Sadly, we are yet to implement the court directives in this regard.

Nevertheless, we believe that with proper plans and policies in place and coordination from all the authorities concerned, the NRCC can, in fact, play the role of the guardian of our rivers and save them from grabbers and polluters.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

'People should judge our ability not disability'

Monsur Ahmed Chowdhury, *Founder Trustee, Impact Foundation Bangladesh, and Member, Executive Board, Disability Council International, talks to The Daily Star's Naznin Tithi about how to ensure an inclusive environment and society for persons with disabilities.*

What are the major challenges that persons with disabilities have to commonly face in our society? Have we made any progress over the years in ensuring their rights and entitlements?

Persons with disabilities still face serious discrimination in all spheres of their lives despite the fact that we have laws to protect their rights. The major challenges that they face can be broadly categorised as: lack of access to education, healthcare services and public transport and lack of opportunity for employment. Besides, there are many social challenges that they face.

In terms of ensuring the educational rights of the students with disabilities, the attitude of the school authorities is still not very positive. For instance, when students with disabilities want to take admission in a regular school, the school authorities do not really encourage them, rather they cite many problems to discourage them. Often, guardians of other students do not want their children to attend schools with students who have any disability.

Access to public transport is also a big challenge for persons with disabilities. There is very limited scope for, say, wheelchair users to travel comfortably by bus, train or water transport. Although a visually-impaired person can travel by a bus or train, the drivers and helpers are not well trained or conversant to deal with them.

The same thing happens when someone with a disability goes to a hospital to seek treatment. There is no separate counter or desk to attend to a disabled patient in most hospitals. It is still very difficult for a vision or hearing-impaired patient to communicate with the attending nurses or doctors.

However, there have been some developments in creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities. For example, Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN) under Bangladesh Employers Federation had arranged job fairs in Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong for people with disabilities before the pandemic. Many job seekers who attended the fairs got jobs in garments and other industries under the initiative. However, many of them already lost their jobs amid the pandemic. I think, we have to motivate the employers and those working in the HR departments of big companies to promote inclusion of physically and mentally challenged persons at workplaces.

We have many policy frameworks to ensure an inclusive environment for the persons with disabilities. Are these policies really helping them to get their



Monsur Ahmed Chowdhury.

rights ensured? What is the situation on the ground?

Yes, we have ample laws to ensure the rights of people with disabilities. Unfortunately, most of them remain on paper only. Bangladesh has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and also enacted Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act 2013. But there is a serious lack of initiative for implementation of the Act. The Act has provisions for two national level committees—the coordination committee, which is headed by the social welfare minister and the executive committee, headed by the secretary of the ministry of social welfare. Under the Act, there are a large number of districts, upazilas as well as municipal committees. But due to a lack of budgetary allocation as well as a lack of manpower at the field level, most of these committees do not even meet once a year at the national or at the field level. The national committees are responsible for coordinating and monitoring different action plans and programmes concerning persons with disabilities of different ministries and government agencies. However, there are also exceptions. For instance, the government's ICT division has taken an initiative for training persons with disabilities on ICT as well as employing

them within their division through the Bangladesh Computer Council.

What should be our approach in ensuring that persons with disabilities are not left behind, which is the commitment of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030?

Apart from legal provisions, to ensure equal opportunities and rights for persons with disabilities, there must be strong commitment by the political leadership and policymakers. In addition, there must be adequate financial allocation in our national budget to enable every ministry or division to initiate inclusive programmes for them in the annual development plan. It may be mentioned here that a national action plan in this regard (in line with the spirit and principles of SDGs, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act 2013) was approved by the government last year, which should now be implemented.

Can children with disabilities go to the same schools with other children?

Children with disabilities are legally allowed to attend the same school with the regular students at the primary, secondary, higher secondary and at the university level in Bangladesh. The problem is the attitude of the educational institutions—

whether they are ready to accept a disabled student. Furthermore, in some institutions, there may be problem of accessibility in terms of using the classroom or toilet. It may be mentioned here that because of the personal commitment of our prime minister, the visually impaired students in all classes, from pre-primary to class 9, are getting brail books from National Curriculum and Textbook Board every year, starting from 2017. However, there is very limited scope for education for hearing-impaired students or students with other disabilities at the secondary level. It is also highly appreciable that the government is supporting all students with disabilities from primary to the university level with a monthly stipend to partly support their educational expenses.

Would you please share with us how you have learned to live with the particular type of disability that you have?

I lost my sight at a very young age but learned to live with my disability as I got tremendous encouragement and support from my late parents, members of the family, teachers as well as my friends while I studied in Dhaka college from 1966 to 1968 and in Dhaka University from 1968 to 1974. It should be mentioned here that I have carried forward my activities with confidence, commitment and professionalism. I have been working to promote, protect and support persons with disabilities for more than four decades at home and at the international level. I faced challenges, barriers and sometimes rude and harsh attitude by people who failed to understand the difficulties that I went through. People should judge our ability, not disability.

Tell us about your experience of working with people with disabilities in the remote areas.

My experience in dealing with persons with disabilities in rural Bangladesh is very rewarding. They are very keen to live with dignity and self-respect. But it is most difficult to live a life with dignity if there is no support from the family and community. The ignorance, indifferent attitude, negative reaction from parents, social stigma, etc., are, in my consideration, the major barriers for a person with disability to develop with confidence. It is also sad to observe that sometimes family members deprive the disabled member of the family from their legal right of inheritance of property, assets, etc. Women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and deprived of their due share of property. This must change.

What JPG's Child Survival Revolution can teach us about dealing with Covid-19

SHARMIN AHMED

We seem to know more about the bad things and people in the world than we do the good. Perhaps there are too many bad things and people. But it is in times like this that it is all the more important to remember people like James P Grant (JPG) and his "child survival revolution (CSR)" that probably saved more lives than were destroyed by Hitler, Mao, and Stalin combined.

James P Grant as the executive director of Unicef from 1979 to 1995 almost single-handedly launched the child survival revolution promoting vaccinations and diarrhoea treatments across the world. The significance of his approach was not in any ground-breaking invention but in his leadership; in mobilising people, resources, and leaders and to bring about positive change in the world for children to survive. Here's how he did it and how we can apply them actionably in these times:

i) Synergy: Grant grasped early on that it was the synergy that came through a package of interventions that would allow children to survive. So CSR was the concept of GOBI which later became GOBI-FFF:

G for growth monitoring to detect undernutrition in small children.

O for oral rehydration therapy (ORT) to treat childhood diarrhoea.

B to encourage breastfeeding.

F for immunisation against the six basic childhood diseases; tuberculosis, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, and measles.

And three Fs: food supplements, family planning and female education.

In this pandemic, the discovery of a vaccine alone will not solve the problem, the collective effort in promoting hygiene practices that ensures limited scope of transmission of diseases must take centre stage in the world. Teaching people how to wash their hands should be revisited and re-taught to people all over the world, preventing the spread of communicable

diseases by isolating when ill, social distancing in public spaces and wearing masks should become the focus for prevention not only during non-holiday seasons as done by advanced economies like UK, USA and many European nations.

ii) United under a common goal: Recognising that only supporting some countries would not produce the result needed, JPG drove the United Nations "World Summit for Children" held in the UN Headquarters in September 1990. It then had the largest-ever gathering of heads of state and government to commit to a set of goals to improve the well-being of children worldwide by the year 2000. It was the first time a UN conference had set a broad agenda for a wide range of goals in health, education, nutrition and human rights.

In recent times WHO director-general, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, "no one is safe until everyone is safe" is a similar call for united efforts which can work if we keep in mind it worked with CSR. So instead of Vaccine Nationalism going for or "vaccine multilateralism—protecting at-risk populations in all countries and keeping economies working" as the focus. A popular home-grown collaborative effort is Dr Younus' pledge declaring the "Covid-19 vaccine to be a common good" to ensure that it will be available once discovered, to everyone even those who cannot afford it.

iii) Credible Leadership: JPG utilised his position at the helm of a powerful institution to get other leaders and institution onboard the CSR, he worked with dictators and rebel leaders. Unicef, at the time having won the Nobel Peace Prize, was uncomfortable to collaborate with corrupt and insensitive regimes to promote immunisation of children. One of his colleague Peter Adamson wrote, "we worried about the lending of UNICEF's good name to corrupt and inhuman regimes. But Jim's answer was always the same. 'We don't like the President, so the kids don't get immunised?' 'You want

to wait to launch the campaign until all governments are respectable?"

The UN and all other world leaders; people and institutions, are failing this test of leadership putting themselves first and picking sides from like-minded or allied leaders in the midst of pandemic is only creating division and confusion among the masses. In 1975 WHO and Unicef agreed on the procurement and distribution of ORS regardless of patent age. A combined effort would make for a better campaign.

iv) Finding new ways to work together: JPG convinced rebels, religious leaders in El Salvador to halt civil war; agreeing to "Days of Tranquillity" so that children could get their immunisation vaccines, adopted later by Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Congo. He convinced countries to put their money and skin in the game, through "Corridors of Peace", facilitating humanitarian supplies to reach war ravaged Iraq, Uganda and Sudan. Better still, he convinced Islamic leaders in Egypt to recommend and commit to promoting education of girls.

The world today is divided and there are many reasons today multi-lateral organisations like the UN and even collaborative nations like the EU to become protectionist and selfish. Multi-laterals must not shy away from engaging because of conflicting values and reluctance but insist on bringing conflicting nations together. If institutions using these types of methods can work with conflicting nations to ensure that solutions to the pandemic is provided apolitically, then we can make a lot of progress, especially given the multiple was going on in the world at the moment.

v) Social Mobilisation: To bring change at a population level it is necessary to get everyone involved. Everywhere he went, JPG called for "social mobilisation" enlisting every possible outreach resource in society—the teachers, religious leaders, the media, the business community, the army, the police force, the NGOs,

the youth movements, the women's organisations and the community groups.

Healthcare systems that need immediate attention with not just regulatory policies, but funds resources and commitments must have these social supports. Both the public and private healthcare system must be revamped to work towards preventive measures that can be adopted by people so that they do not have to heavily rely on limited hospitals and medicines for survival.

vi) Consistent-efforts: JPG was always ready to pitch for the CSR, he carried with him a sachet of iodine salt or saline whichever one was needed to be discussed and he never shied away from creating a platform to pitch his ideas backing them with hard facts.

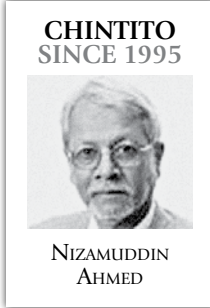
We must all consistently promote and demonstrate preventive measures such as hand washing and wearing of masks and keeping our environment clean. Political propaganda cannot deter scientific facts and that is what we should continue to promote. Many economies are opening up; they are trying to "go back" to normal but we need to move forward and not backward.

vii) Time bound specific action: JPG in 1994 called for a major global push to achieve 80 percent oral rehydration therapy (ORT) use rates against diarrhoea by the end of 1995. He was not willing to wait and he was not willing to take no for an answer, by means of a collaborative, focused effort to make sure low-cost techniques like immunisation and ORT was available to almost every child in every developing country.

We have long discussed the arrival of the 4th Industrial Revolution, that of the Internet of Things (IoT), but adoption of modern technology has not happened at the same pace and many economies have been left out. In the times of Covid, we must ensure the use of technology involving everyone.

Sharmin Ahmed is consultant at IFC.

A life not wasted, nor forgotten



CHINTITO SINCE 1995
NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

OCCASIONALLY an athlete transcends the boundaries of his sporting arena and attains a civil personality through his many socio-welfare activities, albeit woven intricately with the game. Add to that the camaraderie of his colleagues, the respect he warrants from his staff, a restrained rapport with politicians of all shades, humbly magnanimous in victory, and you have Badal Roy.

From a twinkle that flickered in laidback Eliotganj in Comilla, Badal Roy dazzled as a football star for the capital's Mohammedan Sporting Club for a decade and two, that is, for the entirety of his career in top flight, winning the league title five times between 1977-89. Incidentally, MSC secured their first league title in 1957, the year Badal Roy was born on July 4.

He was drafted for national duties in 1981, and remained in the red and green colours for half his playing career. His stint as coach of his Mohammedan was bland by comparison, but he was more of an accomplished organiser. For all his travails, he was decorated with the National Sports Award in 2009.

To the "intelligent" striker, prolific scorer, and famously the unselfish goal-assister in the black and white No 10 jersey, Badal played for none other ever, football was his life, and sadly perhaps his death.

The three-term (2008 to 2020) Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) vice-president who exemplified integrity and fairness, was struck by brain haemorrhage in 2017. "I remain immensely grateful to PM (Sheikh Hasina) without whose affection and support my complicated treatment in Singapore was unthinkable", recalled Badal, pausing to add in deep gratitude, "I would not have lived", his voice slurred due to his speech disability and partial paralysis. Despite that difficulty, Badal walked up the four floors to my consulting office three to four times over the last two years.

The idle brain, driven by the devil, assumes often, erroneously always, that a long-term player, and official of Dhaka Mohammedan (derivative of Muslim)

Around that time, I visited Badal's Jagannath Hall room to accept a lasting gift, a pair of running shoes he had brought from his tour abroad, then an infrequent affair.

Unfortunately, the Awami League pick in 1991 national elections for a Comilla constituency, Badal was not returned, but he remained humble in defeat, never a foul word against his political adversaries, even those within his party.

While some nouveau Awami Leaguers distance themselves from Mohammedan Sporting, Badal Roy remained a proud adherent of Nauka along with many in the club during its ups and downs. His love and loyalty for the party and the club were genuine, ingrained in deep-rooted understanding of the philosophy of both.



Badal Roy.

Badal Roy played a pivotal role to steady the love of his life.

"I had money saved for my essential checkup. I told my wife that we have to give that to the (Mohammedan) club because of the need of the hour. Others gave too, but some who genuinely could not," lamented Badal during one of his visits while having his Waver Street house designed by me. On a patch of about three katha, Badal and my office spent hours to fulfil his requirements of comfort and airiness, utility and economy.

Badal Roy was deeply humane. Seeing his demeanour with all and sundry, hearing his exchanges of pleasantries, and observing his reverence for Islamic practices, it was obvious that he did not discriminate among individuals. As for me, I always got a warm "Salaam" and a "Khoda Hafez" from him.

The September BFF elections was further undoing of his health. He was

aspiring to be president, not to reign, but to try and clean the rot, the dormancy. His body said "No", but his mind and soul wanted to mend an organisation, which "does not follow rules and regulations". Badal's heart was literally burning.

"A little effort, Nizam Bhai, and I could have won. But my condition ...", stated a mentally unwavering Badal, who raked almost half the tally despite his withdrawal on health grounds. A swing of 27 votes could have been a befitting prize for his uprightness and dedication.

Our last rickshaw ride together was to where I cannot remember, but the occasion was an election rally for our incumbent club president, the BNP candidate for the Dhaka-10 by-election 2004. Badal and I had gathered at the club, but we two clearly did not fit. As the pageant, marked by banners, bands, and horse carriages, eased out of the club gate, we fell behind inconspicuously, to embark on a three-wheeler to a different destination.

Badal was in a haste to commence with his building. He wanted me to again sit with him and his wife. But, the Covid situation did not permit, although he had somewhat recovered from a bout with the dreaded disease. On November 1 he pleasantly conveyed over phone that he had received our couriered drawings, that there was a developer interested, etc. Four days later, he was again taken ill. On November 22, Badal Roy breathed his last.

Rest in peace, Badal. Someone will surely rise to realise your BFF mission. Lives like yours are never wasted.

Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed is a practising Architect at BashaBar Ltd., a Commonwealth Scholar and a Fellow, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout Leader, and a Major Donor Rotarian.

From a twinkle that flickered in laidback Eliotganj in Comilla, Badal Roy dazzled as a football star for the capital's Mohammedan Sporting Club for a decade and two, that is, for the entirety of his career in top flight.

Sporting, founded 1936, must have political and ideological leaning towards the right. Wrong! For the gen of the ill-informed, half the 30 players of the Shadhin Bangla Football Team, formed in exile during our War of Liberation, were from Mohammedan Sporting.

Furthermore, it was on a Chhatra League ticket that the charismatic Badal Roy, the natural choice as Dhaka University's Sports Secretary, swept the Ducus elections in the mid-1970s.

Badal was kindly critical of a few football colleagues, who made a name through sports but, despite their affluence, later looked the other way when it came to supporting their club. In the aftermath of the government crackdown on club-based casinos in September 2019, Badal and other sports personalities had no part, Mohammedan found themselves at rock bottom organisationally and in a serious crisis financially, as did several other clubs.

The Muslim world's changing dynamics

Pakistan struggles to retain its footing



JAMES M DORSEY

INCREASING strains between Pakistan and its traditional Arab allies, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, is about more than Gulf states opportunistically targeting India's

far more lucrative market. At the heart of the tensions, which potentially complicate Pakistan's economic recovery, is also India's ability to enhance Gulf states' capacity to hedge their bets amid uncertainty about the continued US commitment to regional security.

India is a key member of the Quad that also includes the United States, Australia and Japan, and could play a role in a future, more multilateral regional security architecture in the Gulf.

Designed as the backbone of an Indo-Pacific strategy intended to counter China across a swath of maritime Asia, Gulf states are unlikely to pick sides but remain keen on ensuring that they maintain close ties with both sides of the widening divide.

The mounting strains with Pakistan are also the latest iteration of a global battle for Muslim religious soft power that pits Saudi Arabia and the UAE against Turkey, Iran, and Asian players like Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama, the world's largest Islamic movement.

A combination of geo- and domestic politics is complicating efforts by major Muslim-majority states in Asia to walk a middle line. Pakistan, home to the world's largest Shiite Muslim minority, has reached out to Turkey while seeking to balance relations with its neighbour, Iran.

The pressure on Pakistan is multi-fold. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan charged recently that the United States and one other unidentified



Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

PHOTO: AFP

country were pressing him to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Pakistani and Israeli media named Saudi Arabia as the unidentified country. Representing the world's second most populous Muslim nation, Pakistani recognition, following in the footsteps of the UAE and Bahrain, would be significant.

Pakistan twice in the last year signalled a widening rift with the kingdom.

Mr Khan had planned to participate a year ago in an Islamic summit hosted by Malaysia and attended by Saudi Arabia's detractors, Turkey, Iran and Qatar, but not the kingdom and a majority of Muslim states. The Pakistani prime minister cancelled his participation at the last moment under Saudi pressure.

More recently, Pakistan again challenged Saudi leadership of the Muslim world when Foreign Minister

Shah Mahmood Qureshi complained about lack of support of the Saudi-dominated Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for Pakistan in its conflict with India over Kashmir. The OIC groups the world's 57 Muslim-majority nations. Mr Qureshi suggested that his country would seek to rally support beyond the realm of the kingdom.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on a visit to Pakistan earlier this year, made a point of repeatedly reiterating his country's support for Pakistan in the Kashmir dispute.

By openly challenging the kingdom, Mr Qureshi was hitting Saudi Arabia where it hurts most as it seeks to repair its image tarnished by allegations of abuse of human rights, manoeuvres to get off on the right foot with incoming US President-elect Joe Biden's administration, and fends

off challenges to its leadership of the Muslim world.

Pakistan has not helped itself by recently failing to ensure that it would be removed from the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force, an international anti-money laundering and terrorism finance watchdog, despite progress in the country's legal infrastructure and enforcement.

Grey listing causes reputational damage and makes foreign investors and international banks more cautious in their dealings with countries that have not been granted a clean bill of health.

Responding to Mr Qureshi's challenge, Saudi Arabia demanded that Pakistan repay a USD 1 billion loan extended to help the South Asian nation ease its financial crisis. The kingdom has also dragged its feet on renewing a USD 3.2 billion oil credit facility that expired in May.

In what Pakistan will interpret as UAE support for Saudi Arabia, the Emirates last week included Pakistan on its version of US President Donald J Trump's Muslim travel ban.

Inclusion on the list of 13 Muslim countries whose nationals will no longer be issued visas for travel to the UAE increases pressure on Pakistan, which relies heavily on exporting labour to generate remittances and alleviate unemployment.

Some Pakistanis fear that a potential improvement in Saudi-Turkish relations could see their country fall through geopolitical cracks.

In the first face-to-face meeting between senior Saudi and Turkish officials since the October 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul, the two countries' foreign ministers, Prince Faisal bin Farhan and Mevlut Cavusoglu, held bilateral talks this weekend, on the sidelines of an OIC conference in the African state of Niger.

"A strong Turkey-Saudi partnership benefits not only our countries but the whole region," Mr Cavusoglu tweeted after the meeting.

The meeting came days after Saudi King Salman telephoned Mr Erdogan on the eve of a virtual summit hosted by the kingdom of the Group of 20 (G20) that brings together the world's largest economies.

"The Muslim world is changing and alliances are shifting and entering new, uncharted territories," said analyst Sahar Khan.

Added Imtiaz Ali, another analyst: "In the short term, Riyadh will continue exploiting Islamabad's economic vulnerabilities... But in the longer term, Riyadh cannot ignore the rise of India in the region, and the two countries may become close allies—something that will mostly likely increase the strain on Pakistan-Saudi relations."

Dr James M Dorsey is an award-winning journalist and a senior fellow at Nanyang Technological University's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore and the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

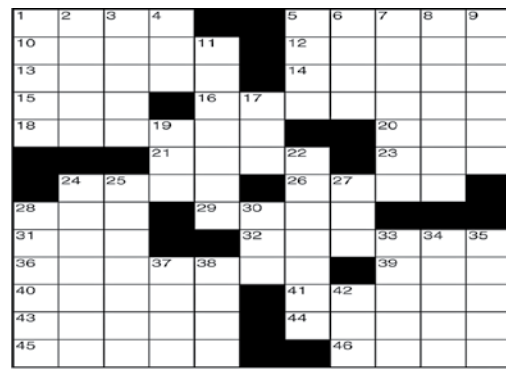


DECEMBER 3, 1984
Gas leak in Bhopal, India

On this day in 1984, a gas leak from a Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India, spread over a populated area, resulting ultimately in 15,000 to 20,000 deaths and leaving some half million survivors with chronic medical ailments.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Sacred chests
 - 5 Archaeologist's find
 - 9 Cruller's kin
 - 11 Poppy yield
 - 13 Love to pieces
 - 14 Wild dog
 - 15 Kitten cry
 - 16 Appended
 - 18 "My bad!"
 - 20 Take to court
 - 21 Wander off
 - 22 Lawyer: Abbr.
 - 23 Bowler, e.g.
 - 24 "That's obvious!"
 - 25 Lively folk dance
 - 27 Trait carriers
 - 29 overhead trains
 - 30 Rudely interrupts
 - 32 Use an easy chair
 - 34 Pot fill
 - 35 Skirt
 - 36 Cricket, for one
 - 38 Audacity
 - 39 Caesar's land
 - 40 Must have
 - 41 Blue hue
 - DOWN**
 - 1 Washington successor
 - 2 Western contests
 - 3 Is discriminating
 - 4 California's Big-
 - 5 Rum drink
 - 6 Mayberry kid
 - 7 Is in charge temporarily
 - 8 Leave in hurry
 - 10 Attack, in a way
 - 12 Bucks
 - 17 Use a towel
 - 19 Vaccine type
 - 22 Polly or Em
 - 24 Hate
 - 25 Showed over
 - 26 Late hour
 - 27 Colt creation
 - 28 Western range
 - 30 Awaited
 - 31 Birth related
 - 33 Exist
 - 37 Sulky state



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



BETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



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

GRAPE VINE



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Celebrating 25 years of 'Tomar Kono Dosh Nai'

Three times Bangladesh National Award-winning singer Monir Khan recently celebrated the silver jubilee of his first solo album, *Tomar Kono Dosh Nai*. The song, *Tomar Kono Dosh Nai* from the album received the most appreciation from the audience. To make the twenty-five years of the album memorable Monir Khan's fan club arranged the celebration. On November 26, Monir Khan honored everyone who worked for the album including the lyricist, composer, among others. Monir Khan said, "I am elated to honor those for whom I have been able to make a name in the industry. I shall continue to work respecting my past and holding the value in me."



KISHORE'S LETTER

Singer Kishore Das recently released a new song, *Cithi dio* written by Mahi Flora and composed by Ringo Basu. The song was released under the banner of *GaanChobi Entertainment*. Kishore Das said, "I enjoyed working for this song. I believe it is a treat to those who waits for good music. I hope the audience will appreciate our hard work. I also request everyone to continue listening to new songs and support the music industry." Besides, *Bangabandhu T20 Cup 2020* commenced on the 24th of November. Singer Kishore Das gave voice to the theme song for the Rajshahi cricket team. The song has been written by Robiul Islam and composed by Kishore himself.



Puja Back After Eight Months!

After eight long months, actor Puja Cherry has returned to filming. She returned to film the Ispahani Arif Jahan directed film *Hridita*. Puja said, "We are filming while maintaining caution. I was a little nervous to return in front of the camera after so long, but in the end, it all worked out. I read the script for this film three months back, and when I went to shoot, I had already memorized the whole script. I also thought about the look I should go for in the film." Aside from this, Puja has also been rumored to appear in the Saikat Nasir film *Masud Rana*. Three films starring Puja is awaiting their releases: *Shaan*, *Jinn* and *Psycho*.

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub



COVER STORY

In Tune To The World

Renowned classical music artist Alif Laila evokes her love and passion of music through the tunes of her Sitar. She has received numerous awards for her contribution to classical music, including the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' from ASHA, a welfare organisation for women. In this interview, she talks about her journey and inspirations of classical music and why it is important.

Rafi Hossain: Welcome to *Uncensored with Rafi Hossain*. Today, we are here with classical music artist Alif Laila. Thank you for being with us here today.

Alif Laila: Thank you for having me.

Rafi Hossain: I feel that artists do not pursue instrumental music as much as other forms. Do you agree with me?

Alif Laila: There isn't anything to not agree with. In the past century, it was rare to see women of any religious background perform music in public settings. There were dance performances in temples as a form of prayer and vocal performances as a form of entertainment. Instrumental performances had no place in it. Women performing music publicly meant sacrifice; in fact, any occupation for women meant sacrifice if they had families. Even now, the society that we live in is male-dominated, even if women are liberated much more than in the past. In the case of instruments, we need to be attuned to it twenty-four hours a day. It has to be in every breath and step we take. It is very difficult for a woman to do this as she has to compartmentalise her life. This means that she cannot give her everything to music. For me, my career was delayed because I concentrated most on



PHOTO COURTESY: ALIF LAILA

the instrument is a very difficult task as it is both heavy and fragile.

Rafi Hossain: Can you tell us something about your musical journey?

Alif Laila: I am very fortunate to have been able to learn from many great artists. In 1981, I was in the Middle-East where I used to practise my art as an amateur. I came to America in 1988 and had to face a lot of struggles of life. Here, I could work with Partha Chatterjee. I also got to learn from Pandit Krishna Bhatt and Barun Roy in Kolkata. Kolkata is the hub of classical music, and I love that place. The environment is perfect for someone who wants to be at one with music. Although things are changing because of improvements in technology and anyone can learn anything from anywhere, I still believe that there is something special about Kolkata that gives its music the authentic flavour. Anyone can learn to play instruments through *Youtube*, but the subtle nuances and the soul of the instrument and music can only be learned from Gurus. I hope that this does not die off in the future. It is our duty as artists to sustain this practice for the future generation of artists. In fact, we all have the responsibility to perpetuate the practice of instrumental music. We have to take this to the mainstream. I also had the opportunity to talk with Ravi Shankar. He was an incredible knowledgeable and talented artist. The fact that I'm an established artist today can be credited to him because he revolutionised the path for instrumental music today. He inspired me greatly.

Rafi Hossain: Do you have a parting message for the readers?

Alif Laila: Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity. Music is a universal language and energy of peace and love. It has no borders. We must unite with music as a weapon to overcome any adversity that comes our way. I urge everyone to understand each other and concentrate on their happiness. We should all reflect deeply on ourselves and find what makes us happy and follow that with courage. Music is priceless and healing, and I hope we can use it as such.

Amina Hossain

"I was lucky to have received a lot of support from my family in this matter. I graduated from Charukola Institute while having a small child. I don't think it would have been possible for me to follow my passion had my family not supported me."

my family. In this occupation, we have to deal with a number of difficulties and unwarranted comments from people about how it isn't worth it. However, I believe that it is worth much more than what's on the surface. I was lucky to have received a lot of support from my family in this matter. I graduated from Charukola Institute while having a small child. I don't think it would have been possible for me to follow my passion had my family not supported me. In fact, I don't think any woman who has a family to take care of can follow their passions without proper support. My mother was my biggest inspiration. She wanted to be a Sitar player, but was unable to do so. She was my mentor and my best friend. Our bond was much stronger than that of a mother and a daughter. Another reason behind the disinclination to play musical instruments is the physical aspect of it. Playing the Sitar means having cuts, bruises and callouses on your fingers. Not everyone can be okay with this, and it's understandable. Moreover, carrying

POPCORN HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some binge worthy movie and series you can spend your time watching while you stay at home social distancing, keeping yourself, as well as others, safe.

If Anything Happens I Love You

If Anything Happens I Love You is an animated film. It has been directed by Michael Govier and Will McCormack, and produced by Maryann Garger, alongside others, under the banner of Gilbert Films and Oh Good Productions. The movie focuses on two parents who lose their daughter in a school shooting. It was released on *Netflix* on November 20, 2020.



PARANORMAL

Paranormal is an Egyptian fantasy, drama, and horror web television series on *Netflix*, which has been based on the supernatural book series *Ma Waraa Al Tabiaa* by Ahmed Khaled Tawfik. It has been directed by Amr Salama and Majid Al Ansari, produced under the banner of

Netflix, and stars Ahmed Amin, Reem Abd El Kade and Samma Ibrahim, among others. The story follows a professor of haematology who experiences and learns about different supernatural happenings. It was originally released on November 5, 2020.



MANK

Mank is a biographical drama film on *Netflix*. It has been directed by David Fincher, produced by Ceán Chaffin, Douglas Urbanski, and Eric Roth, with Gary Oldman in the lead, alongside Amanda Seyfried, Lily Collins, and Arliss Howard, among others. It narrates the experience of American screenwriter Herman J. Mankiewicz while he was writing *Citizen Kane*. It was initially released on November 13, 2020.

Shreya Shomoyeeta

Introducing
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B500 DWR
 the tough steel

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 Cox's Bazar
PROUD CONSTRUCTION PARTNER
SHAH CEMENT

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Pandemic paused their education

Mohiuddin Alamgir and Nilima Jahan

Mohammad Alif's life has utterly changed. The sixth grader was a resident of Blind Education and Rehabilitation Development Organisation (BERDO) in the capital's Mirpur. He was fond of his fellow students who also lived at the facility. After the school closed late March due to the pandemic, his father Joyal Abedin, a police constable, took him back home, which is also in Mirpur. "My son's studies came to a complete halt in the first three months. He got depressed. Although she has to take care of the younger children, my wife learnt to read Braille and started teaching him at home," said Joyal. Since the family does not own any smart device, Alif has not attended the classes his school has been giving twice a week for the last few months. His hardship is multiplied by the thousands of students with disabilities either in mainstream or special schools. Rights activists say these students lack access because of a lack of study material in format suitable for children with special needs. Students with hearing impairment miss out on lessons because of the absence of sign language interpreters. Society for the Welfare of the Intellectually Disabled, Bangladesh, widely known as SWID Bangladesh, has 539 special schools with over 27,000 students.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Men drying and sorting out plastic sheets discarded from re-rolling mills in Bayejid area of Chattogram city as a white cloud of chemical residues from the sheets covers the area. Even the risks involved with prolonged inhalation of the chemical and coronavirus have not been able to make two of them wear a face covering.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Selim Prodhan amassed Tk 57.79 crore

Says ACC source about casino 'kingpin'

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

It was Tk 12.27 crore illegal wealth mentioned in a graft case filed against online casino "kingpin" Selim Prodhan.

But during investigation, it was revealed that Selim's illegal wealth was five times higher than that mentioned in the FIR.

An Anti-Corruption Commission source said Selim amassed about Tk 57.79 crore illegally and laundered about Tk 22 crore to Thailand and the US.

The source said the investigators have summed up their findings and will submit it before the commission.

In September, the Criminal Investigation Department submitted a charge-sheet against Selim in another case for siphoning off about Tk 13.28 crore.

Selim, who came to the fore last year when the law enforcement agency conducted drives against

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

DIGITAL SECURITY ACT Arrest warrant issued against Baul Rita

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued an arrest warrant for Baul singer Rita Dewan for "hurting religious sentiments".

Dhaka Cyber Tribunal Judge Mohammad Ash Sams Joglul Hossain issued the order, Shamim Al Mamun, bench assistant of the tribunal, told The Daily Star.

Two others, Shahjahan and Md Iqbal Hossain, who had uploaded Rita's songs to their YouTube channels, were also ordered to be arrested.

Rita Dewan was sued on February 2 by a lawyer named Advocate Imrul Hasan. The case was filed with the cyber tribunal in Dhaka. On February 3, another case was filed against her by short filmmaker Rasel Mia with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka. The arrest warrant

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Bangladesh will work for durable peace



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman offering prayers at the mass grave at Jhalokati on December 3, 1972.

December 3, 1972
 SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

PRESIDENT ASSURES ALL COOPERATION TO INDIA
 President Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury today says that the new nation Bangladesh would extend full cooperation to India for establishment of durable peace in the subcontinent to make it an abode of peace. Speaking at a civic reception given in his honour by the sheriff of Calcutta, President Chowdhury says Bangladesh is following a policy of non-alignment to have friendship with all countries of the world and help establishment of peace in the subcontinent.

He further says Bangladesh is also ready to cooperate with Pakistan for the cause of peace in the subcontinent. He, however, regrets that no response has yet been received from Pakistan for establishment of peace in the region.



SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Bag with fake IED hurled at US embassy security guard

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two youths yesterday threw a "suspicious black bag" at a security guard of the US embassy in the capital, following an altercation.

The incident took place around 3:30pm.

Police later called the bomb disposal unit of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTC) unit to check the contents of the bag.

The bomb disposal unit members found a match box, a cup wrapped with black tape, some wire and a knife inside the bag.

Rahmatullah Chowdhury, chief of the bomb disposal unit, told The Daily Star that it was a fake improvised explosive device-type object.

"We are suspecting that the youths wanted to draw international attention ...," said a high police official, requesting anonymity.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

S'pore allows sale of lab-grown meat



REUTERS, Singapore

Singapore has given US start-up Eat Just the greenlight to sell its lab-grown chicken meat, in what the firm says is the world's first regulatory approval for so-called clean meat that does not come from slaughtered animals.

The meat, to be sold as nuggets, will be priced at premium chicken prices when it first launches in a restaurant in Singapore "in the very near term", co-founder and CEO Josh Tetrick said.

Demand for alternatives to regular meat is surging due to concerns about health, animal welfare and the environment. Plant-based substitutes, popularised by the likes of Beyond Meat, Impossible Foods and Quorn, increasingly feature on supermarket shelves and restaurant menus.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Shahzaman Mozumder Bir Protik passes away

STAR REPORT

Valiant freedom fighter Shahzaman Mozumder Bir Protik breathed his last at a clinic in the capital yesterday.

With his death, the country has lost a war hero, and the ICT industry an entrepreneur.

He had been suffering from dengue fever.

Born in Dinajpur, Shahzaman went to war when he was 16 and fought in the Sylhet region.

Popularly known as the King of Dhaka, he wrote the book "The Guerrilla" and maintained an immensely popular blog, "What I am wearing today", which ran with the slogan, "Style is knowing who you are, what you want to say, and not giving a damn."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Bangabandhu sculpture to be installed in Ankara

BSS, Dhaka

A sculpture of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be set up in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, Turkish Ambassador to Bangladesh Mustafa Osman Turan yesterday said.

The ambassador informed this to newsmen after paying a courtesy call on Information Minister Hasan Mahmud at his office.

Turan also said another sculpture of Kemal Ataturk, father of modern Turkey, will be set up in Dhaka.

State Minister for Information Murad Hasan, Information Secretary

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Over one lakh people of 15 villages in Aruail and Pakshimul unions of Brahmanbaria's Sarail depend on this six-foot wide bamboo bridge over the Chetra River. Their only other option is to use boats, but that too becomes impossible in winter. A proper bridge would hugely benefit the residents of the area.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDYOY

More than 2,500 die in US in 24 hrs

England leaves lockdown but sees new Covid curbs

AGENCIES

The United States, the country hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic and in the throes of a surge in cases, registered more than 2,500 deaths in a 24-hour period, the highest total since late April, Johns Hopkins University said.

More than 180,000 new infections were recorded, according to real-time data provided by the Baltimore-based university at 8:30 pm (0130 GMT yesterday).

The last time the daily death toll was higher than Tuesday's total of 2,562 was in late April, at the height of the pandemic's first wave.

The number of hospitalizations in the United States hit 99,000 on Tuesday, a new record, according to the Covid Tracking Project. The situation is particularly dire in several Midwestern states, including Indiana and South Dakota.

Experts fear a new surge in the number of infections now that several days have passed since the Thanksgiving holiday, which saw millions of Americans travel to see loved ones despite recommendations to skip festive gatherings.

For now, the number of new daily infections is still high, but more or less consistent with the figures seen in recent weeks.

The United States regularly saw 2,000 deaths a day in the spring, but has hit the number several times in the past two weeks.

In total, the US now has registered more than 13.7 million coronavirus cases and more than 270,000 deaths.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 3
 Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
 AZAN 5-15 12-45 3-45 5-19 7-00
 JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-00 5-22 7-30
 SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION