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SECOND EDITION



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PREVENTING CYBER-ATTACKS

Most banks ill-prepared

Only 4 out of 60 banks set up security solution in about 5 years as per central bank directive

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN and SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

Only four of the 60 banks in the country have set up cyber security operation centres in line with a Bangladesh Bank directive to thwart large-scale cyber-attacks.

In the absence of an effective cyber security system in most banks, the country's banking sector remains vulnerable to cyber criminals even about five years after the \$101 million cyber heist from the BB's account with the Federal Reserve Bank in New York.

Though the central bank in its 2016 directive specified an IT security solution for all banks with an investment of Tk 2-5 crore each, most of the banks either went for partial-fix or no-fix at all.

Dependence on digital banking tools has been growing fast in recent months as many now do online banking from home instead of going to banks amid the Covid pandemic.

"This has created more cyber risks to the banking system than ever," said Tanvir Hassan Zoha, an IT expert and an assistant professor at Bangladesh University of Business and Technology.

Following the cyber heist in February, 2016, the BB on March 3 the same year asked all banks to immediately set up IT security solution system, namely cyber "security operation centre" (SOC).

But banks are persistently ignoring the instruction to set up SOC as they seem uninterested in investing additional funds, putting the entire banking system at risk, Zoha said.

Contacted, Debdulal Roy, an executive director of the central bank, said only four of the 60 banks in the country have been able to set up SOC.

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With hardly any space between them, people queue up to get tested for coronavirus infection at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital in the capital yesterday. Inset, Mugga Medical College Hospital had to stop testing as its testing machine broke down at a time when Covid-19 infections and deaths are on the rise.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON/ANISUR RAHMAN

Fresh crisis over Covid testing

A few PCR machines out of order; experts stress the need for more tests

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

A few RT-PCR machines, used for Covid-19 testing, remained out of order at a time when coronavirus cases are on the rise with the advent of winter.

Experts said the number of daily tests was already low compared to the country's population and such developments would only aggravate the situation.

Government officials said 172 hospitals have 177 RT-PCR machines across the country. Of them, four to five were out of order. The officials, however, claimed that it did not make any difference since samples meant to be tested with those machines were being sent to labs elsewhere.

The RT-PCR machine at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital was out of order for three

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

'We're beaten mercilessly'

Garment workers, madrasa teachers staging sit-ins in front of Press Club allege police brutality at dawn; officers deny excesses



An A One BD Ltd employee in tears after she was truncheon charged and forced to move from in front of Jatiya Press Club early yesterday by police. Her son was injured too. They were staging a sit in there.

NILIMA JAHAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

PHOTO COURTESY: HIMU

Until Sunday night, the sidewalks in front of the Jatiya Press Club were teeming with protesters pressing their demands for various causes, but since yesterday morning the area has been deserted.

Around 42 former Tazreen Fashions workers, more than 300 workers of A One BD Ltd, a few hundred independent Ebtedayee madrasa teachers, and aspiring primary school assistant teachers had been staging sit-ins there.

Yesterday at dawn however, according to the workers and teachers, police swooped on the demonstrators and attacked them with batons, tear gas shells and water cannons while they were asleep. Around 54 of the workers and teachers were injured in the attack, they said.

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"They beat us like animals," said Nasima Akter, one of the Tazreen Fashions workers, who had been in front of the press club for the last 80 days demanding proper compensation, rehabilitation and treatment for their injuries sustained during the fire at the garment factory on November 24, 2012.

"On Saturday night, we were asked by police to leave the place by 4:00pm the following day. But as we weren't willing to leave empty-handed, they took preparations on Sunday night [arranging water cannons to disperse them]," Nasima told this newspaper.

"Around 4:30am, we dozed off, thinking they won't do anything... Then they started beating us severely, shot tear gas shells and used water cannons," she added.

Govt to revise textbook curriculum

Says secretary after cabinet meeting; muktijoddha council bill approved

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is aiming to revise textbook curriculum and create technologically sound manpower to survive the upcoming fourth industrial revolution that will be driven by technology.

To cope with the industrial revolution, the government will introduce some schemes in the financial system to encourage small and medium entrepreneurs to adopt the new technology, said Khandker Anwarul Islam, cabinet secretary, at a press briefing at the secretariat yesterday.

In the meeting, a proposal was given to form a taskforce to find the way to deal with the fourth industrial revolution.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

2 Hefajat leaders sued for sedition

Another leader of Islami Andolon also accused; court ask PBI to probe charges, submit reports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hefajat chief Junayed Babunagari and two other islamist leaders were accused in two cases of sedition yesterday.

Hefajat-e-Islam Joint Secretary General Maulana Mamunul Haque and Islami Andolon Bangladesh Senior Nayeb-e-Amir Syed Muhammad Faizul Karim are the other accused.

One of the cases was filed by Muktijuddho Moncho President Aminul Islam Bulbul with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Satyabrata Sikder.

Bangabandhu Foundation founder Moshirur Malek filed the other case against Mamunul with the same court.

The magistrate took the cases into cognisance and recorded statements of the complainants.

The court directed the Deputy Inspector General of Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to investigate the cases and submit two separate reports to it by January 7.

Meanwhile, Awami League General Secretary and Minister for Road Transport and Bridges Obaidul Quader yesterday said those who have shown the audacity to attack the sculpture of the Father of the Nation must face grave consequences.

Bangabandhu's sculpture will be constructed, he added.

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 2

Ensure security of Bangabandhu monuments

HC orders government

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned of the government to immediately take necessary steps to ensure protection of all monuments and murals of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman across the country.

It also ordered the government to establish Bangabandhu's murals on the office premises of all deputy commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers and to submit a report before the court on the progress of setting up the murals in a month.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice Shahed Nuruddin came up with the order while hearing a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Bashir Ahmed in November 2017 seeking necessary directives on this issue.

Earlier in the day, the cabinet secretary submitted a compliance report to the bench through Deputy Attorney General Abdullah Al Mahmud Bashar, saying that the government has established Bangabandhu's murals on the office

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

8 killed as bus hits 2 auto-rickshaws

STAR REPORT

Eight people, including a child, were killed as a BRTC bus collided head-on with two auto-rickshaws on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Habiganj's Nabiganj upazila yesterday.



mother Samirun Begum, 30, Halima Begum, 26, Antar Miah, 21, Liza Akhter, 20, and Kitab Ali, 32. The identities of the two others could not be confirmed until last night.

On information, police and firefighters rushed to the spot and joined the rescue operation with some locals.

The injured were sent to two hospitals in Sylhet and Habiganj. Two of them were in critical condition, said fire service officials.

Angered by the accident, locals blocked the highway in Shataihai area for over two hours, halting movement of traffic, said OC Ershadul.

[Our correspondents in Brahmanbaria and Moulvibazar contributed to this report.]

Ershadul Haque Bhuiyan, OC of Sherpur Highway Police Station, said a Sylhet-bound BRTC bus from Cumilla rammed into the CNG-run three-wheelers in Fultali Bazar area around 5:00pm, leaving the eight dead on the spot.

Twelve passengers of the bus were also injured as the vehicle skidded off the highway into a field, said OC added.

Among the dead are Maria Akhter, 2, and her

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BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,198
New cases in 24hrs



4,79,743
Total cases



6,874
Deaths



3,98,623
Recoveries



1,546,888
Deaths



67,717,705
Total cases

67,717,705
Total cases

JASHORE CORRECTION FACILITY

Eight teens flee

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Eight inmates, aged between 13 and 15, fled from Jashore juvenile correction centre early yesterday.

Asraf Islam, superintendent of Jashore police, said the eight were staying at the guard building next to the main building of the correction centre.

They broke the window grills of a bathroom and escaped going down a ladder used for fixing electricity problems, he added.

Zakir Hossain, caretaker of the centre, said the inmates fled around 4:15am. They were from Jashore,

Khulna, Narail, Gopalganj and Barisal districts.

He, however, refused to give further details about the eight.

The police superintendent said they were trying to confirm the inmates' whereabouts.

Eighteen inmates of the juvenile correction centre were brutally tortured, allegedly by some staffers and fellow inmates, over a trivial matter on August 13.

Three of the victims died of their wounds and 15 were hospitalised.

Later, a case was filed against five staffers and seven inmates in connection with the incident.



The wreckage of a battery-run three-wheeler after it was crushed by a bus on Bangabandhu Bridge approach road at Shalla of Tangail's Kalihati upazila yesterday. The driver of the three-wheeler was killed. PHOTO: COLLECTED

DEFACED BANGABANDHU SCULPTURE

Arrest the culprits immediately

15 eminent citizens demand in joint statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen eminent citizens, mostly cultural personalities, yesterday demanded immediate arrest of culprits who recently vandalised an under-construction sculpture of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Kushtia.

In a joint statement, they said opposing setting up of sculptures and damaging Bangabandhu's sculpture are anti-constitutional and are also against the spirit of a secular and democratic Bangladesh.

Termining the defacers of Bangabandhu's sculpture "enemies of humanity and traitors", the eminent personalities demanded their immediate arrest.

"These bigoted fundamentalist forces are delivering anti-culture sermons with false interpretation of the Holy Quran and announcing that they would root out the sculptures," said the statement, signed by cultural activist and valiant freedom fighter Nasiruddin

Yousuff.

Sculpture is one of the oldest media of art. Sculptures give testimony of time and human civilizations artistically. Fundamentalist forces want to turn Bangladesh into a backward country by rejecting the significance of sculpture and science, the eminent citizens added.

They said they were "stunned and shocked" to see that fundamentalists had dared to vandalise Bangabandhu's sculpture in Kushtia on Saturday.

"We urge the government and the people to resist this anti-human civilization bigoted militant force unitedly. We demand the government strongly resist these evil forces," the statement said.

Among the signatories to the statement are: Abdul Gaffar Choudhury, Shamsuzzaman Khan, Hasan Azizul Haque, Anupam Sen, Sarwar Ali, Ramendu Majumdar, Ferdousi Majumdar, Abdus Selim, Mamunur Rashid, Mofidul Hoque, Shofi Ahmed, Abul Momen, Sara Zaker, and Shimul Yousuff.

Ensure security

FROM PAGE 1

premises of Muktiyoddha Council in 380 upazilas of 63 districts.

During yesterday's hearing, petitioner Bashir prayed to the HC bench to pass necessary directives on the authorities concerned to ensure proper security of Bangabandhu's monuments and murals, considering the incident of damaging his under-construction sculpture in Kushtia.

DAG Abdullah and petitioner Bashir told The Daily Star yesterday that the government has already declared March 7 as "National Historic Day" in line with the HC's earlier order and also submitted a compliance report before the HC to this effect.

During the hearing of the same petition, the HC on February 25 this year directed the government to declare March 7 as "National Historic

Day" since Bangabandhu delivered his historic speech on March 7, 1971, inspiring the nation to go for the Liberation War.

In the speech at the then Race-course Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan), Bangabandhu called on the freedom-loving Bengalis to wage a decisive struggle against the Pakistani rulers.

The HC also asked the authorities concerned to set up Bangabandhu's murals in all upazilas and districts across the country during the Mujib Borsho and to submit a compliance report in a month.

Besides, the court issued a rule asking the government to explain as to why it should not be directed to include Bangabandhu's historic March 7 Speech in textbooks for all students so that they can learn about the significance of the speech.

Govt to revise textbook

FROM PAGE 1

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina joined the weekly cabinet meeting from the Gono Bhaban virtually and chaired it.

The cabinet secretary said, "Our future depends on the way of handling the fourth industrial revolution. If we fail to handle it, we'll face problems. ... We'll fall behind the international competition in economy and technology."

Total technology and system of production will change. "In some sectors, manpower will be reduced, while the demand for manpower will increase in other sectors. We have to develop our workforce in light of that."

Of the multiple problems, three problems of the upcoming revolution have been pointed out. These are replacement of workforce by machines or robots, outdated curriculum and bulk investment.

"We would not be able to cope with the technology with our existing curriculum. Therefore, we need to introduce advanced education system to increase knowledge [of students]," he said, adding that financial stimulus packages and proper training will solve other problems.

He said 10 technologies will dominate the fourth industrial revolution, he said, adding that the country needs to emphasise on the 10 technologies.

These are: advanced materials, cloud technology, autonomous vehicle including drone, synthetic biology, virtual augmented reality, artificial intelligence, robot, blockchain, 3D printing and internet of things.

"To deal with the fourth industrial revolution, one must have knowledge on these technologies," he said.

Replying to a query, he said the authorities concerned have been instructed to form a national steering committee to include these in the curriculum.

Meanwhile, the cabinet in principle

approved the draft of the Jatiya Muktiyoddha Council Bill-2020, aiming to replace the existing Jatiya Muktiyoddha Council Act-2002.

"The Liberation War affairs ministry placed the draft law as the existing act can't fulfill the demand of present time completely. With the passage of the proposed law, the existing act of 2002 will be annulled," said the secretary.

The provisions related to the operation and formulation of the Jatiya Muktiyoddha Council (National Freedom Fighter Council) have been made more precise in the proposed law.

As per the bill, the council could prepare the list of the collaborators and recommend that the government publish it.

Anwarul said the council will have the authority to recommend the list of those who had opposed the Liberation War of Bangladesh, acting as members of Razakar, Al Badr and Al Shams or engaging in the war as members of the para-military forces from March 26 to December 16 in 1971.

In another development, the cabinet also okayed the drafts of revised memorandum of association and articles of association of a company titled "Bangladesh Data Centre Company Limited".

The cabinet secretary said from now on, data of all government servers will be stored at Kaliakoir Hi-Tech City.

Private organisations can also do so on payment, he said, adding that it will be more secure.

There will be a backup in Jashore. As a result, there is no fear of losing data if any disaster takes place at Kaliakoir Hi-Tech City.

Replying to a question, he said all government organisations have been instructed to store their data at the Hi-Tech City.

The cabinet also gave the nod to a proposal to observe December 18 as the national and international migration day every year.

Most banks ill-prepared

FROM PAGE 1

He said a lack of skilled manpower is one of the main reasons for most of the banks' failure to put the system in place.

Many banks may have financial capabilities to set up SOC, but they don't have trained manpower to run such a centre, he mentioned.

Asked why most of the banks failed to create skilled manpower despite the BB initiative about five years ago, he said many of the banks lack willingness to do so.

"We have written to the banks from time to time, asking them to put in place the cyber security system. We also conveyed it to bank officials at various meetings."

The central bank is now thinking of fixing a deadline for the banks for setting up SOC once the coronavirus pandemic comes under control, he noted.

Debdul further said the IT security units of the government agencies should help create skilled manpower in the banking sector.

"The police and the Rapid Action Battalion have strong wings to tackle cyber-attacks. Such government agencies can play a positive role in improving the skills of IT officials in banks," added the BB official.

SOC is a centralised function within an organisation employing people, processes and technology to continuously monitor and improve its security posture while preventing, detecting, analysing and responding to cyber security incidents.

It acts like a hub or a central command post, taking in telemetry

from across an organisation's IT infrastructure, including its networks, devices, appliances and information stores.

For instance, if anyone tries to steal money from an automated teller machine (ATM) booth of a bank with SOC, the central security system of the bank will be alerted and the fund transfer will be stopped automatically.

Zoha said the IT departments of banks are largely dedicating themselves for setting up infrastructure or fixing the existing IT-related problems.

"Risks will deepen further in the days ahead due to the rapid expansion of digital banking. The banks should take immediate measures to this end," he added.

Except for the branches of three specialised banks, the branches of almost all other banks (99.21 percent) had online banking facilities last year, according to BB data.

The foreign commercial banks had 100 percent online banking facilities, followed by private commercial banks (99.98 percent) and state-run commercial banks (98.12 percent).

In September and November this year, the central bank and the finance ministry issued cyber security alerts for banks soon after receiving information from different local and global agencies.

Following the BB's alert in September, almost all banks suspended the service of ATMs and point of sales (POS) from 12:00am to 7:00am for the time being.

Talking to this newspaper, Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank, said

all stakeholders of the banking sector should make a concerted effort to strengthen the IT security.

"Banks enjoy profits from their loan disbursement immediately. But they do not see any profit from investment on the IT security in the short term," he said.

Several executives of IT departments at three banks said a good number of banks are now on track to set up SOC.

It's a tough job for the banks as they have to upgrade their digital systems and also make a huge investment, they pointed out.

The bank officials said they are now trying to mitigate the risks of cyber-attacks by using various manual and digital tools in the absence of SOC.

Many banks are using two-factor authentication and SMS alert system for every financial transaction. Imposition of a ceiling on each card transaction is another option to reduce the risks, they mentioned.

They, however, admitted that SOC is the most effective way to protect a bank from cyber-attacks.

Syed Almas Kabir, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS), said it is alarming that most of the banks don't have SOC.

"The government needs to have policies to encourage and ensure cyber security. Currently, there are high import duties on security hardware and this is detrimental to the industry."

"We expect the government will heed our request [to lower duties] so that the country can benefit in the long run," he said.

Fresh crisis over Covid testing

FROM PAGE 1

days from December 3, said the medical college's virology department head, Akbar Hossain.

"This is the only PCR machine in the entire Barishal division. So, when the machine went out of order, the whole testing process got stuck. We need another machine to ensure uninterrupted testing," he said, adding that the machine was fixed and the testing would resume today.

Take another example. Cumilla Medical College Hospital has the only RT-PCR in the district. But lately, the machine started malfunctioning and giving false results. The testing there was suspended on November 30 and resumed yesterday, Md Niatuzzaman, civil surgeon of Cumilla, told The Daily Star.

The Daily Star visited Muga General Hospital in the capital yesterday and found a notice on the hospital gate that said, "Covid-19 testing remains suspended due to unavoidable reasons." A staffer of the hospital's emergency department said the RT-PCR machine there was out of service. Every day, the machine would test 180-200 samples, he said.

Contacted, Dr Md Habibur Rahman, director of Management Information System (MIS) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said, "Machines sometimes go out of order and we try our best to repair them within the shortest possible time. It takes two to five days to repair a RT-PCR machine."

RT-PCR machines needed regular

maintenance. Otherwise, they start to give false results, he said.

DGHS Additional DG Nasima Sultana said the RT-PCR machine in Barishal had already been fixed. Others would be repaired soon too.

"Normally, RT-PCR machines are supposed to be run once a day. But we are using them multiples times since the testing begun. So, these machines would go out of service and it is normal. We, however, are carrying out the tests at other labs to cope with the demand," she added.

Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director (disease control) of the DGHS, said it was extremely important to ensure uninterrupted testing to fight any possible second wave of the Covid-19 outbreak. He stressed on expanding testing facilities immediately.

Testing is important because it lowers the risk of infection, he said.

"The number of daily tests is low in Bangladesh. We need to test around 50,000-60,000 samples every day. When the number remains so low the situation can go out of hand if the RT-PCR machines become non-functional," he warned.

He reminded that the number of Covid-19 infections and deaths caused by the virus was going up as the cold intensified.

On Saturday, Health Minister Zahid Maleque urged people to get tested for Covid-19. "Patients have to come for tests," he said, adding that people were not coming for tests.

As of yesterday, the country tested 28,77,538 samples, shows data from the DGHS.

Currently, the total Covid-19 positivity rate in Bangladesh stands at 16.67 percent while the death rate at 1.43pc.

According to www.worldometers.info, 17,398 out of every one million people in the country have so far been tested, whereas the number is 625,164 in the United States, 382,729 in Italy and 106,639 in India.

RT-PCR, in which samples from nose and throat are swabbed, is considered the gold standard for Covid-19 tests.

Health officials, however, said one of the major challenges with PCR machines was that they could not do a huge number of tests in a single day.

YESTERDAY'S UPDATE

Thirty-six people died from Covid-19 and at least 2,198 people tested positive for the virus in 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday, according to a DGHS press release.

The total number of deaths climbed to 6,874 and the death rate stood at 1.43 percent. The country has so far reported 4,79,743 infections, added the release.

The current positivity rate is 15.3 percent while the total positivity rate stands at 16.67 percent.

At least 14,369 samples were tested across the country in those 24 hours. In the meantime, 2,663 Covid-19 patients have recovered, the DGHS added in the release.

2 Hefajat leaders sued

FROM PAGE 1

The cases mentioned that the statements made by Babunagari, Mamunul and Faizul tantamount to sedition.

The complainants appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants against the accused for "tarnishing the image of the government and creating anarchy".

Accused Mamunul made anti-state remarks on November 13 at the BMA Auditorium in the capital's Topkhana Road area, while Faizul made similar comments at an event in Dhaka's Gandaria the same day, the complaints said.

Hefajat Amir Babunagari also made anti-state remarks at an event in Hathazari, Chattogram on November 27.

On a live programme on his verified Facebook page, Mamunul last night termed Muktiyoddha Moncho an extremist organisation and said he

never made a disrespectful comment against Bangabandhu.

He added that Muktiyoddha Moncho was creating unrest in the country.

A lower court lawyer said the court might summon or issue arrest warrant against the accused if the PBI probe found the allegations to be true.

No one has been convicted for sedition in recent past, sources said.

Talking to reporters at his secretariat office, Obaidul Quader said the attackers of Bangabandhu's sculpture in Kushtia must be guilty of sedition as Bangabandhu is the father of the nation.

About Hefajat leaders, Quader said, "It is not right to take action against anyone without concrete evidence. If we find any evidence... we will take action. We are in the government, in power. We have to move forward with a cool head... We don't want to create unrest in the country by taking action

against anyone.

"Religion is a very sensitive [issue] in Bangladesh. We do not want a hasty decision to create a volatile situation in the country. The government wants to resolve the crisis politically."

He added, "The prime minister is looking into the matter herself."

Quader said there was no political understanding between the government and Hefajat.

FOUR SENT TO JAIL, REMAND HEARING TODAY

The four suspects arrested on charges of damaging the sculpture of Bangabandhu in Kushtia were sent to jail yesterday.

Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Rezaul Islam passed the order in the afternoon.

The court will hear today the police's appeal to place them on remand.

2 women raped in Gazipur, Noakhali

STAR REPORT

Two women were allegedly raped in Gazipur and Noakhali while a youth in Gazipur's Sreepur was sued over spreading secretly-recorded video footage of a teenage girl on social media.

In another incident, a madrasa teacher was arrested yesterday over raping a 16-year-old male student in Feni's Daganbhuiyan upazila.

Quoting the case statement, Moniruzzaman, inspector (investigation) of Sreepur Police Station, said Tauhidul Hasan Rakib, 25, of the upazila's Tepirbari village, gave an indecent proposal to an 18-year-old girl on Saturday.

As she declined the proposal, Rakib threatened to spread her secretly-recorded video footage, which he later did from his Facebook account, said the police official. The girl then filed the case with the police station yesterday.

A housewife, 32, filed a separate case with the police station yesterday, accusing Selim, son of Md Rafiq, of raping her.

In the case statement, she said her family have been having a land-related dispute with Selim for the last 25 years. Recently, Selim came to the house of one of her neighbours to discuss a case filed over the land issue. After the housewife went there, Selim raped her holding a knife to her throat.

The woman also accused him of threatening to gang-rape her if she disclosed the matter to anyone. Two others were also made accused for abetting the crime.

Inspector Moniruzzaman said they were investigating the cases. "We are trying to arrest the accused in the two cases," he said.

In Noakhali, a woman, 35, filed a rape case on Sunday night against a former expatriate, Md Ripon, who now lives in Chatkhil upazila.

The case statement says Ripon developed an intimate relationship with the victim after promising that he would marry her. But he married someone else three weeks ago and then went into hiding.

Chatkhil OC Anwarul Islam said they were trying to arrest Ripon.

In Feni, madrasa teacher Emdad Ullah, 27, was arrested over raping one of his students on multiple occasions in the past few months.

Police sources said law enforcers held the teacher after the 16-year-old boy informed the matter to some of his other teachers at the residential madrasa in Yeakubpur union of Daganbhuiyan.

The victim said he was raped in a room of the madrasa, where the teacher lived.

Councillor, publisher feud now talk of Sylhet city

Cases they filed against each other under investigation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The feud between a city corporation councillor and a local daily resulting in cases filed under Digital Security Act in Sylhet have been the talk of the town over the last few days.

The dispute started over a report published in the Ekattorer Kotha on November 28 alleging that ward-22 Councillor Saleh Ahmed Shalim grabbed land of a government school.

The first case was filed by a personal secretary of Nazrul Islam Babul, the publisher of Ekattorer Kotha, on December 2 against Shalim and four others with Kotwali Police Station on charges of spreading "defamatory speech" against the publisher on Facebook.

The other case filed by Shalim two days later with Shahporan Police Station accused Babul and 17 others of publishing and spreading fake news.

The others accused in the case filed by Babul's personal secretary Rana Miah are umayun Rashid Sumon, Kamal Uddin, Kazi Jubayer Ahmed and Ehsan Ahmed, who also shared the defamatory posts on Facebook.

Rana said, "The accused defamed the newspaper's publisher and editor in social media and I filed the case on behalf of the publisher."

The councillor on the other hand accused the publisher and others who shared the news on Facebook.

The news in question mentioned that the councillor was trying to grab the land of a government primary school and extorting the local land owners.

Contacted, Councillor Shalim, also a ruling Awami League Leader, said, "I saw the news online the day they published it. My supporters protested against the news on Facebook. In several interviews on Facebook, I said the publisher of the newspaper himself is a controversial industrialist. The news was published to defame me and I will take legal action against them."

"But to my surprise, they filed a case against me. Then I filed the case against them. I believe that the report intended to defame me," he said.

Officials said both the cases were being investigated.



Despite the red light at the back signalling pedestrians to halt movement, people cross the road near Green Herald School at Asad Avenue. The pushbuttons for pedestrian crossing were installed here last year, but the initiative has yielded little success for traffic management.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

PUSH BUTTON SIGNALS FOR PEDESTRIAN CROSSING DNCC pursuing it despite little evidence of utility

MATHEWS CHIRAN

People holding out their hands to stop speedy vehicles, buses stopping randomly to take in passengers, cars zooming past pedestrians crossing the road – this is the chaotic scenario at the road crossing in front of Brac University at the capital's Mohakhali.

But it should not be that way. Last year, after spending Tk 6,68,724, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) installed pedestrian crossing buttons to resolve all these issues.

This new technology enabled pedestrians to press buttons installed on both sides of the road to indicate that they want to cross. A countdown would begin for a certain period, showing red signal for vehicles to stop, and simultaneously, green signal for passengers to cross.

However, since installation, the system has been of no use. During a recent visit, this correspondent found the countdown timers not working, and some bulbs for the signals gouged out from the sockets.

"I don't know what it actually does. I never saw this being of use since installation," said Abdul Aziz, a security guard for an ATM just beside the button.

This situation is similar for pedestrian crossing buttons at the road in front of SFX Greenherald International School at Mohammadpur. DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam inaugurated the system there, which was installed at a cost of Tk 6,46,594, in the same year on October 24.

After a month of its inauguration, this newspaper did a story on the technical malfunctions of the system. As the buttons did not work properly, DNCC and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) kept staff to help people cross the road.

Despite the dismal performance of this system, DNCC recently installed another set of buttons, spending Tk 7,71,000, in front of Mirpur Commerce College.

Although the recently installed ones do not have apparent technical errors, people are not using the buttons properly.

Despite all this, DNCC is planning to install such buttons in 20 other points of the city, spending Tk 2,05,00,000.

The proposed 20 points were suggested by DMP. Authorities have already decided to install the system at Kuril Intersection, in front of Milestone College at Uttara Sector-11,

and in front of Gulshan Commerce College on Pragati Sarani.

DNCC's traffic engineering department implemented the system. DNCC officials said the technology is new, so it is difficult for them to make it work properly. Notable, they said the same thing last year, when this reporter pointed out the malfunctions. Also, while inaugurating the system at Mohammadpur a year ago, Mayor Atiqul had announced that those who would not abide by the signals of the button system would be punished under law. However, that did not happen.

According to DNCC, Mesarse Shine Enterprise, a local contractor, along with DNCC was responsible for setting up the buttons in Mohakhali and Mohammadpur, while Mesarse SM Rahman International was the contractor for Mirpur.

Engineer Khorshed Alam of Mesarse Sine Enterprise said they had to use local components due to DNCC's small budget, which resulted in the system suffering from errors while calculating timings.

According to him, DNCC has now directed Mesarse Shine Enterprise to buy components from abroad

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Padma Bridge in one year: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said it would take 10 to 12 months to complete other works of the long-cherished Padma bridge after installation of the last span.

Quader, also the general secretary of ruling Awami League, also hoped that the 41st and also the last span would be installed by Thursday. The first span was installed in September 2017.

He was speaking at a press conference on contemporary issues at his secretariat office. Asked whether the bridge would be opened for public on Victory Day next year, Quader said the prime minister is against the concept of inaugurating something on special day.

The 40st span of the Padma bridge was installed on December 4, making 6km stretch of the main structure visible. Only one more span is needed to complete the 6.15km-long bridge.

The current deadline of the fast-track project is June 2021, meaning project is likely to see another revision for time extension. The project cost rose to Tk 30,193 crore after several revisions.

Construction of the bridge started in November, 2015, to connect the country's southwestern region with the capital via road and rail.

Once in service, the 6.15km bridge will connect the capital with 21 southwestern districts. It is expected to boost the country's

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Ivermectin effective in treating mild Covid-19

Finds icddr,b study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Covid-19 patients that received a five-day course of the anti-parasitic drug ivermectin have shown an early viral clearance and improvements of blood biomarkers compared with other two control groups, researchers found in their study at icddr,b.

Investigators found the anti-parasitic drug to be safe and it has shown, at best, a modest benefit for mild case of coronavirus in the study under which patients were enrolled between June 17 and September 8 this year.

The study findings have been published in the International Journal of Infectious Diseases (IJID) on December 2, 2020.

Experts lauded the first-ever randomised clinical trial on the drug, saying it can be helpful for physicians to treat Covid-19 patients.

They, however, suggested not to take the drug without physicians' advice.

icddr,b, formally known as the International Center for Diarrheal Disease and Research, Bangladesh revealed the study findings supported by Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd at an event in Dhaka yesterday.

During the presentation, Dr Wasif Ali Khan, the chief investigator of the study said, "Despite a small sample size, the results provide evidence of potential benefit of early intervention with ivermectin for the treatment of adult patients diagnosed with mild Covid-19. The findings also conform to other global studies on ivermectin as a treatment for Covid-19."

The randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial evaluated orally administered ivermectin alone (12mg once daily for 5 days), ivermectin single dose (12mg) in combination with doxycycline (200mg stat doxycycline on day one, followed by 100mg 12 hourly for next four days) compared with placebo among 68 hospitalised patients of Covid-19 in Dhaka.

Patient distribution was 22, 23 and 23 in each group respectively who were from Mugda Medical College Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital, and Dhaka Medical College Hospital in Dhaka.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Woman mobbed for smoking in public

Video goes viral; women in Rajshahi say it's not an isolated incident

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

[WARNING: Smoking is injurious to health.]

A young woman, sitting with a man, was smoking near Rajshahi's Circuit House Road -- a public space -- on Sunday afternoon when a man appeared and started shouting at her, asking to leave immediately. Soon, some other men joined him in rebuking her for "smoking in a public place".

A video of the incident that went viral on social media showed the man repeatedly and rudely telling the woman to put out her cigarette and leave. The woman tried to argue, asking the man what she had done wrong, and pointing out that there were several men nearby who were also smoking.

The mob that formed around the woman and her friend started getting louder and at one stage she had to leave, humiliated.

While she was leaving, someone in the mob was heard saying that "this kind of insolent behaviour is a reason for rape".

The video also shows a youth standing up for the woman and questioning the men verbally abusing her, asking whether they have any authority to stop her from smoking. He also faced the mob's wrath.

According to women's rights activists in Rajshahi, this was not an isolated incident; rather, it was part of a growing, disturbing trend happening in different city areas over the last few years.

Men, either in groups or alone, are harassing women for not following what they refer to as "socially acceptable behaviour", they said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

6-YR-OLD HRIDOY MURDER HC acquits three death row convicts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday acquitted three people who were sentenced to death by a trial court in a case filed for abducting and killing a six-year-old in Cox's Bazar in 2013.

HC acquitted Abdul Khaleque, Bahadur Miah and Abdus Shukkur of the charges of abducting and killing Md Hridoy, as allegations against them were not proven.

The HC bench of Justice Krishna Debnath and Justice ASM Abdul Mobin gave the verdict after hearing the appeals filed by accused Khaleque and Bahadur, death reference (lower court record) of the case and examining relevant documents and evidence.

They are now in the jail while Shukkur is on the run, Mohammad Shishir Manir, a defence lawyer for the two, told The Daily Star.

He said the HC bench acquitted the three as it was proven that Khaleque and Bahadur were tortured and forced to give confessional statements to the magistrate concerned.

Shishir Manir said there is no other evidence and documents in the case to prove the allegations against the three.

VIOLATING 2017 DIRECTIVE SC summons ex-DG of pry education

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday summoned the then director general of the directorate of primary education Dr Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, now defence secretary, and four other government officials to appear before this court on December 14 for not complying with its 2017 directive over appointing a qualified candidate to the post of primary school teacher.

An Appellate Division bench led by Justice Muhammad Imman Ali passed the order while hearing a contempt of court rule issued by this court earlier against the officials.

The apex court had issued the rule on March 2 this year following a contempt of court petition filed by a Beauty Begum, who stood first in the test for the post of primary school teacher in Gaibandha in 2008.

Four other officials are deputy director of the directorate of primary education Md Ramzan Ali, district

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

BIWTA recovers land 'grabbed by Haji Salim'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday demolished part of a petrol pump illegally constructed on land surrounding Buriganga River. The land was allegedly occupied by lawmaker Haji Mohammad Salim.

BIWTA also recovered a piece of land surrounding Buriganga, allegedly occupied by the lawmaker, locals said.

Modina Petrol Pump was running occupying part of BIWTA's land, and they have demolished illegal parts of the structure, said a BIWTA official.

The BIWTA team, led by its executive magistrate Mahubul Jamil, also demolished 171 illegal structures from Buriganga riverbank at Old Dhaka's Islambagh and Kamalbagh areas.

Kamalbagh residents had removed their belongings before the second day of the drive. People were seen removing machinery from their shops.

Earlier on Sunday, associates of Haji Salim had pre-emptively torn down parts of an illegal structure ahead of yesterday's drive at Old Dhaka's Shoari Ghat.

The Dhaka-7 MP had allegedly occupied land and put up a signboard of "Modina Water Tank" there, locals said, adding that his associates had torn down parts of a warehouse and some water tank models at the area.

The BIWTA team also demolished the front side of "Chand Sarder Cold Storage", allegedly owned by the lawmaker, who constructed illegal structures in front of the storage on the riverbank.

BIWTA Joint Director AKM Arif Uddin said they started a massive drive to recover land surrounding four rivers around the capital on January 29 last year, and have demolished around 8,000 illegal structures in different phases.



Many illegal tin-shed structures were demolished in yesterday's drive by Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority at Old Dhaka's Islambagh and Kamalbagh areas near Buriganga River. Shopkeepers and residents had taken their belongings out before the eviction took place.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



No matter the size of his business, for kids, this man is the embodiment of everything good and happy. In fact, one does not even need to buy from him to share this happiness. For those who have the eye for it, just a glimpse of his bizarre balloons wind-surfing from the back of a hired auto-rickshaw suffices. This photo was taken on Friday from Keraniganj.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Sangram editor walks out on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Editor of Bangla daily the Sangram, Abul Asad, got released from jail yesterday following the bail order from the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Asad's lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir told The Daily Star that his client walked out of Kashimpur jail last evening and they have talked to each other over phone.

He said Asad was arrested on December 13, 2019 in a case filed under the Digital Security Act on charges of "circulating provocative report and sedition".

The High Court on September 23 this year granted bail to Asad following a bail petition filed by him in connection with the case.

The state later moved a petition before the Appellate Division challenging the HC bail order. On November 5, the Appellate Division dismissed the state's petition and upheld the order, Manir added.

Police detained Asad on December 13

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Partnership between pvt sectors of both countries can be a game-changer

Says Bangladesh envoy to Netherlands; virtual investment summit begins today

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh seeks Dutch investments in agriculture, water and light engineering -- the areas where The Netherlands has superior technologies that Bangladesh needs for boosting productivity and exportability in eco-friendly way.

"Large share of Dutch economy is based on agriculture. It also faces serious challenges of climate change, but the country has been doing extraordinarily well in these sectors due to its technological innovation," said Riaz Hamidullah, Bangladesh Ambassador to The Netherlands.

He said this just ahead of two-day Bangladesh-Netherlands Investment Summit 2020 beginning today.

The Bangladesh embassy in The Netherlands with support from the Dutch government is organising the event that will feature three themes -- Agriculture & Agro-Food, Water and Maritime and Light Engineering.

Private sector business from The Netherlands and Bangladesh will participate in the virtual event where more than 50 Dutch companies have already registered, Riaz Hamidullah told this correspondent yesterday.

Explaining the background of the event, the ambassador said Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Earn people's trust thru' your work: IGP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Police personnel should earn people's trust through their works, said Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed in Barishal yesterday.

"We have to provide services to people unconditionally. In return, we will get their respect and love," he said while exchanging views with about 2,500 policemen at the district police lines in the afternoon.

Barishal Metropolitan Police Commissioner Md Shahabuddin Khan was present as special guest at the meeting with Barishal Range DIG Md Shafiqul Islam in the chair.

Earlier, the IGP inaugurated the newly constructed office building of the superintendent of police on Polytechnic Road in Barishal city.

Barishal City Corporation Mayor Semiat Sadiq Abdullah and government high officials of the district were present at that time.

JCI Dhaka holds assembly

CITY DESK

Junior Chamber International (JCI) Dhaka Entrepreneurs, a non-profit international non-governmental organisation, held its 2021 general assembly (GA) at a city hotel yesterday.

At the GA, the executive committee of JCI for 2021 was declared, according to a press release.

Outgoing local president Kudrat E Ebtihaj conducted the assembly where national governing board members of JCI Bangladesh, executive board members and general members of JCI Dhaka Entrepreneurs were present.

Of the new committee, Arefeen Ahmed Rafi was elected president; Lisan Hoque secretary general; Ashan Ullah Chowdhury treasurer; Md Ali Reasat Khan general legal council; while Md Shariful Alam Shabuj and Nurul Hasnat were elected directors, the press release said.

Padma Bridge

FROM PAGE 3

gross domestic product by 1.2 percent.

When work of most development projects was suspended due to the pandemic, Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project work continued. But it suffered due to lack of workers -- Chinese and local -- and poor supply of construction materials since January, said officials.

The project authority was able to bring back pace after Chinese nationals returned to work in May. But strong currents in Padma started causing problems, they said.

No span could be installed for four months after June 10, due to strong currents, officials said.

Besides, at least 192 railway stingers and 220 roadway decks, supposed to be used for construction of the bridge, went into the Padma on July 31 due to erosion at a yard.

SC summons

FROM PAGE 3

primary education officer of Gaibandha Aminul, its Sadar thana education officer Md Abdus Salam and assistant thana education officer Masumul Islam, Beauty's lawyer ABM Altaf Hossain told The Daily Star.

They will have to explain to the Appellate Division on December 14 why they have not implemented its order, he said.

Lawyer Altaf Hossain said the government officials recruited Nazma Sultana, who stood second position in the examination for the post of primary school teacher in Gaibandha in 2008, depriving Beauty Begum.

MARKETPLACE FOR SALE
<https://remo.com.bd> is a reputed two-year-old online real estate marketplace built with the latest and fastest technology. Our whole business with technology and data is for sale. **Contact: 01752561149**

HSBC Dhanmondi branch moving to a new location

From 13 December 2020, Sunday, HSBC Dhanmondi Branch will be relocating to: Bay's Park Height (10th floor), Road-9, Holding-2, Dhanmondi, Mirpur Road, Dhaka-1205.

The banking services provided from the existing location will be available until 10 December 2020, Thursday.

Our new premise is located in the heart of Dhanmondi for your convenience and has a larger area which would help us to serve you better. The new branch is the first sky branch with most advanced air quality management system and equipped with auto queue management system to give customers the finest experience.

Should you require any assistance, please contact 16240 (accessible from within Bangladesh) and +88 096127 16240 (accessible from overseas), 9 am to 9 pm Bangladesh time, 7 days a week, except government holidays.

brac	
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি (ফ্রেমওয়ার্ক চুক্তি)	
প্রকল্পের নাম	ব্র্যাক এইচসিএমপি
তহবিলের উৎস	দাতা তহবিল
দরপত্রের বিষয়	গাড়ী ভাড়া ও অনুরূপ সেবা
দরপত্রের সূত্র নং এবং তারিখ	আইএফটি/ব্র্যাক/বিপিডি/এইচএমপি/ডিসেম্বর-২০২০-০১ ৮ ডিসেম্বর, ২০২০
চুক্তির সময়সীমা	০২ (দুই) বছরের জন্য
দরপত্র ডকুমেন্ট প্রাপ্তির স্থান	নিম্নে উল্লিখিত ওয়েবপোর্টাল থেকে ৮ ডিসেম্বর ২০২০ থেকে ৬ জানুয়ারী ২০২১ পর্যন্ত সর্বশেষ দরদাতাগণ বিনামূল্যে দরপত্র সংগ্রহ করতে পারবেন। দরপত্রের জন্য জিজিটি করুন procurement.brac.net/tenderhcmp
প্রি-টেন্ডার মিটিং এর তারিখ, স্থান ও সময়	১৪ ডিসেম্বর ২০২০ তারিখে সকাল ১০.০০টা থেকে গুগোল মিট এর মাধ্যমে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। লিঙ্কঃ https://meet.google.com/wxq-qeog-dui বর্তমান করোনাকালীন পরিস্থিতিতে আমরা বশরিরে যে কোন মিটিং নিরস্ত রাখি।
দরপত্রের সঙ্গে জামানত (কেরতযোগ্য)	স্বল্পস্ট্রিট দরদাতাগণ দরপত্রের সঙ্গে ২,০০,০০০/- তফসিল ব্যাংক হতে পে-অর্ডার বা ব্যাংক ড্রাফট এর মাধ্যমে "ব্র্যাক" বরাবর দাখিল করতে হবে।
দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	প্রোকিউরমেন্ট বিভাগ, এইচসিএমপি, ব্র্যাক, হ্যাচারী জোন, মেরিন ড্রাইভ রোড, কক্সবাজার এ রক্ষিত টেন্ডার বক্স এ ৭ জানুয়ারী ২০২১ এর মধ্যে প্রতিদিন সকাল ০৯.০০টা থেকে বেলা ২.০০ টা পর্যন্ত।
দরপত্র ঘোষণার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	প্রোকিউরমেন্ট বিভাগ, এইচসিএমপি, ব্র্যাক, হ্যাচারী জোন, মেরিন ড্রাইভ রোড, কক্সবাজার। তারিখঃ ৭ জানুয়ারী ২০২১ বিকাল ২.০০ টা।
কাজের বিস্তারিত বিবরণ ও শর্তাবলী	দরপত্র সিডিউলে বর্ণিত আছে।

প্রোকিউরমেন্ট বিভাগ, এইচসিএমপি, ব্র্যাক, হ্যাচারী জোন, মেরিন ড্রাইভ রোড, কক্সবাজার। প্রয়োজনে যোগাযোগঃ ০১৮৭৪-৪৫৫৬০১

Two popular restaurants in Sylhet fined

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A mobile court of Rapid Action Battalion fined Sylhet's popular Pach Bhai and Panshi restaurants Tk 6.5 lakh for preparing and serving unhygienic food.

A team of Rab-9, led by Executive Magistrate Md Akhtaruzzaman, conducted the drive at the restaurants yesterday. The mobile court fined Pach Bhai Restaurant Tk 3 lakh and Panshi Restaurant Tk 3.5 lakh. Both were fined for preparing and serving food mixed with harmful chemicals, fabric colour and expired food flavour, said the executive magistrate.

Both restaurants were also seen preparing food under unhygienic conditions, he said while talking to journalists after the drive. "The drive is part of our regular marketing monitoring. Owners of both restaurants have been cautioned," the official added.

Ivermectin effective

FROM PAGE 3

The study demonstrated that patients in the five-day ivermectin group were 77 percent more likely to have early viral clearance on day-14 compared to those who received a combination of ivermectin and doxycycline, and placebo.

It also showed that on day three, some 18 percent of the patients in the group treated with ivermectin alone began to show viral clearance while this was at three percent among the patients taking the combination of ivermectin and doxycycline and three percent among the placebo group.

On day seven, it stood at 50 percent, 30 percent, and 13 percent respectively.

The odds of improvement in clinical status with the five-day treatment course of ivermectin versus ivermectin plus doxycycline, and placebo were also favourable, trending toward reduction of severity of infection indicated by improvement in the blood bio-markers, Dr Wasif Ali Khan said.

Biomarkers including the C-reactive protein (CRP), Lactate Dehydrogenase (LDH) and Ferritin levels notably dropped from the baseline to day seven in the ivermectin-only group compared to other two groups.

Speaking as the chief guest, Nazmul Hassan, Managing Director of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Limited, said, "We are happy that the treatment regimen shows promise and that will indeed strengthen our fight against COVID-19 and help avoid many untimely deaths."

Prof Dr Ahmedul Kabir, the secretary general of Bangladesh Society of Medicine said they would include this drug in the national treatment protocol. "However, there is no chance for using the drug outside of clinical prescription," he mentioned.

Prof Tareq Alam said, "The basis for prescribing ivermectin was only observational so far. Now this study has created a scientific base. We, however, will need further study. We have been conducting another such study at BMCH."

Dr Tahmeed Ahmed, acting executive director of icddr;b; Professor Dr Syed Modasser Ali, former advisor to the Prime Minister and chairman of Bangladesh Medical Research Council, and Dr MA Hasnat, assistant professor at Kurmitola General Hospital spoke at the event among others.

Partnership

FROM PAGE 3

and Netherlands have many similarities. Agriculture in both the countries share the challenges of climate change as they have large coastlines, while they also have large agriculture sectors.

The west European country that is one third of Bangladesh in terms of size exports more than \$100 billion worth food to the global market. The major agriculture-based exports of the country include chili, tomato, cucumber and apple.

A significant portion of Dutch agricultural exports also consists of fresh-cut plants, flowers, and flower bulbs, with Netherlands exporting two-thirds of the world's total.

With only some 17 million plus population, The Netherlands is the world's 16th largest economy.

"Much of this is because of Netherland's efficient technology. This is where we lag behind in Bangladesh," said Riaz Hamidullah.

He said as Bangladesh's exports still now heavily depend on readymade garment and needs diversification as the country moves to become one of top 30 economies in ten years.

Agriculture is a real potential sector from that perspective. Citing an example, he said post-harvest loss of fruits in Bangladesh is 30 to 40 percent.

"Imagine if that loss is zero and the fruit

is value added and is packaged in a way to be exported to the global market. This can earn huge amount of foreign currency."

Not only that, augmenting productivity, food processing, packaging and cold storage facilities for connecting the international supply chain are the issues most important for Bangladesh.

Fish and livestock are the other two major areas that need massive change for boosting productivity and exportability, which is possible through technological innovation.

"You see, Bangladesh's Ilish is world famous. But, the problem for us is packaging for international market," the ambassador said, adding that these are the areas where Dutch businesses can come in and invest.

For long, Dutch businesses have not been finding their counterparts in Bangladesh. Now, they have found a number of Bangladeshi conglomerates. Strategic partnership between the private sectors of both the countries can be a game-changer, Riaz Hamidullah said.

Apart from food and agro-processing technologies, he said, The Netherlands has reached excellence in managing its coast and continues to innovate.

As the future industries will need to be eco-friendly, Dutch technologies can help Bangladeshi industries in a big way.

Sangram editor

FROM PAGE 3

last year after a mob vandalised the daily Sangram's office over publishing a report that termed Quader Molla a "martyr".

Molla, former assistant secretary general of Jamaat and known infamously as "the butcher of Mirpur" during the Liberation War, was hanged in 2013 after

being convicted in a case for committing crimes against humanity during the war by the Supreme Court on September 17 that year.

Afzal Hossain, a freedom fighter, filed the case with Hatirjheel Police Station.

Asad was sent to Kashimpur jail on December 14 of 2019.

DNCC pursuing

FROM PAGE 3

and install them at Mohakhali and Mohammadpur. However, this will cost DNCC an extra Tk 2,90,000 for each system, totalling to Tk 5,80,000.

EXPERTS' TAKE

Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) President Dr Akhter Mahmud said, "It is unfortunate that the system does not work properly. Before installing such systems, authorities must conduct primary assessment to see whether they will work."

Assistant Professor of Accident Research Institute of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology Kazi Md Shifun Newaz said, "There are few conditions for setting up such buttons. The system works best where pedestrian density is light. It works that way in European countries."

"But it will not be that effective in a densely populated city like Dhaka. It will be problematic both for smooth movement of vehicles and pedestrians. But if authorities still want to install them, they should run pilot tests and see the success rate, and based on that, they can reconsider," he said.

"DNCC should make a report and run a study on the currently installed buttons. Statistics should show whether they work the way they are supposed to.

They can then proceed to set up more buttons. Otherwise, they should think of something else," he added.

Also, authorities need to raise awareness about the system if they are keen to install it and make it work, he opined.

DNCC'S EXPLANATION

DNCC Chief Engineer Brig Gen Md Amirul Islam did admit that they do not have any report on the system's success rate, and said they are focusing on educational institutions, as it is currently the best alternative for students' safety.

"We are setting up these buttons in front of educational institutions, so students, teachers and guardians can be benefited. However, to get full benefit, people will have to be more aware, and that will take time," he said. DNCC will train students and teachers on how to properly use the system, he added.

"We need to bring the accident rate down. Therefore, we have built speed-breakers in front of the buttons...Without all these arrangements, vehicles will not stop, and it would be difficult for students to cross roads," he opined, adding that such areas are best for installing the system.

He also welcomed anyone who can come up with a better alternative.

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB)
 TCB Bhaban, 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215
 IMPORT SECTION

Cancellation of Invitation for Tender (International) of 3,000 (±10%) M. Ton Onion

Invitation Ref. No. 26.05.0000.016.10.092.20.465 Date: 04-11-2020

This is to inform all concerned that the Invitation for International Tender Ref. No. 26.05.0000.016.10.092.20.465 dated: 04.11.2020 for 3,000 (±10%) M. Ton Onion is hereby cancelled for some unavoidable circumstances.

Md. Shekhabur Rahaman
 Chief Officer (Commercial)

GD-1952

Woman mobbed

FROM PAGE 3

Initially, such incidents of harassing women were limited to Rajshahi University campus but gradually, similar incidents started happening in Uposohor and Lakshmipur, said Prof Mahbuba Kaniz, general secretary of RU unit of Bangladesh Mohila Parishad.

In early November, Rajshahi's Rabintra Sangeet Sammiloni Parishad general secretary Monira Mithi shared on Facebook that some women in burqa harassed her in public for not covering her head.

Talking to The Daily Star, she said she was harassed three times in the last two years. "I have been living in this city for several decades. Such harassment is quite new to me," she said.

She described her latest experience at Uposohor New Market on November 7 and how she was rebuked by some women for not covering her head.

Under Mithi's Facebook post, dozens of people -- mostly women -- commented, many of whom shared their experience of being harassed in different city areas in the span of the last two-three years.

One Mitalee Sarker wrote that she and her mother experienced similar harassment while shopping at Shaheb Bazar. Nibedita Chatterjee wrote such incidents happened to her despite wearing shankha -- bangles which Hindu women usually wear.

Contacted, Rajshahi Metropolitan Police's spokesperson and Additional Deputy Commissioner Golam Ruhul Kuddus said such incidents were never reported to police. "Rajshahi city is comparatively safer than other cities in the country and the city's police are active in maintaining this status," he said, wondering why such incidents have not been reported despite occurring for years.

Harassing people and verbally abusing them are serious crimes as per law, he said and added, if reported, police will take action.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

RECRUITMENT NOTICE (নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি)

SAHCO International Ltd. One of the leading multidisciplinary companies giving highest emphasis on the selection and development of its human resources is looking for smart, energetic and hard working personnel for the following positions:

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Responsibilities and Duties:

- Maximize organic traffic growth by establishing a planned SEO target keyword list and working with IT Content, and Social Media
- Provide key inputs for writing effective SEO content for websites and social media platforms
- Optimize website content, image, website structure, landing pages, etc.
- Monitor and evaluate search results and search performance across major traffic channels to improve rankings (Google Analytics and Search Console)
- Manage off-page and on-page optimization and reporting on performance (link building, content-based link)
- Review all technical issues related to SEO, provide solutions and recommend fixes promptly
- Conduct keyword research and prepare detailed SEO strategy reports.

Hands-on Knowledge on SEO Tools:

- Google Analytics, Google Search Console, Google's algorithm updates
- Firebase
- Ahrefs/Moz
- SEMrush/Longtail Pro
- Clicktale/Heat Map
- SEO Audit
- Basic understanding of HTML coding and how websites work
- Understanding of web design and site structures
- Good knowledge over backlink creation (content-based)

Experience:

- The incumbent should have at least 2 years of working experience in SEO and related areas

Required Skills & Qualifications:

- Must have good communication skills
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work under pressure and timeline
- Bachelor Degree in any discipline (major in Engineering, Economics or Statistics will receive priority). Some Marketing experience is also preferred.

Experience in using and maintaining Teleprompters will add an advantage to the candidate.

SAHCO international limited is looking for a professional Search Engine Optimizer (SEO) to manage all search engine optimization and related activities. In this regard, the incumbent will be responsible for content strategy, link building, and keyword strategy to increase organic traffic as well as rankings on all major search networks and maximize ROI.

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Responsibilities & Duties:

- Maintaining official correspondence with International Companies and Government Organisations.
- Communications will need to be maintained over phone, text, e-mail, formal written letters and in person at the head office or on site.
- Must work closely with the IT, engineering and management teams to process the content of messages being sent and received.

Experience:

- The incumbent should have some experience working in any written media.

Required Skills & Qualifications:

- Must have high proficiency in English and knowledge of formal correspondence style and etiquette.
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- Ability to work under pressure and timeline
- Bachelor Degree in any discipline (major in English, Engineering or Economics will receive priority). Some Marketing experience is also preferred.

SAHCO international limited is looking for a professional Business Correspondence Specialist to manage all official communications of the company. In this regard, the incumbent will be responsible for receiving, processing and reporting all incoming communications to the relevant officers as well as drafting appropriate responses and outgoing communications with the advice of senior officers.

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- Drafting eloquent, insightful and thought-provoking speeches for Syed Abul Hossain for various private, government and international events.
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Experience:

- The incumbent should have some experience working in any written media.

Required Skills & Qualifications:

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- Ability to work under pressure and timeline
- Bachelor Degree in any discipline (major in English, Political Science or Economics will receive priority).

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SIPRI RESEARCH INSTITUTE REPORT

US, China dominated arms market in 2019

AFP, Stockholm

US and Chinese companies dominated the global arms market in 2019, while the Middle East made its first appearance among the 25 biggest weapons manufacturers, a report by the SIPRI research institute said yesterday.

The US arms industry accounted for 61 percent of sales by the world's "Top 25" manufacturers last year, ahead of China's 15.7 percent, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Total sales by the "Top 25" rose by 8.5 percent to \$361 billion, or 50 times the annual budget of the UN's peacekeeping operations.

Six US companies and three Chinese firms were in the top 10, rounded out by Britain's BAE Systems in seventh spot.

"China and the United States are the two biggest states in terms of global arms spending, with companies cut to size," Lucie Beraud-Sudreau, director of SIPRI's arms and military expenditure programme, told AFP.

The US has dominated the market for decades, but for China -- whose companies' sales rose by almost five percent in 2019 -- "this increase corresponds to the implementation of reforms to modernise the People's Liberation Army underway since 2015," she said.

US companies Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and General Dynamics clinched the top five spots, while China's AVIC, CETC and Norinco held spots six, eight and nine. US group L3Harris Technologies was in 10th place.



A farmer plays a snake charmer's flute next to a buffalo, symbolising the government not listening to their demands, as farmers protest against the recent agriculture reforms, at the Rashtriya Prerna Sthal and Green Garden Park in Noida, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

China calls for new talks with US after Biden win

China's top diplomat yesterday called for the resumption of talks with the incoming US administration of president-elect Joe Biden, as relations between the world's two largest economies continued to nose-dive. Beijing and Washington have locked horns over issues from trade and China's human rights record to its expansionist ambitions in the South China Sea. But speaking during a video call with the board of the US-China Business Council (USCBC) yesterday, foreign minister Wang Yi said "the two sides should work together." "We need to strive to restart the dialogue, get back on the right track, and rebuild mutual trust in the next phase of China-US relations," he said, according to a readout of his remarks on the foreign ministry website.

Pro-Maduro candidates win control of Venezuela congress

Candidates supporting Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro have secured control of the national congress, the electoral board said yesterday, after a parliamentary election which opposition leaders boycotted because of what they said was fraud. The electoral board's president, Indira Alfonzo, said in comments broadcast on state television that 67.6% of 5.2 million votes cast in Sunday's election were for pro-Maduro candidates, but



only 31% of eligible voters participated in the ballot. The result returns congress -- the last state institution not in the hands of the ruling Socialist Party -- to Maduro's allies despite an economy in ruins, US sanctions that stifle the OPEC nation's oil exports and the emigration of some 5 million citizens.

Australian surfer survives great white shark attack

An Australian surfer told yesterday how he managed to paddle back to shore and walk hundreds of meters to get help after being attacked by a great white shark. The 29-year-old said he had been enjoying a "normal days surfing" on Sunday on Kangaroo Island -- off Australia's southern coast -- when he had a sensation of "being hit by a truck" on his left side. "It bit me around my back, buttock and elbow and took a chunk out of my board," the surfer said in a statement. "I got a glimpse of the shark as it let go and disappeared." Police said a member of the public took the man from D'Estrees Bay and was met by paramedics while on route to the island's main city of Kingscote.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

TACKLING THIRD COVID-19 WAVE

Japan, S Korea deploy military

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

South Korea and Japan are deploying their militaries to assist healthcare workers in combatting Covid-19, with South Korean soldiers called in to expand coronavirus testing and tracing and Japanese military nurses tapped to fill a shortage of staff at hospitals in the hard-hit regions of Hokkaido and Osaka.

Moon Jae-in, the president of South Korea, yesterday ordered the government to mobilise "every available" resource to track infections and to expand testing by deploying the military and more people from the public service, presidential Blue House spokesman Chung Man-ho told a briefing.

The order came as the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) reported 615 new coronavirus cases as of midnight on Sunday, capping a month of triple-digit daily increases that have led to 8,311 confirmed patients in



quarantine, the most ever.

South Korea has avoided lockdowns but used an intensive system of tracing, testing and quarantining to tamp down two earlier waves of infection.

With this third wave, however, the government has faced increasing criticism as cases continue to rise despite measures such as mask mandates, curfews for restaurants and other businesses and restricted public transportation.

Moon said testing sites should

operate longer hours to allow workers to get tested at their convenience and more drive-through testing facilities should be set up, Chung said.

In Japan, chief government spokesman Katsunobu Kato said yesterday Self-Defense Forces nurses were preparing to be deployed to Hokkaido and Osaka to help treat a surge in coronavirus infections as soon as the two prefecture governments request it.

In northern Hokkaido, there has been infection clusters at two hospitals in the city of Asahikawa, according to the NHK broadcaster. The Asahikawa Kosei Hospital has a total of 217 confirmed cases and the privately-run Yoshida Hospital has 184.

The latter sent a request to Hokkaido's governor asking for military assistance, saying the city's medical association "is overburdened and there is no alternative", NHK reported.

Decision time nears as Brexit hit the wall

AFP, Brussels

Post-Brexit trade talks between the EU and UK neared a decisive point yesterday as Europe pushed a leaders summit later in the week as the final chance for a deal.

Chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier told MEPs that Wednesday was the effective deadline for a breakthrough as talks with his UK counterpart David Frost dragged on in Brussels.

Barnier and Frost were wrangling once more yesterday before reporting back to their respective bosses, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The two leaders were set to speak by phone at around 5:00 pm Brussels time (1600 GMT), a call that a diplomat said would assess where matters stood and likely ask that the negotiators push ahead.

Barnier told a briefing of EU envoys that negotiations were still blocked over fishing rights, rules for fair trade and an enforcement mechanism, still the thorniest problems since talks began eight months ago.

All eyes are on an EU summit on Thursday, when the outline of a deal -- or an admission of the failure to find one -- will be put to the bloc's 27 leaders.

A senior EU diplomat said the leaders would either "welcome a deal" if there was one there, or demand for the urgent preparation of contingency measures in the event talks failed.

"These are going to be decisive hours for the future of our UK relations, and I guess we are at the make it or break it moment," the diplomat told reporters.



Container with Coronavirus disease vaccines from China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd are seen prepared to be brought to PT Bio Farma (Persero), in the first shipment to Indonesia at Soekarno Hatta International airport in Tangerang near Jakarta yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

INCLUSION IN NUKE TALKS

Iran ministry dismisses Saudi call

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday flatly dismissed a call by Saudi Arabia for Gulf states to be consulted on any potential negotiations with the Islamic republic on its nuclear programme.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan had on Saturday sought that the kingdom be "fully consulted" on "what goes on vis a vis the negotiations with Iran."

The request was rejected yesterday by Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh.

"Everyone is free to talk, but it's better that they do not talk above their level so that they don't embarrass themselves," he told reporters.

Japan boosts AI funding to match lonely hearts

AFP, Tokyo

Japan is seeking to boost its flagging birthrate by funding the use of artificial intelligence to help match lonely hearts, an official said yesterday.

Although it might not conjure thoughts of romance, AI tech can match a wider and smarter range of potential suitors, the cabinet official told AFP.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's government plans to allocate two billion yen (\$19 million) in the next fiscal year to back local authorities that run schemes to help their residents find love, he said.

Around half of the nation's 47 prefectures offer matchmaking services and some of them have already introduced AI systems, according to the cabinet office.

The human-run matchmaking services often use standardised forms to list people's interests and hobbies, and AI systems can perform more advanced analysis of this data.

"We are especially planning to offer subsidies to local governments operating or starting up matchmaking projects that



use AI," the official said.

"We hope this support will help reverse the decline in the nation's birthrate."

Japan's fertility rate -- the number of children a woman is expected to have in her lifetime -- was 1.36 last year, one of the world's lowest and far below the rate needed to maintain a population.

Its rapidly ageing population, also a result of long life expectancy, poses a major headache for Japanese policymakers trying to ensure a shrinking workforce can pay for the ballooning cost of welfare.

NEW ANTI-CONVERSION LAW

Police in northern India arrest 10 men

REUTERS, Lucknow

Police in northern India have arrested 10 men for allegedly compelling women to change their religion after getting married, using a new anti-conversion law popularly called the "Love Jihad" law, officials said yesterday.

Last month, Uttar Pradesh state became the first Indian province to pass a law against forced or fraudulent religious conversions, laying out prison terms for anyone compelling others to convert their faith or luring them into these conversions through marriage.

The anti-conversion law does not name any religion but critics call it Islamophobic for being solely imposed with the objective of preventing "Love Jihad", which hardline Hindu groups describe as a conspiracy to convert gullible Hindu women to Islam by misleading them with promises of love and marriage.

Officials in Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, said the law will help prevent fraudulent religious conversions and was designed to protect young women.

The federal government and the Uttar Pradesh government are both controlled by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

Four senior police officials said 10 men were arrested last week from different parts of Uttar Pradesh based on separate criminal complaints lodged by parents who alleged their daughters were abducted by Muslim men.

"We are using the new law to only arrest those men where we have proof to show it is a clear case of forced religious conversion," said one police official, speaking on conditions of anonymity as he was not authorised to brief the press.

Ethiopia scorns guerrilla war fears

UN team shot at in Tigray

REUTERS, Addis ababa

Ethiopia's government yesterday denied that northern forces whom its troops have fought for a month would be able to mount a guerrilla insurgency, while diplomats said a United Nations team was shot at while trying to visit a refugee camp.

Federal troops have seized the regional capital Mekelle from the former local ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and declared an end to their month-long offensive.

But TPLF leaders say they are fighting back on various fronts around Mekelle. Ethiopia experts fear a drawn-out insurgency with a destabilising impact around east Africa.

"The criminal clique pushed a patently false narrative that its fighters and supporters are battle-hardened and well-armed, posing the risk of protracted insurgency in the rugged mountains of Tigray," Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said in a statement.

"It also claimed that it has managed to undertake strategic retreat with all its capability and regional government apparatus intact."

There was no immediate TPLF response.



Visitors take photographs with their children in front of the Christmas decorations at a terminal of the Changi International Airport in Singapore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

LAW INTERVIEW

The belief that NHRC carries the voice of the masses has been shaken

Dr. Mizanur Rahman is a Professor of Law, at the University of Dhaka and the former Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh. He is the founder coordinator of Professional Legal Education in Bangladesh (Continuing Legal Education Programme of the Bangladesh Bar Council), pioneer in curriculum designing and introduction of Clinical Legal Education in Bangladesh and pioneer of Street Law in Bangladesh. Professor Rahman is experienced in institution building and has been a consultant to organizations such as UNICEF, ILO, UNDP, The World Bank, Save the Children-UK, the European Commission etc. He also founded Empowerment through Law of the Common People (ELCOP), a human rights organisation. On the eve of World Human Rights Day 2020, **Psynhe Wadud** and **Tahseen Lubaba** from Law Desk talk to him on the following issues.

Law Desk (LD): How would you evaluate the overall situation of human rights compliance in Bangladesh right now?

Mizanur Rahman (MR): The human rights situation in the country has experienced ups and downs over the years. There were times when we were quite pleased that a certain degree of human rights compliance was being maintained, especially in a developing country like Bangladesh. However, there have also been times when the condition had deteriorated. In my opinion, this cannot be linked to any specific political regime - with all

construed as ignorance, it is also a reflection of their helplessness and attitude towards the system in general. It is indeed saddening that even after nearly 50 years of independence, the impoverished people are left behind.

Moreover, the pandemic has clearly revealed the fragility and inadequacy of our healthcare system. Although there was a shortage of necessary equipment, in response to the Honorable PM's question, not a single member of the local authorities said that they were unprepared. But when the pandemic hit, the real scenario became apparent. For these reasons, it is crucial that we

European Union of including human-rights compliance as a requirement that must be met in order to receive development aid and GSP facilities from EU member states.

LD: How do you evaluate the criticisms that the National Human Rights Commission faces on a regular basis?

MR: This is a delicate question - especially because there was a time when I led the organisation too. It saddens me to say that NHRC has not lived up to our expectations and played the role that it ought to have performed, particularly keeping pace with the needs of the current times. The people have not heard much from the NHRC during the recent incidents of human rights violations. The belief that NHRC carries the voice of the masses has been shaken and people are doubtful of its relevance.

In the past, although there may have been some failures, people knew, at least to some extent, that they could reach out to the NHRC with their grievances. This public confidence has weakened significantly. This is also true for other government institutions as well. When the organisations that are essential for the flourishing of democracy weakens, it poses a grave risk to the overall human rights compliance situation within the country. It is important that we evaluate where we stand in this regard.

LD: Are the constraints mostly practical or legal?

MR: One of the reasons behind the shortcomings of the NHRC is the National Human Rights Commission Act itself. The law has significantly reduced the powers and functions of the NHRC. When we were first evaluated by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) (which at the time was known as International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights), we received a B status which reflects partial compliance with the Paris Principles, despite tremendous works, research and



This is indeed disappointing.

LD: Is there any scope to still meaningfully contribute despite the constraints?

MR: There indeed is. A lot also depends on the leadership skills of the individuals who run the institution. Building a capable team and leading them in the right direction is a crucial aspect of making NHRC effective. The NHRC should be led by people whose hearts bleed for the less fortunate and who can drive the organisation with passion and dedication.

We must remember that the robust presence of the NHRC can enhance the image of the country in international platforms. Therefore, it is imperative that the present role of NHRC be examined and a system be established wherein it can realise its fullest potential. Therefore, proper amendment of the law to ensure the autonomy of NHRC is crucial.

LD: The 2020 theme for Human Rights Day is Recover Better - Stand Up for Human Rights. Would you please share your thoughts on this?

MR: In the past few years, the US President Trump has caused serious damage to human rights and international relations. At the UN podium, he stated that the future belongs to the patriots (implying the ultra-nationalists, chauvinists) and not the globalists. This worked as motivation for countries around the world. As a result, authoritarianism has engulfed democratic governance across many states of the world. The COVID-19 has made inequalities more prominent - richer countries are already accessing vaccines but other countries are being deprived. This is antithetical to the principles of international cooperation and sovereign equality.

Now we need to rise above the past weaknesses, recover and stand up for our and others' rights. We need human rights defenders who shall be the voice for the voiceless and the strength of the weak.

LD: Thank you for your valuable time.

MR: Thank you.



governments over the years, we have had some challenges. Right now, we are at a critical period, due to the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although urban and district areas have been coping somehow, rural areas have been left entirely at the mercy of the Almighty. It is interesting to note how many people in impoverished classes have been found to assert that the COVID-19 is a disease for the rich, and not for them. While this may be

develop a system of transparency and accountability wherein the authorities may be held accountable.

The group that is facing significant difficulties during these challenging times are the human rights defenders as well. It is important that the human rights defenders and journalists get the space within which they can do their part in upholding democratic governance. This is particularly relevant in the light of the recent decision of the

LAW LETTER

The long overdue menstrual leave

OUR country is far away from legislating provisions concerning menstrual leave. The very concept of menstrual leave is a neglected and overlooked issue in Bangladesh. According to a report of the International Labor Organisation titled 'World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2018', 28.4% of women in Bangladesh are employed. Hence, menstruation leave is a topic worth bringing to the limelight.

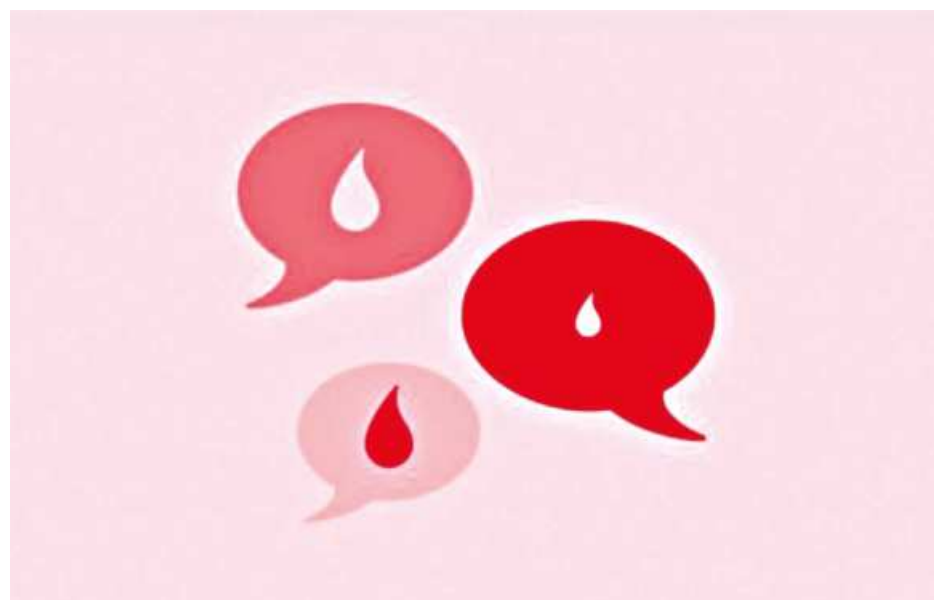
Agonising menstrual cramps also known as dysmenorrhea has a major impact on a woman's work productivity, daily chores, and health in general. The pain can be mild to severe, accompanied by nausea, fatigue, back pain, and even diarrhoea. According to research conducted by the American Academy of Family Physicians, dysmenorrhea affects approximately 20% of women in the world. 10% of women suffer from endometriosis, a uterine tissue disorder which results in pelvic pain and worsens period symptoms. John Guillebaud, professor of reproductive health at the University of College London said that period pain can be as "bad as having a heart attack."

Research conducted by Acta Biomedica, titled 'Dysmenorrhea in adolescents and young adults: a review in different country' depicts that 59.8% of women in Bangladesh suffer from dysmenorrhea. Our female workforce is not only engaged in white-collar work. Women working in manual labor and at bourgeoisie industries are particularly at a disadvantage when it comes to access to clean water, toilet, and sanitary products. Approximately 70% of Bangladeshi textile workers are women. Dhaka-based NGO "Karmojibi Nari" remarked in a study that 95% of workers get no recess in their 10-hour shift apart from lunch. There are uncountable anecdotes of women facing uncomfortable and humiliating circumstances at the workplace owing to menstruation. These give us a background on why it is high time for Bangladesh to incorporate period leave in the Labor Act, 2006.

Section 115 of the 2006 Act offers ten days casual leave with maximum wages. Pursuant to Section 116, an employee will get annually fourteen days of sick leave with pay. Under Sections 117 and 118 annual and festive leaves are provided. Sections 45-50 of the aforementioned Act

enumerates maternity benefit and leave. Bangladesh Labor (Amendment) Act, 2018 has been enacted amalgamating the Labor Rules, 2015 to make the 2006 Act more time-befitting. Though it includes specifications for reasonable behavior towards working women, it does not consider the inconveniences arising from menstruation for paid leave. It was reiterated in *Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) v. Bangladesh and others* 14 BLC (2009) 694 that fundamental rights guaranteed in Chapter III of the Constitution are sufficient to embrace all the elements of gender equality. It is time for our legislators to take this into account and provide a paid

It is pertinent to note that discussions regarding menstrual leave have always been fraught with arguments regarding gender equity at the workplace and reverse discrimination. It is often pointed out that menstruation leave will make companies less inclined to hire female employees and give them positions of authority. These are the same fallacies that are put forward maternity leave. Associating menstrual leave with female participation at the workforce looks a bit incongruent. Women constitute 44.5% of the workforce in Japan and the country has a menstrual leave policy since 1947. South Korea where women make up 42.1% of the workforce precedes such a policy as well.



leave for fixed days during menstruation in the 2006 Act.

Paid menstrual leave has been guaranteed in several Asian countries namely Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, and Taiwan. Article 68 of the Labor Standards Law in Japan coined the concept of paid menstrual leave for women in 1947. Article 71 of the Labor Standards Law in South Korea not only provides menstrual leave but also additional pay if a woman does not take the entitled leave. The Act of Gender Equality in Employment of Taiwan gives women annually three days of menstrual leave. The "Menstruation Benefit Bill 2017" having provision of two days paid menstrual leave per month was tabled at Lok Sabha in India.

In an ideal world based on the ideals of gender equality, the debate concerning menstrual leave should not really exist. Unfortunately, employment policies for workplaces have always been adopted by patriarchal society. The norms, policies, standards of productivity, and codes of conduct are mostly made keeping men in mind.

Menstrual leave will not only provide a better working condition for women but also somewhat remove the stigma regarding period. It is high time we thought about incorporating menstrual leave in the Labour Act, 2006, and went a step further in smashing the long-existing taboo.

SURIYA TARANUM SUSAN
STUDENT OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF
CHITTAGONG

REVIEWING THE VIEWS

Interpreting the tenure of life imprisonment

ALI MASHRAF

THE Supreme Court (SC) on December 1 delivered its verdict in the review petition of the *Ataur Mridha* case (Criminal Review Petition 82/2017). In the short order, it sought to clear the confusion that arose following its verdict in 2017 on the tenure of life imprisonment.

Earlier in 2017, the SC had interpreted life imprisonment to be the whole of a convict's natural life by a plain reading of sections 45 and 53 of the Penal Code (PC), 1860 (*Ataur Mridha v. State*, Criminal Appeal 15/2020, p 18). That verdict, *inter alia*, relied on the Indian SC's decision in *Sambhaji v. State* ((1974) 1 SCC 196) that a person sentenced to life imprisonment may be detained in prison for life. The verdict ignored section 35A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1898, which obliges a court to deduct the total time an accused has been in custody during the pendency of their trial. The verdict further assumed that the legislature drafted and amended this provision without understanding PC sections 45, 53 and 57 and CrPC section 401 (*Ataur Mridha*, pp 85-86). Hence, it seemed that the SC effectively created a new law in the guise of statutory interpretation, which is tantamount to 'radical judicial law-making' (Ridwanul Hoque, 'Constitutionalism and the Concept of Whole- life Sentence in Bangladesh' (BILIA, May 2017)).

Upon review, the SC finally reverted to its decision in *Rokya Begum v. The State* ((2015) 4 SCOB (AD) 20). By harmoniously interpreting PC sections 45, 53, 55 and 57 and CrPC section 35A, it held that life imprisonment would mean rigorous imprisonment for 30 years. It further held that while awarding sentences, if a court or tribunal, or the International Crimes Tribunal constituted under the International Crimes Tribunal Act, 1973, orders for the accused to be sentenced to imprisonment till their natural death, they will not be entitled to any remission of their sentence. It is speculated that the court may have been wary that the tenure of life imprisonment may be lenient in certain cases. The SC



had also expressed similar concerns in *Rokya Begum* (para 24) but refrained from elaborating on it. Hence, this verdict seems to create two categories of sentences - life imprisonment and imprisonment till death.

While any comment on the merit of the arguments forwarded by the lawyers, the *amicus curiae* appointed by the court and the court's reasoning will be premature before the full text of the verdict is released, the following points are worth noting:

The appeal verdict was based on a plain textual reading of the relevant provisions. It did not take into account the progress that has taken place worldwide in the recent past. Globally, penal policies now have a reformatory approach. Hence, our criminal justice system should move away from awarding any punishment that deprives the accused of the opportunity of reforming and reintegrating themselves back into the society. The review verdict seems to correct the mistaken approach the court had taken earlier. PC sections 55 and 55A, CrPC section 35A, chapter 21 of the Jail Code, apart from other statutory and constitutional provisions, have the provisions to reduce and remit the life sentences of the accused.

However, the SC's creation of a new category of punishment - imprisonment till death in the earlier verdict, as well as in this verdict, has created ample scopes for further discussion. While the decision is a welcoming sign, it leaves a few unanswered questions, which, we can hope, will be answered in the full verdict.

THE WRITER IS THE BANGLADESH JUNIOR LEGAL ANALYST OF IPOBONO.

Why are we still not following Covid-19 health guidelines?

The message must be loud and clear

THE advent of winter has brought a spike in Covid-19 cases and one of the reasons for this, say experts, is the “super-spreaders”—people aged between 20 and 40, who are the most exposed to infection as they must go outside to earn their livelihood. While many of them have mild to no symptoms, they can infect those who fall under the vulnerable category. People aged 50 years and above and those with pre-existing conditions are at the highest risk. The death rate is higher for this group, about 79 percent, as stated by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

So what is the message that should be made loud and clear to the public? As the director of IEDCR has said, it is crucial that the super-spreader group maintain the health guidelines—wearing masks, washing hands with soap frequently, and maintain physical distance. But what we see in public spaces is quite the opposite of that. Buses are filled with people, many people have stopped wearing masks, and whether they wash their hands or sanitise them is questionable. This is because there is a kind of indifference regarding these guidelines which need to be disseminated more vigorously by the health authorities through national TV, radio, loudspeakers and other public awareness campaigns. Enforcing these guidelines is difficult if people are not really convinced about how important these are and that following these makes the difference between life and death. They should be made aware that their disregard for something as basic as wearing a mask or maintaining social distancing can actually cause the death of their loved ones, their neighbours or those who they don't know but may come in close contact with.

Covid-19 is now closer to home than ever and we just cannot afford to be so lackadaisical about our adherence to these guidelines. In cities like Dhaka and Chattogram, social distancing is practically impossible but at least those who are in the super-spreader category can wear masks and stay away from those in the vulnerable category, who should also wear masks whenever there is a possibility of exposure.

Specialists have said that the daily figures are just a “snapshot of the whole picture”, and to get the real scenario, we need to do at least five lakh tests daily. This is indeed disconcerting given that our testing is way below that. The health minister has urged people to get tested especially since the antigen testing has also been introduced to selected areas to increase testing capacity. He has also said that people are reluctant to test. The government should make testing easier and affordable. Outdoor testing camps with proper social distancing can be introduced to minimise exposure.

As we battle a second wave of Covid-19, we must learn from our past experiences to better combat this deadly disease. Better, more accessible testing facilities and strict adherence to health guidelines will go a long way. It will save lives.

Stalling of circular bus services

Why are new routes launched (and stalled) without proper feasibility studies?

ALTHOUGH the lockdown on transport was lifted in May, the circular bus services introduced by Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) on two routes in Dhaka still remain suspended. BRTC had launched the circular bus services—Dhanmondi-Azimpur and Uttara-Airport Sector 12—last year in order to reduce gridlocks, ensure smooth vehicular movement and bring discipline to the capital's transport system. Within a week of its launch, however, the Uttara short circular route was suspended, while the Dhanmondi-Azimpur route remained suspended since the government enforced a nationwide lockdown on March 26. However, BRTC is still operating the Uttara-Gulshan circular route on a limited scale due to low turnout of passengers. BRTC intends to resume operations on the Uttara-Sonargaon Janapath and Airport sector-12 route once educational institutions reopen.

Officials say these routes are no longer financially viable. Experts, however, highlight that the pandemic isn't the only thing to blame for the stalling of services. When the routes were introduced, no proper in-depth study was conducted to assess the viability of the projects. Moreover, no steps were taken to rid the roads of alternative transportation such as rickshaws and to divert buses of other routes, resulting in redundancy of the buses. As such, the state-owned bus service is now making profit at a bare minimum. How could the authorities have taken such a huge decision without analysing the situation thoroughly? The buses that are now collecting dust exemplify a waste of taxpayer's money.

The circular bus services need to be properly utilised for their intended purpose. BRTC can operate on a partial scale on the suspended routes. The privately-run Gulshan and Hatirjheel circular bus service, which has proven beneficial as no rickshaws or buses of different routes ply through that road, can serve as an example.

Moving forward, there needs to be accountability of how resources are allocated and projects implemented. We hope this will serve as a lesson for our authorities about doing their homework first before taking such leaps.



KNOT SO TRUE

RUBANA HUQ

WHEN the sky isn't looking clear anymore, to say you are watching the clouds go by with the hope of a better day is being cautiously optimistic. If there's rain in the process, one gathers that it is what it is and

a sense of ease settles in, looking at the freshly cleaned landscape. With Covid-19, it's been neither clouds nor rain. It's been a clear sense of a lingering thunder which has frightened humanity and shooed us to our cubbyholes. There's no bravery that's been able to confront this monster, no shield that's been enough. The world, at the most, has just watched it unfold and handled it to its limited capacity.

Throughout the world, Covid-19 is indeed being approached with caution and advisories at all levels. Governments all over the world have reacted and rescued; businesses all over have wailed and suffered. Yet, through all the losses and tears, trepidations and predicaments, many lives and enterprises have learnt to cope with the oscillations of the pandemic.

At our end, the single largest industry of readymade garments had to deal with the crisis of such magnitude. The impact of the pandemic on the lives, livelihoods and the overall economy cannot be overstated. The USD 3.15 billion worth of cancellations put a dent on the essence of trust between the suppliers and the brands, and the inevitability of repatriation of funds had become a reality overnight. At a time like that, the impact could have been more severe in the absence of the incentive packages and policy interventions announced and implemented by the government. Quite often, we hear about bureaucratic hurdles (“*amlatantrik jitolota*”) but, during this pandemic, the promptness and efficiency of the bureaucratic response had given the industries in Bangladesh a fresh air to breathe in.

We are grateful to the prime minister for providing the critical direction to the industry and for having saved industry-related livelihoods. We also salute our workers who have literally saved the industry from being doomed. And we must also applaud the finance ministry, commerce ministry, Bangladesh Bank and

all other ministries and departments of the government for their fast response and painstakingly implementing the incentive packages. These were absolutely crucial for re-coursing the industry from obvious destruction.

At the very outset of the calamity, the concern that grappled us immediately was saving the livelihoods of four-million workers and their dependents from any possible financial crunch. As the industry embraced the tsunami of cancellation resulting in export slashed by 85 percent in April, the severity was foreseen by the government, and the BDT 50 billion loan stimulus meant for paying workers' wages

industry, and thanks to Bangladesh Bank for particularly having eased off and enhanced the export development fund. Apart from this, the retention of foreign currency in single pool for back-to-back import payments, extension of the tenure of realisation of export proceeds, and suspension of loan classification till December 31, 2020, served as saviours.

It's true that our expectations from the working capital loan assistance packages was higher, particularly for the SMEs since the working capital loan was meant for supporting the affected factories. In reality, it was difficult for the RMG SMEs, who are the most-affected groups, to access this



The RMG industry needs continuity of the supports received so far to stay afloat in the coming days, along with additional supports to withstand any adverse impact.

DS FILE PHOTO

in April, May, June and July marked the first turning point for the industry to stay afloat during the peak of the storm, i.e. April-July 2020.

As far as the salary packages are concerned, the integrity of the disbursement of incentives could not be questioned. The farsightedness and pragmatism of the government had made the digital wage payment possible, and this itself ensured transparency. Needless to say, at a time when the West came to a dead halt by lockdowns and emergencies, the “financial flow” came as the lifeline of the industry. Thanks to the Ministry of Finance for efficiently stitching up the much-needed rescue package for the

support to a large proportion due to the nature of business and conditions set out to access the incentive.

However, while enthralled by the revival in exports since July (by 0.82 percent during July-September), albeit short-lived, the emergence of the second wave of Covid-19 is extremely worrying for the industry. The dwindling retail sales in the West and further slowdown in export since October could be early signs of a resurgence of the situation we have passed through earlier this year. The approval of vaccines is a great source of hope, but as far as trade is concerned, the worries may still persist as the global economy may take time to generate momentum

Ten takeaways from one year of Covid-19



RIZWANUL ISLAM

IT'S been almost one year since the novel coronavirus was identified in China and reported to WHO. During the past year, the pandemic caused by Covid-19 has spread to the entire world, over six

and a half crores have been infected, and over 15 lakhs have died. We have seen countries suffering from multiple waves of the pandemic, different types of responses to the health challenge, severe crisis hitting the global economy and different types of measures taken in response to the latter. So much was unknown about the disease during its early days that there were differences even among scientists and epidemiologists on measures needed to contain the spread of the virus and mitigate its adverse effects. In the history of civilisation, this is one of the most serious challenges faced by mankind. It is perhaps time to look back and see what are the major takeaways from this experience.

Why have some countries/regions been more affected than others?

It is well-known that some countries and regions have been more affected by the pandemic than others. Globally, Europe, America, parts of Latin America and parts of Asia have been more affected than Africa and parts of Asia. Scientists have scratched their heads and research has been done to understand this variation. Explanations ranging from genetic differences and basic hygiene practices of certain races to the timeliness and stringency of measures undertaken at the beginning of the outbreak have been put forward. And yet, it is not clear whether there are convincing explanations of why, for example, the number of infections per million of population is only in double digits in China, Thailand and Vietnam as opposed to thousands in not-too-far-away countries like Bangladesh and India. **Maintain social distance, wear mask and wash hands**

On how to contain the spread of the virus, it is customary to recite the trinity of social distancing, mask wearing and hand washing. But the real challenge is their implementation. Human being is a social animal; and the experiences of countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Brazil or Germany show how difficult it is to persuade them to abstain from socialisation and to maintain distance from each other when they do so. People consider attending religious congregations their pious duty and right. Whether it is Eid or Thanksgiving, people are extremely reluctant to forego celebration with their

near and dear ones. Maintaining social distance during such occasions gets low priority. Younger people even in developed countries have been seen to go to any extent to arrange and attend parties (there were instances of parties held in remote forest areas as a way of evading law enforcers).

As for wearing masks, issues like personal freedom and democratic rights come into play. While it is easy to preach frequent washing of hands, it can be a far cry for millions of people who have to walk miles just to procure a jar of water for drinking. So, when one is asked what else can one do other than wearing mask and maintaining social distance, the inevitable answer is: precious little.

Well-thought-out strategy and clearly articulated messages are important

Countries that were able to put together well-thought-out strategies and send clear messages to the people attained greater success in containing the virus. There are different models of such success stories ranging from authoritarian regimes like in China to democracies like Australia

(Bangladesh) and to transfer patients to nearby countries (The Netherlands) are indicators of a general malaise: neglect of the health sector in public policy.

Effective shutdown helps, but for how long can that be done?

One way of ensuring social distance is to shut down public life, and its effectiveness has been demonstrated in a wide range of situations ranging from Wuhan to New Zealand, and to a number of countries in Europe during the first wave of the virus in the spring of 2020. However, apart from the issue of jeopardising livelihoods, issues like democratic rights of people to move freely have been invoked in various countries. In several countries of Europe, there have been street protests against shutdown of economic activities.

Influencing human behaviour, raising public awareness

At least two of the measures that are critical to fight the pandemic—viz., social distancing and wearing mask (and to an extent the third one, greater attention to personal hygiene, also)—require changes

The importance of clearly-laid-out strategies is also illustrated by the difference in the experience of the same country at different points in time. In Switzerland, for example, the success of containing the first wave could not be replicated during the second wave because of ambivalence and delay in putting in place the needed strategy.

and New Zealand. At the other extreme are countries (e.g. the USA, Switzerland—the latter, during the second wave) that could not put together such a strategy at the national or local level, and as a result, failed to contain the virus. The importance of clearly-laid-out strategies is also illustrated by the difference in the experience of the same country at different points in time. In Switzerland, for example, the success of containing the first wave could not be replicated during the second wave because of ambivalence and delay in putting in place the needed strategy.

Health services put to test in developing and developed countries

When the pandemic hit, health service infrastructure was strained and put to test not only in developing countries like Bangladesh but also in high-income countries in Europe and America. In general, the strain was felt more in countries where health service is over-dependent on the private sector. Scrambling to erect makeshift hospitals in parks (USA) and convention centres

in human behaviour. Although people in a number of East Asian countries became familiar with and used to wearing masks when they fought viruses before, the concept of social distancing is rather new. If lack of public awareness about it at the early stage of the pandemic was a major factor, influencing human behaviour continues to remain a challenge even after a year of the fight against the pandemic.

Dilemma between saving lives and livelihoods

The dilemma between saving lives and saving livelihoods is a reality not only in developing countries but in high-income developed countries as well. Support was provided to businesses affected by the shutdown and the economic crisis that ensued. But given the prolonged recession, a repeat of shutdown to contain the second wave of the virus provoked resistance from the business community in several high-income countries.

Has coronavirus acted as the great equaliser?

in employment, consumption, spending and trade. The double-edged sword of the pandemic is slicing the price. Data suggests that our RMG has been consistently losing unit value by around 5 percent since September.

The industry has contributed so much to our nation, and we only have a nominal share in the global market, thus we have a great potential to grow further. We have painstakingly prepared ourselves for the renewed opportunities over the past few years in the area of industrial safety, sustainability and eco-efficiency. Therefore, the needs of the industry are clear: 1) The industry needs continuity of the supports received to stay afloat in the upcoming days, along with additional supports to withstand any adverse impact; 2) The industry would expect the empathy of the authorities in ensuring legal protection for our exporters who dealt with bankrupted buyers to deal with the losses and outstanding liabilities, because without resolving these issues, the affected factories (supposedly employing hundreds of thousands of workers) cannot fight back. And essential alignment between the policy makers and the industry must continue.

While exports dip and concerns are heightened, this should not be taken as a cry-wolf syndrome. With the cry and the ask also comes the promise of turning around by 2021. With the vaccines, a better time and a better consumption trend will surely set in. Besides, we are better-placed than most of our competitors. Ethiopia is politically troubled, Vietnam's export basket isn't prioritising RMG and won't grow capacity overnight, Myanmar is questionable in terms of capacity and ethical sourcing, and Cambodia has just lost its GSP. Therefore, it's important to stay on course and be hopeful.

There's no alternative to depicting the real picture. Reality cannot be exaggerated. Projections cannot be amplified. The only answer is to handle the situation as it comes and hope that the policy makers stand by our side and help us swim through the troubled waters, as they have in March 2020. It's an industry where 4.1 million workers are engaged. The numbers cannot be ignored, the impact cannot be underestimated, and the potential cannot be insulted by scepticism.

Dr Rubana Huq is President of BGMEA and Managing Director of Mohammadi Group.

From the early days of the pandemic, people of all classes ranging from heads of governments, political and social leaders, business executives and stars from different fields to ordinary citizens were infected. And that gave rise to a view that the virus would act as a big equaliser in society. But after a year's experience, there is enough reason to doubt whether that has been so in reality. Although anyone can be infected by this virus, the probability of certain classes of people being infected seems to be higher. Lower-income people living in congested housing, immigrants, and minorities face a higher degree of risk compared to higher-income people. Also, the impact of the economic crisis that has followed from the pandemic is not neutral to classes—with the poor, the youth and women suffering more.

The pandemic has accentuated existing challenges

It is not only the challenges of eradicating poverty and reducing inequality that have become tougher in the pandemic-affected world. Other challenges—e.g. domestic violence, gender differences in the labour market, differences in educational opportunities—have also been accentuated by the pandemic and related developments. Irrespective of the level of development of a country, domestic violence has increased, women find themselves at greater disadvantage in the labour markets and sometimes withdraw from the labour market, and students from lower-income households are dropping out of education.

Fatigued by fighting pandemic

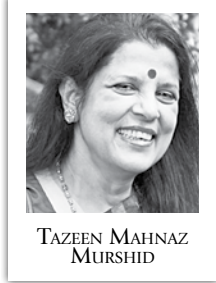
The evening applause for doctors and other front-line workers, which was a practice in several countries during the first wave of the pandemic, was no longer there during the second wave. People no longer accepted shutdowns without question. They started ignoring calls and exhortations for minimising contacts. Policymakers started showing ambivalence in extending support to their economies and saving them from further damage. In sum, societies seem to have been taken over by a kind of fatigue.

Fortunately, vaccines are around the corner, and there seems to be light at the end of the tunnel. However, a key question is whether people will have access to them in an inclusive manner irrespective of the level of development of their country, level of income, race, and social strata. While there will be practical challenges in the roll-out of the vaccine, no less a challenge for mankind is to rise over “vaccine nationalism”.

Rizwanul Islam, an economist, is former Special Adviser, Employment Sector, International Labour Office, Geneva.

IN MEMORIAM

The intellectual journey of Khan Sarwar Murshid



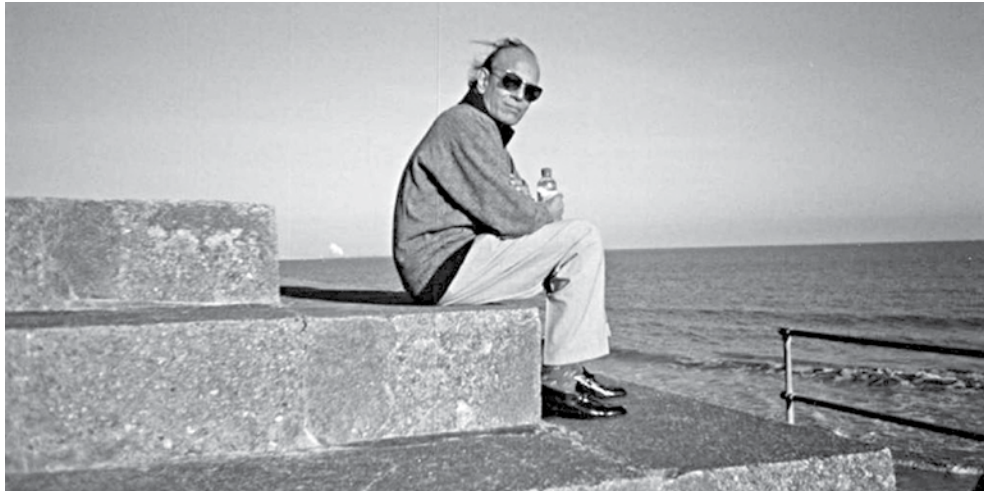
TAZEEN MAHNAZ MURSHID

In the black-and-white cultural milieu that often engulfs us, we are frequently unable to grasp a man's intellectual worth when neat categories cannot pin them down. But man is a many-splendoured being. I have tried

to understand what had made the man, my father. I delved into family history, and in his activist and teaching roles. I knew him to be detached from any ostentatious show of religious affiliation, a man who questioned all assumptions and yet continued to search for moral order and spiritual certainty. For him, truth and beauty were integral elements of that quest. Intellectually, at one level, it led him to explore philosophy and study the great literary minds of the early twentieth century, both Eastern and Western. At another level, he came to appreciate refined culture, arts, manners, and etiquette. Gradually, he evolved into an aesthete.

An unexpected finding has enabled me to explore some of these dimensions of his intellectual world when I chanced upon his moth-eaten thesis with a letter of recommendation for its publication by his external examiner, Professor Bullough of the Department of English Language and Literature, University of London's King's College. *Indian Elements in the Works of W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot and Aldous Huxley* is now awaiting publication by the University Press Limited. The following ruminations follow from my many readings of the manuscript

as I prepared it for its publication in 2020. I hope that my father will forgive me for this audacious task. Being a perfectionist, he only brought out one or two articles from this work. When he undertook this study, it was an uncharted field. It was many years later that the theme of Indian elements was touched upon by other scholars. The work remains relevant for us today because it touches on issues of moral responsibility, right conduct and social order.



Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid (1924-2012)

What transpires are the musings of a young man navigating the crossroads where the great minds of the West meet those of the East. It required considerable courage for a young man to tell the Occident, in the immediate aftermath of the end of empire, that the East had exacted its revenge on the

West. The western intellectual milieu had been changed forever.

Through this study, along with what we know of Murshid's life and other interests, we can picture the image of a more complex and nuanced human being than what we had supposed. It provides the missing link that helps us understand his own development better, for the impact of his study on himself had been no less profound than it had been on his subject matter: the intellectual worlds

after Gautama Buddha! But the manuscript reveals how that connection manifested itself.

Reading his literary treatise, it struck me that some of the basic values he sought to inculcate in us were, in fact, Buddhist in origin, particularly the ideas of *sangha* and moral responsibility. Young Murshid shared Huxley's idea that a minority of individuals can "attain enlightenment" and make a difference. His life and works came to embody that value. He championed the values of right conduct, followed a path of legitimate action in its defence, and sought the company of like-minded people in its pursuit. He painstakingly promoted the selection of suitably qualified persons for given tasks in the interests of an orderly society. His passion for teaching to train young minds in critical thinking was an aspect of promoting that ideal.

Like Eliot, Murshid was fascinated by the idea of the "Eternal now"; and like Yeats, the concept of the "unity of Being" exercised him. However, the Buddhist concept of *anatman*—that there is no soul, but there is rebirth—left a sense of uncertainty. Surely this is the only life we know, and this was the only life to be lived. Beyond death was the realm of the mysterious unknown. Like Rilke, he found it slightly fearful.

He identified most with Yeats. Both opted for a this-worldly approach to life, where love, beauty and delight have a place. Eliot and Huxley chose detachment but fell short due to their excessive loathing of the body and preoccupation with negativity, such as with "dung and death", possibly due to their traditional Christian upbringing centred around concepts of original sin and guilt. They missed the cue of the ancients that

life is to be delighted in even as we separate ourselves from its attachments.

At the core of Murshid's world view had already evolved the concept of values. It included ideas of order and moral responsibility, justice and right conduct, truth and beauty as the measure of such an order. He summed these up in his concept of values. To him, values were what made a man, and those values are what held society together. He had already come to call these new values when at the ripe age of 25 years he began to publish a journal from Dhaka in 1949, called *New Values*, several years before he embarked on his spiritual journey into ancient Indian philosophy in the context of his literary studies. The influence of the Buddhist Mukti Andolana of the 1930's in Bengal can be traced to the secular appeal of the journal. Some may even venture to relate this stance to the values of the European Enlightenment. He had also explored other spiritual systems focussed on the Qur'an and Sufi thought, his interpretations bringing out their hidden wonder and depth.

With hindsight, it would appear that his intellectual pursuit for an orderly society based on the values of right conduct, truth and beauty found a spiritual counterpart in his quest to understand the nature of man's relationship with God. In essence, one could conclude that these two journeys—the intellectual and the spiritual—that compelled him to action all his life were one and the same. Notably, however, he was the living embodiment of the values he upheld and the world view he adopted.

Professor Tazeen Mahnaz Murshid is a social scientist and historian, and daughter of Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid, who died on this day eight years ago.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Masculinity, toxicity and 'bro' culture: Learnings from the locker room



SHAER REAZ

LAST month, amidst a seemingly sudden uptick in the number of rape cases across the country, the Brac James P. Grant School of Public Health released a study that showed 63 percent of participants—11,102

male respondents aged between 15 and 24, from all 64 districts (81 urban and 289 rural clusters)—believed that beating their wives is justified if they are denied sex.

What's interesting is the response to studies like these. To some men, studies like these are an attack on their upbringing, their social contexts, on the masculinity they have relied on as a crutch for most of their lives as a way to cover their weak personalities and even weaker coping mechanisms. Some men try to distance themselves from the participants of the study—they would never be capable of such malice, they tell themselves—without realising that they are just as likely to resort to similar measures of getting what they want if the situation called for it. The subtle microaggressions and a quiet hostility towards women continue to persist in their personal spheres, unchecked and unrecognisable to themselves.

It doesn't take long for a young male to fall into the trappings that produce toxic masculinity—one could even get David Attenborough to narrate the sequence of events and accurately describe, to a tee, the environments and the actions that contribute to a manifestation of toxic behaviour in human males. It is, unfortunately, that predictable—across social classes, educational backgrounds and religions.

For a large part of my life, I have been witness to the ways different social, cultural and economic settings produce toxic males. In hindsight, I can see my own instances of

toxic behaviour at various stages of growth, each strain requiring dedicated effort and guided unlearning to address. But the more I learned—of consent, mutual respect, of the fine balances of equity and justice and access—the more I found myself to be at odds with the environments that had shaped me into the person I had become.

I remember warm summer evenings in the Dhaka University teachers' quarters on Fuller Road, where, as a child, I had gleefully run around collecting leaves and branches and dirt for some make-believe cooking with my friends in miniature *haari-patil*. I also vividly remember the jeering, mocking tone with which a slightly older girl had called me "half-ladies" for playing a home-maker with the other children. Children don't form these opinions by themselves; these are fed to them by their parents and relatives, and even in the case of university professors and highly educated academics at the country's premier educational institution, that holds true.

I remember the hallways and playgrounds of my school—an elite English-medium school where the children of industrialists, civil society actors and people of national importance ran around, displaying what they had learned at home and within the classrooms themselves. I remember how, in my early teenage years, I was mocked for having more female friends than male ones, and how the cooties contagion had propagated thanks to me and my non-masculine ways.

And so I toughened up. I left behind the *haari-patil* and my books for football and video games, receded into a shell where I had to convince myself that if a girl talked to you, it must mean she liked you romantically, and learned to bottle up my feelings and my views when "kicking it" with my "bros". Conversations quickly veered to manly things like sports, rock and roll, teenage rebellion and getting girls. I was an active participant, and eventually it became second nature to crack sexist jokes at the expense of my female friends, to pursue the romantic interests of women, and



essentially perpetuate the accepted nature of what it means to be a man.

The unlearning did not start until the grim realities of the world caught up. I was in Dhaka University then—another institution teeming with the frenzied masculine rage that enabled thousands of young men to project their power outwards, be it with cups of tea and lit cigarettes on the roadside or hockey sticks and flaming torches at political rallies. I met quietly brilliant poets from the *chairs* of Barishal who denounced conservatism in society, yet wrote sleazy love letters for unwilling classmates because they didn't know how else to woo a woman. I came across the ex-cadets who were seemingly brilliant at everything from academics to inter-department basketball, but wilted under the female gaze and often resorted to misogynistic rants to counter their inability to handle an ounce of desire from the opposite sex. All the while, I had by my side a friend and a partner who would teach me—in the context of my relationship with her—the countless ways in which patriarchy had robbed her of her dreams and her agency. By the end of my university career, she was no longer a

part of my life, and the effects of coming from a cracked and ultimately broken home had started to bear down on me and my views.

Even in a professional setting, the dichotomies were ever present. Engaging male co-workers meant suffering through endless sexist jokes and off-handed comments that the oblivious men had passed on their female colleagues. In maintaining professional relationships with other men, the constant berating of the work ethics of women was unbearable, the ludicrous comments often devoid of the context that they probably had to take care of their own man-children at home through cooking and cleaning as their unpaid wives, in addition to working in an office. Winding down from work meant game nights with friends who revelled in locker room talk—extended soliloquies centred around the intern's breasts, the latest measures enforced by the HR manager in trying (and failing) to stop their advances, and how the New Year's office parties would be prime hunting grounds for some "action". Even after #MeToo reached our shores, men still found a way to doubt accounts, call the characters of victims into

question, and generally sided with the greater enclave of their own gender whether or not they knew any of the details of an incident.

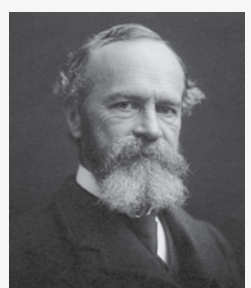
These few examples aren't excuses for the way men behave. They are a depiction of the environments that breed the kind of behaviour that permeates every layer of society and ultimately creates an atmosphere that suffocates women and men who identify as feminists. These microaggressions end up creating a culture of intangible violence, till it manifests in tangible harm.

To the men who identify with my words, I implore you to keep calling out harmful, predatory, toxic behaviour. It will seem like an uphill battle, but it is of the utmost importance that you continue to confront, correct and guide your fellow men. You are far outnumbered, but letting that dull your edge in standing up for women—not just in your lives but everywhere—is akin to admitting defeat.

To the men reading this, I would like to say that I've been there. I know how you got where you are. I know how much of a sense of belonging you get when you're part of a group of red-blooded men. But know this: the sense of camaraderie you feel also makes you the biggest part of the problem. You may pass off the raping and the torture of women as a socioeconomic issue and try to absolve yourself of any responsibility, but having been a part of the "in-group" and seeing the kind of conversations you have in your elite, corporate and personal circles, you are just as much a part of the problem as your lower-income brethren. Unlearning the traits of being a toxic male takes time and effort, and going down that path means finding the courage to admit that you have a privilege that you'd like to upend to make society more liveable for the women around you. Having the basic empathy to recognise women's suffering is ultimately one of the truest tests of masculinity—not how it is currently defined, but how it should be.

Shaer Reaz is currently serving as Deputy Editor of the Digital section of *The Daily Star*. He can be reached at shaer@thedailystar.net.

QUOTABLE Quote



WILLIAM JAMES (1842-1910)

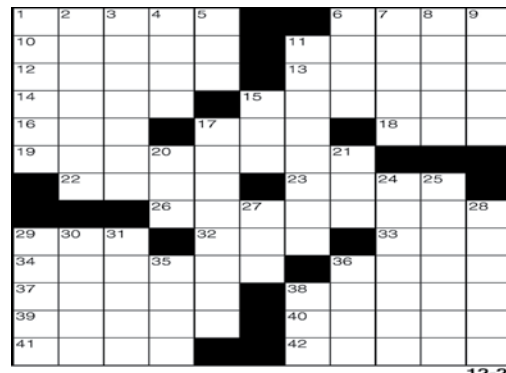
American psychologist and philosopher.

A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| ACROSS | 32 Tina of "30 Rock" | 8 City on the Mohawk River |
| 1 Bridges | 33 Deep groove | 9 Solitary sort |
| 6 Julia of film | 34 Spotted cat | 11 One of the deadly sins |
| 10 "Cats" poet T.S. | 36 Titled woman | 15 Scathing review |
| 11 Reach | 37 Marco from Miami | 17 Unshod |
| 12 Writer Eudora | 38 Work of fiction | 20 Brief drop |
| 13 Caesar's language | 39 Publicity act | 21 Hotel amenity |
| 14 Matching | 40 Papas of "Z" | 24 Come apart |
| 15 Volcanic rock | 41 Henri's head | 25 Class member |
| 16 Try out | 42 Trappers' wares | 27 Pay stub line |
| 17 Diamond club | | 28 Fashion page topics |
| 18 Sedan or SUV | DOWN | 29 Lowest |
| 19 Necklace features | 1 Finishes | 30 Less than right |
| 22 Recipe instruction | 2 Gratifies | 31 Explain away |
| 23 Musical work | 3 Clinic concern | 35 Script unit |
| 26 Small flags | 4 Staff symbol | 36 Collected stories |
| 29 Combat | 5 Pig's place | 38 Tiny taste |
| | 6 Paper pack | |
| | 7 Top story | |

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

L I M A S R E L A Y
I N A N E I R A T E
B A T T E R F R I E S
E W E H A T D I D
L E S S E N S O N E
S A R G E I R K B U T A
I R O N P E G
D U B B O B S L E D
E G O L O U O R O
B U T T E R F L I E S
A L I E N F O R C E
R A C E D S T E T S

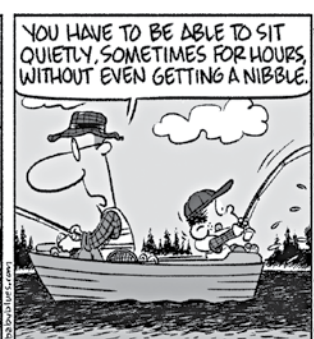
BETLE BAILEY



BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES



Lok Sabha

FROM PAGE 12
from moving that amendment. He points out that the Argentine resolution spoke of repatriation of civilians and POWs but nowhere had it made the acceptance of these factors a condition to admission of Bangladesh.

TEJGAON WORKERS DEMONSTRATE IN FRONT OF THE GONO BHABAN

A large number of workers from the Tejgaon industrial area stage a demonstration today in front of the Gono Bhaban, official residence of Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, demanding trial and punishment of a labour leader for his alleged anti-social activities. Bangabandhu walks down to the gate amidst slogans and addresses the crowd.

GHANA ACCORDS RECOGNITION
Ghana officially recognises Bangladesh today as an independent and sovereign state. Quoting an official report from Accra, the capital of Ghana, BBC further says Ghana would look into the interest of Bangladesh both in the fields of economic and post-war reconstruction and the country would hold a similar stance in the case of prisoners of war.

SOURCES: December 9, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Titas sues

FROM PAGE 12
Yesterday, they were shown arrested in the case and were sent to jail.

The police inspector said they were conducting drives to arrest the other accused.

On Sunday noon, Executive Magistrate and Assistant Commissioner Uzzal Hossain had led the drive in Jhaugora Uttarpara area to snap illegal gas connections.

Three Titas Gas officials and eight policemen sustained minor injuries during the attack, said police.

Biden names

FROM PAGE 12
highest level of integrity, scientific rigor, and crisis-management experience to one of the toughest challenges America has ever faced," Biden said.

Biden, who has said he would ask Americans to wear masks for 100 days when he moves into the White House, vowed his administration would "ready on day one to mobilize every resource of the federal government" to lower the soaring daily death toll from Covid-19.

President Donald Trump's administration has been widely criticized for its response to the pandemic, with Trump downplaying the risks and ignoring basic measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing to prevent spread of the deadly virus.

Biden confirmed that the government's respected top infectious disease specialist Anthony Fauci would remain in his post as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases -- and will also serve as Biden's chief medical adviser on Covid-19.

Biden has stressed that he would strive for diversity when choosing staff.

During Becerra's 12 terms in Congress representing Los Angeles, he was an outspoken advocate of Latino rights and a vigorous defender of Obama's signature health care program -- a policy that has been much attacked by Trump.

Akram Ahmed

FROM PAGE 12
brave role as a fighter pilot during the Liberation War, Caab said in a press release.

He left behind his wife, daughter and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Captain Akram was hospitalised in early November with Covid-19. He had also been suffering from pneumonia.

He was one of the nine pilots who joined the "Kilo Flight", which caused havoc in enemy territory during the war.

On the night of December 3, Squadron Leader Shamsul Alam and Captain Akram attacked the eastern refinery in Chattogram and destroyed the oil depot.

Simultaneous attacks in Chattogram and Dhaka were made by the valiant "Akash Shainik", in conjunction with the Indian military, against the Pakistan occupation forces.

After the war, Akram joined Biman Bangladesh Airlines as a pilot, flying Dakota DC-3. Later, he flew the F-27 and Boeing 707. He retired when he was a DC-10 pilot.

He was awarded the title of Bir Uttam for his contribution to the Liberation War.

He will be buried at Banani graveyard today after Zohr prayers, with a guard of honour from the Bangladesh Air Force.

State Minister for Civil Aviation M Mahub Ali and Caab Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidir Rahman expressed deep shock at the demise of the brave freedom fighter.



Employees of Austria's railway operator OeBB shovel snow from a train in Lienz, eastern Tyrol, yesterday, as winter sets with heavy snowfall.

Remembered forever

FROM PAGE 12
MAG Kabir Vulu, who was captive there, said, "We were sent to the Wapda Pakistani army camp in Barishal town in July 1971."

He had previously been incarcerated at Gournadi Pakistani army camp in Barishal, where he had been severely tortured. "Both my legs were severely injured by bayonets. I did not know the reason for my transfer from Gournadi to Barishal town," he said.

"My friend Anwar, who was bigger and stronger looking, had been brought with me. One morning, he was picked up and dragged away. Then I heard the sound of gunfire. In the same way, the then student leader Firoj Kabir was also shot dead."

Kabir, who had been spared, also described the other killings at Wapda

on the banks of Kirtankhola river in Barishal town.

Every day, people were brought by trucks from different parts of Barishal, Jhalakati, and Pirojpur. "In the early morning the next day, they were taken to the banks of the river and after that I would hear gunshots."

Barishal Sangskritik Sangathan Samannay Parishad has been calling for initiatives to preserve the memories of the Liberation War at Wapda since 1996, said Syed Dulal, former president of the organisation.

After a few delays, it will finally be inaugurated for the public today, the day the city of Barishal was liberated from Pakistani occupation forces, as a significant reminder of sacrifices in the war.

PRESERVATION
Barishal City Corporation, with the

help of the Liberation War Museum, has preserved and restored the Wapda compound as the largest memorial of the Liberation War and genocide in the south.

The compound includes two wartime torture cells and two bunkers, as well as an open stage, auditorium, and a walkway which have been constructed so that visitors can tour the compound and pay their respects.

BCC sources said the preservation and restoration work started in 2017 at a cost of Tk 3.31 crore.

The bridge, the site of many killings during the period, has also been preserved so that the youth and children can get an idea of what took place here, BCC Mayor Serniabat Sadik Abdullah, who will inaugurate the site, told The Daily Star.

"On December 18, 1971, we first

visited here and recovered human bones, and materials and other documents related to the killings," said Mahafuz Alam Beg, sub-sector commander of the ninth sector.

On April 25, 1971, the Pakistan occupation forces first entered Barishal district town and set up an army camp in the Wapda area.

"From then till December 7, they killed innocent Bangladeshis here every day," said Mahafuz.

Surrounded on land, the Pakistan army left Barishal on December 8 by water on several launches and was met by Indian Air Force fighter planes which sank these, killing most of the Pakistan military personnel.

Freedom fighters entered the city and captured Barishal Kotwali Police Station, liberating the city that very day.

Nuke scientist killed by 'AI' machine gun

FROM PAGE 12
despite being only 25 centimetres (10 inches) away, was not shot," Mehr news agency quoted him as saying.

It was being "controlled online" via a satellite and used an "advanced camera and artificial intelligence (AI)" to make the target, he added.

Fadavi said that Fakhriyadeh's head of security took four bullets "as he threw himself" on the scientist and that there were "no terrorists at the scene".

Iranian authorities have blamed arch foe Israel and the exiled opposition group the People's

Mujahedeen of Iran (MEK) for the assassination.

State-run Press TV had previously said "made in Israel" weapons were found at the scene.

Various accounts of the scientist's death have emerged since the attack, with the defence ministry initially saying he was caught in a firefight with his bodyguards, while Fars news agency claimed "a remote controlled automatic machine gun" killed him, without citing any sources.

According to Iran's defence minister, Amir Hatami, Fakhriyadeh was one of his deputies and headed the ministry's Defence and Research

and Innovation Organization, focusing on the field of "nuclear defence".

Meanwhile, plans by Iran to install advanced centrifuges at its main nuclear enrichment plant in Natanz are "deeply worrying", France, Germany and the UK said yesterday.

The three governments, dubbed the E3, said the plans were contrary to a 2015 agreement between Tehran and world powers that aimed to restrain Iran's nuclear programme.

The deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

(JCPOA), is "the best and currently the only way to monitor and constrain Iran's nuclear programme," the three countries said.

The UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported last month that Iran had installed and begun operating advanced centrifuges at an underground section at Natanz.

"Iran's recent announcement to the IAEA that it intends to install an additional three cascades of advanced centrifuges at the Fuel Enrichment Plant in Natanz is contrary to the JCPOA and deeply worrying," the E3 said.

India's Serum Institute seeks urgent approval

FROM PAGE 12
supplies for a domestic coronavirus outbreak that is the world's second biggest, has said an emergency use approval could preface a full rollout by February or March.

Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla tweeted that the move to apply for emergency use "will save countless lives," but did not give any other details.

The company declined to reply to Reuters' follow-up questions about the process.

AstraZeneca's vaccine, called "Covishield" by Serum Institute, can be stored at two to eight degrees Celsius and distributed more easily in India, which lacks cold chain capabilities that the vaccine developed by Pfizer requires.

Poonawalla has said the company will first focus on supplying the vaccine in India before distributing it to other countries, pricing it at 1,000 rupees per dose (\$13.50) for private markets.

Governments signing large supply deals will likely buy it at lower prices. In Europe, AstraZeneca has pledged to supply 300 million doses of the vaccine for 750 million euros, pointing to a per-dose price of 2.50 euros.

Meanwhile, Britain yesterday prepared to start its biggest ever immunisation campaign but health officials warned the drive to inoculate millions against Covid-19 would be a "marathon" stretching well into next year.

The world-first rollout of the

Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is due to start today -- dubbed "V-Day" by Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who has volunteered to take it live on television to assuage any public doubts over the rapid approval.

Croydon University Hospital in south London is one of 50 clinical hubs that started receiving the country's initial consignment of 800,000 doses over the weekend, from a Pfizer plant in Belgium.

The vaccine rollout coincides with the end-game of Brexit talks on Britain's future trading relationship with the European Union, reports AFP.

In China, Sinovac Biotech has secured \$515 million in funding from a local firm to double production capacity of its coronavirus vaccine,

the companies said yesterday, as it expects efficacy data of its experimental shot this month.

The investment deal also comes as Sinovac expands supply deals and trials of its experimental Covid-19 vaccine CoronaVac with more countries following positive results from early to mid-stage clinical trials.

China's Sino Biopharmaceutical Limited said yesterday a business unit will invest \$515 million in Sinovac Life Sciences, a subsidiary of Sinovac, to help development and production of CoronaVac.

The investment will give Sino Biopharmaceutical a 15.03% interest in Sinovac Life Sciences, Sino Biopharmaceutical said in a filing to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

'We're beaten mercilessly'

FROM PAGE 1
Jorina Begum, another injured worker of Tazreen Fashions, said, "Our female workers were brutally beaten by male police members. They also groped them, ripped off their clothes, snatched their scarves, and called them 'whores'. Even elderly workers and children weren't spared."

"Eighteen of the injured Tazreen workers had to take treatment from the Mitford Hospital," she added.

"We couldn't even take our medical certificates and documents, phones and the few belongings we had left," she further added.

Among the more than 300 workers of A One BD Ltd at Ashulia EPZ, who were sacked 11 months ago, 25 were also injured in the attack yesterday, the former garment workers said in a joint press conference later yesterday.

A One BD LTD workers had joined the Tazreen Fashion workers on December 1, demanding arrears, other allowances and Eid bonuses.

"In the last 11 months, BEPZA [Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority] has promised to pay our dues at least 22 times, but they didn't do that. Rather, we were beaten twice at BEPZA. Finally, we came here, but now we're beaten mercilessly by the police," said Ashraf Ali, a former worker of A One BD Ltd, said during the press conference.

Garment Sramik Mukti Andolon President Shabnam Hafiz said she was assaulted both physically and verbally, and forcibly picked up in a prison van. She was released after 6:00am.

Apart from the garment workers, around 10 teachers of independent Ebtedayee madrasas were also injured

by the brutality, said Kazi Abu Musa Bhuiyan, central committee joint secretary general of Bangladesh Independent Ebtedayee Madrasa Teachers Samity.

According to him, they were all sleeping as they were not asked to leave. "We never expected that police could beat teachers like us. We were protesting peacefully for the past 22 days, demanding nationalisation of our madrasas," he told The Daily Star.

Oliul Islam, a head teacher of one such madrasa of Parbatipur, Dinajpur, said he was beaten when he went back to collect his bag. "My feet have swollen due to the baton charging and I am not able to walk. One of my fingers might be broken. I took primary treatment from a nearby dispensary," he said.

According to Musa, although currently more than 8,000 independent

Ebtedayee madrasas have around 40,000 teachers, 1,519 of the madrasas pay Tk 2,300 to its assistant teachers and Tk 2,500 to the headmasters.

Contacted, a duty officer of Shahbagh Police Station, wishing not to be named, said that the garment workers were dispersed last night. He, however, did not want to speak about the matter further.

Sazzadur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Ramna Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the DMP commissioner recently said that no meeting and rallies could be held here without prior permission.

"Since they have been here for some days without permission, we repeatedly told them yesterday to leave the place. They left the place this morning. We just did the monitoring," he told The Daily Star.

Cybercrime costs to top \$1 trillion this year

Say researchers

AFP, Washington

Cybercrime is expected to cost the global economy more than \$1 trillion this year, up more than 50 percent since 2018, a research report said yesterday.

The report by McAfee Corp. with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) concluded that the cost of online criminal activity is more than one percent of global economic output, and also had significant non-monetary impacts.

The researchers noted a surge in a range of attacks including ransomware, phishing, business email takeovers, spyware and cryptocurrency theft.

Some of the increase can be attributed to weaker security with more people working remotely outside their workplace.

"The severity and frequency of cyberattacks on businesses continues to rise as techniques evolve, new technologies broaden the threat surface, and the nature of work expands into home and remote environments," said Steve Grobman, chief technical officer at McAfee.

"While industry and government are aware of the financial and national security implications of cyberattacks, unplanned downtime, the cost of investigating breaches and disruption to productivity represent less appreciated high impact costs."

The report was based on a survey of 1,500 technology professionals in government and business in the US, Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Japan and Australia.

The impact of cybercrime included the loss of intellectual property and monetary assets, but also system downtime and damage to an organization's reputation, according to the report.

"It is no secret that cybercrime can harm public safety, undermine national security, and damage economies," the researchers wrote.

Giant vertical

FROM PAGE 12
1,000 tonnes annually when the farm is running at full capacity by the end of 2021, explains Anders Riemann, founder and chief executive of Nordic Harvest.

That would make the Taastrup warehouse one of Europe's biggest vertical farms.

These urban facilities have unsurprisingly received a cool welcome from rural farmers, who have questioned their ability to feed the planet and criticised their electricity consumption.

But Riemann stresses the environmental benefits of his farm, with produce grown close to consumers and its use of green electricity.

"A vertical farm is characterised by not harming the environment by recycling all the water and nutrition or fertiliser," says Riemann, who uses no pesticides.

In Denmark, a world leader in wind farms, about 40 percent of electricity consumption is wind-based.

"In our case, we use 100 percent energy from windmills which makes us CO2-neutral," he adds.

First developed around a decade ago, vertical farms have taken off in Asia and the United States. The idea has slowly started to catch on in Europe.

Urban farming could even allow land exploited by single-culture farming to be reforested, Riemann said.

"We moved the forests in order to have fields," he laments, noting that now farmers like him can bring "some of the food production back into the cities where you can grow on much smaller land and space optimised in height".

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12
Aftab ul Islam said he was aware of the issue of conflict of interest and that was why he left the BB board meeting when the approval was given yesterday.

"There has been no conflict of interest as I was not present during the discussion on the issue at the board meeting," he said.

When her attention was drawn to the matter, Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said conflict of interest was a regular phenomenon in the country's banking sector.

The latest decision is the continuation of existing practices, she said.

The new bank is set to join the others at a time when the banking and financial sector is riddled with a number of loan scams and bad loans due to a lack of good governance.

Khaled said the existing banks were already struggling to survive amid the current situation over business activities. In addition, new banks seem reluctant to expand their business to rural areas as they mainly focus on urban areas.

This means they have had little impact on the expansion of the county's financial inclusion, he added.

T SPORTS

Bangabandhu T20 Cup
Barishal vs Rajshahi
Live from 1:30 pm
Chattogram vs Khulna
Live from 6:30 pm
TEN 1
Australia vs India

Third T20

Live from 2:10 pm
UEFA Champions League
RB Leipzig vs Manchester United
Live from 2:00 am (Wednesday)
TEN 2
UEFA Champions League
Zenit vs Borussia Dortmund

Live from 11:55 pm
Barcelona vs Juventus
Live from 2:00 am (Wednesday)
SONY SIX
UEFA Champions League
Chelsea vs Krasnodar
Live from 2:00 am (Wednesday)

Tigers' pace race heating up

SPORTS REPORTER



The pace bowling department has always been one of Bangladesh's weaker suits of cricketing arsenal, with the fast men generally struggling to make a mark at home or abroad.

Pace bowlers are also more susceptible to injuries and that also makes it harder for them to sustain improvement over the long term, but things seem to be changing.

In October this year, Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo informed that he is looking to develop a good group of seven to eight fast bowlers who can play all formats and perform both home and abroad.

Over the past two months,



PHOTO: TWITTER

Eight of the top 10 wicket-takers in the BCB President's eight were fast bowlers, with Saifuddin leading with 12 wickets in four games.

The trend continued in the Bangabandhu T20 Cup. The pacers are dominating the wicket-takers' list and making a huge impact behind their teams' successes.

There have been quite a few young seamers emerging from various sources such as the age-level, high-performance and also from the domestic circuit, creating healthy competition in the fast-bowling department.

The likes of Khulna's Shohidul Islam and Rajshahi's Mukidul Islam are among the top performers in the ongoing tournament, bagging eleven wickets each. The list of up-and-coming pacers goes on with

Sumon Khan, Hasan Mahmud, Shoriful Islam, Mehedi Hasan Rana, and Shafiqul Islam are also in the reckoning for national places.

The emergence of such young talents however will keep the likes of Mustafizur, Taskin, and Abu Jayed on their toes to perform and lift their standards.

Mustafizur, to the relief of national selectors, has been doing just that as he returned to his groove after being sub-par in recent times. The left-arm seamer has looked in good shape and regained some of his accuracy, which makes his famed cutters all the more lethal. The Fizz has showed his class in the ongoing Bangabandhu T20 Cup and is the highest wicket-taker so far with 13 in five games.

Another highly-rated seamer, Taskin, also impressed as the pacer

has been generating good pace and more importantly, he is now more consistent with his line and length.

Meanwhile, among all the young and aspiring seamers, a big test awaits for a wily old fox in former Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who is all set to play for Gemcon Khulna after recovering from a hamstring injury.

The Tigers' highest ODI wicket-taker, Mashrafe has been gearing up for a comeback to competitive cricket since he quit the captaincy in March this year.

It will be a different battle for the 37-year-old this time around as Mashrafe will have to prove his worth as a pace bowler, without the added value of captaincy, to be an attractive option for national selection in the upcoming West Indies series in January.

Two titans renew rivalry tonight

AGENCIES



Lionel Messi's rivalry with Cristiano Ronaldo has enthralled football for the better part of a decade, and the pair will duel for potentially the final time when Barcelona host Juventus in the Champions League tonight.

Ronaldo and Messi haven't exactly been on the friendliest of terms, ever since the pair emerged as the two best players on the planet around a decade ago, a status they have essentially kept locked down ever since.

Any mention of the two men in the same breath generally evokes a discussion of which one is greater, but that is an argument rather the fans always enjoy the rivalry that has given so much joy over the years.

some of the Champions League's biggest sides.

While Group G is cut and dried, Group H is anything but, with Manchester United, PSG and RB Leipzig are all tied on nine points. But with PSG playing bottom-of-the-table Istanbul Basaksehir, this RB vs United tie has the feel of a one-off cup final for a place in the knockout phase.

"We are very aware that the next game will be difficult," insisted Neymar after Matchday 5's 3-1 success at Old Trafford, but if a point at home against eliminated Basaksehir spells certain qualification for Paris, coach Thomas Tuchel remains wary: "Almost qualified isn't qualified." Leipzig and United are level with Paris on nine Group H points meaning any winner in their meeting would qualify; both sides have been unpredictable this season, and both could go through with a draw if Paris



MESSI V RONALDO IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Messi's sides have had the better of their European games against Ronaldo's teams: W2 D2 L1.

Messi has scored three Champions League goals against Ronaldo's teams.

Messi has scored three times in six UEFA Champions League games against Juventus.

Ronaldo is yet to score against Barcelona in 450 minutes of UEFA Champions League football.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE (OVERALL)

Name	Matches	Goals
Lionel Messi	146	118
Cristiano Ronaldo	173	132

BARCELONA V JUVENTUS IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: HEAD TO HEAD

Matches: 12, Barcelona won: 5, Juventus won: 3, Drawn: 4, Barcelona scored: 15, Juventus scored: 10

lose. In short: it's tight.

Club Brugge honoured coach Philippe Clement's promise that they would "go all-in" against Zenit on Matchday 5, a 3-0 win setting them up for an improbable mission: beat Lazio in Rome and the Belgian champions will qualify at their hosts' expense (and set a new club record of ten points in a Champions League group stage).

SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ STORY

Not without the usual fun and camaraderie

through competitions like the BCB President's Cup and the ongoing Bangabandhu T20 Cup, there has been reason for Domingo to be pleased as a few young and talented pacers have been competing alongside national seamers like Rubel Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman, Taskin Ahmed, Al-Amin Hossain, Abu Jayed, Ebadat Hossain, Abu Hider and Mohammad Saifuddin.



PHOTO: BFF

UNBRIDLED JOY FOR MAGURA

Players of the Magura team are ecstatic after beating Rangpur 3-1 in the final of the JFA U-14 National Women's Football Championship at the Liberation War Memorial Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday. Nabiran Khatun scored twice while Arpita Biswas scored the third goal for Magura after Khadiza had given Rangpur the lead. Nabiran was adjudged player of the final while Arpita scooped the top-scorer's award. Subarna Khatun of the same team bagged the player of the tournament award.

Eng-S Africa ODI series postponed

REUTERS, CAPE TOWN

England's One-Day International series against South Africa has been postponed amid concerns over the mental and physical health of the players, Cricket South Africa (CSA) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a joint statement on Monday.

The announcement comes after the players were subjected to a number of Covid-19 scares with potentially five cases inside the teams' bio-secure environment in Cape Town, with one South Africa player and two hotel staff confirmed as positive.

Two members of the England tour party also have "unconfirmed positive results" that require further investigation, the ECB said on Sunday.

'Never knew it could feel that good'

REUTERS



An emotional Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp said the return of the club's fans to Anfield after a nine-month absence gave him goosebumps as they witnessed a 4-0 thumping of Wolverhampton Wanderers on Sunday.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the club's faithful had not been able to see their team play in their famous old stadium since March 11, when Liverpool were dumped out of the Champions League by Atletico Madrid, but on Sunday 2000 Reds fans roared them on to victory.

"Wasn't it the perfect night? Imagine 10 months ago people would have told us we would have a game and 2,000 people would turn up," he told broadcasters Amazon Prime.

"When we came out, we all had goosebumps. I had no idea how it would feel. It was perfect. The noise, what the people did, they were on their toes, you could see and feel and smell. They had waited so long for it," he said.

The 53-year-old enjoys a great relationship with the club's fans, and despite the team's success on the field during the pandemic, he has clearly missed playing in front of them.

"The game, the atmosphere, it was so nice. I had goosebumps. They started 'You'll Never Walk Alone' - really nice. I never knew it could feel that good," Klopp said, his voice welling up with emotion.

"This (the pandemic) started in February, and we were waiting to get normality back. Normality is good - I don't think we appreciated it as much. It was very very touching," he added.



Tottenham Hotspur's strike duo of Harry Kane and Son Heung-min both scored in Sunday's 2-0 derby victory over Arsenal while Liverpool were clinical in their 4-0 thrashing of Wolverhampton Wanderers, celebrating in front of their fans at Anfield for the first time since they won last season's title.

PHOTO: REUTERS/TWITTER

Muktijoddha battling for survival

SPORTS REPORTER



Falling football power Muktijoddha Sangsad were once in acute financial crisis to form a squad during the second edition of the professional football league in 2008 after the then caretaker government froze their bank account. But devoted footballers like Firoz Mahmud Titu, Rokonuzzaman Kanchan, Saifur Rahman Moni decided to sign for the freedom fighters' side without taking any signing money, bailing out the club that time.

In that journey, Muktijoddha Sangsad, who won the Dhaka Premier League in 1998 and 2000 before winning the national league once, just about avoided relegation, thanks to the sacrifice of those players who also motivated junior players by arranging money from sponsors.

More than a decade later, the club is still mired in financial crisis and yet again struggling to form a squad for the upcoming professional league, with the transfer window set to close on December 15 and season set to start on December 22 through the Federation Cup.

During this long period of struggle for survival, no system has developed inside the club and there



is virtually no management to look after the football team, which once drew a lot of attention as the third force in country's football behind Abahani and Mohammedan. Each season the club struggles to collect fund to form squad and the crisis deepened after its club tent in Gulistan was shut down by law enforcement agencies last year on allegation of running illegal casinos.

Hearing the poor condition of the club, its former striker Kanchan regretfully said, "We once played for Muktijoddha without payment to save the club and paved the way for the next generation of footballers. The club still owes me Tk 30 lakh. It is really painful that Muktijoddha Sangsad can't stand properly because of some people who are not honest."

According to Ariful, Muktijoddha Sangsad need nearly Tk 1.80 crore for the payment of players including four foreign recruits as well as for running the camp for the duration of the season. He also added that the players will get 50 percent of last season's contract money which is worth Tk 1.20 crore.

However, Bangladesh Football Federation and its senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy are trying to convince top management of the club after a group of footballers appealed to save the club.

"We have already talked to the management of the club, who informed us that they have financial problems" Murshedy said. "However, we are hopeful that Muktijoddha Sangsad will play in the Federation Cup in the month of victory because the name of Muktijoddha is involved with our emotion, liberation and many other things."

Murshedy said that they are also trying to convince high-ups of the government to allocate some fund for Muktijoddha Sangsad.

Introducing
BSRM Xtreme
B500 DWR
 the tough steel

Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant
 Work in progress using Shah Cement



Remembered FOREVER

Preserved and restored, Barishal Wapda killing ground of Liberation War set to be inaugurated for public today

SUSHANTA GHOSH

The horror and the deaths had turned it into hell on earth in 1971.

The Wapda compound in Barishal city, infamous in the area as a torture centre and a mass killing ground of the Pakistan occupation forces, saw 25 to 30 Bangladeshis brutally killed every morning.

Shafiqur Rahman Jamal's father was one of them. A resident of Kalish Chandra area of what is now Barishal city, Jamal himself and his older brother Kamal had been captured in lieu of their father Mojibur Rahman Kanchan.

Kanchan, a cultural worker and veteran freedom fighter, had escaped the house shortly before members of the Pakistan army came to their house looking for him. So, they picked up the two brothers and sent them to Wapda camp.

"The Pakistan military then announced that if Kanchan Miah surrendered, his two children would be released. At last, my father surrendered himself at Wapda on the day of Eid and we two brothers were released," Jamal told this newspaper.

"But my father was shot dead and killed there." The Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) compound has witnessed multiple such gruesome acts of torture, killing, and rape during the Liberation War.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



This Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) compound in Barishal city was the centre of operations for the Pakistan Army and a mass killing ground during the Liberation War. Two torture cells and two bunkers have been restored and will be opened to the public today, the very day the city was liberated from the Pakistan occupation forces in 1971.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Biden names health team to tackle Covid crisis

AFP, Washington

President-elect Joe Biden yesterday named the team tasked with turning around the United States' floundering efforts to quell the Covid-19 pandemic, nominating Xavier Becerra as his secretary of health.

When Biden takes office on January 20, his health team will be immediately responsible for rolling out a historic immunization drive -- set to launch later this month in a bid to gain control of a pandemic that has killed 280,000 people in the country.

Along with California attorney general Becerra, Biden named Vivek Murthy as surgeon general -- a role he previously held under Barack Obama -- and Harvard infectious disease expert Rochelle Walensky as director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"This trusted and accomplished team of leaders will bring the

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Bangladesh Bank approves new bank

Experts worry as country now has 61 banks; raise questions over conflict of interest

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladesh Bank yesterday approved one more commercial bank, taking the total number of banks in the country to 61.

The name of the new lender is Citizen Bank. It is the third private bank to get BB approval over the last two years, populating the already-crowded banking landscape. Community Bank Bangladesh and Bengal Commercial Bank are the other two.

Experts say the decision to approve the new bank would create more pressure on the banking sector, given the size of the country's economy.

Talking to The Daily Star, two analysts said the central bank's latest decision has also brought to the fore the question of conflict of interest.

The chairman of Citizen Bank, Toufika Aftab, is the wife of AKM Aftab ul Islam, a director of Bangladesh Bank Board.

"Such an example is not justified on ethical grounds as the central bank directors are those who are mainly responsible for issuing licence to a new bank," said Khondker Ibrahim Khaled, a former BB deputy governor.

He, however, said there was no legal complications in this regard.

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Lok Sabha debate on Bangladesh and POWs



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressing a group of workers from Tejgaon Industrial Area in front of the Gono Bhaban on December 8, 1972.

December 8, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

SWARAN EXPLAINS UN RESOLUTION

Indian External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh says today that unless Pakistan recognises Bangladesh and unless Bangladesh is admitted to the United Nations, the release of the Pakistani prisoners of war would continue to be difficult. The external affairs minister says this in his reply to the debate in the Lok Sabha on the Bangladesh situation. Some members comment that India should not have accepted the simultaneous adoption of two resolutions on Bangladesh's admission and release of POWs.

In response, Swaran Singh explains that Pakistan had moved amendments to the resolution of admission of Bangladesh making her admission conditional to release of prisoners of war but the adoption of the Argentine resolution prevented Pakistan

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ILLEGAL GAS LINES Titas sues 533 for attacking its officials on drive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A case was filed yesterday against 533 people over attacking Titas Gas officials during a drive against illegal gas connections in Narayanganj's Arahazar upazila.

Mezba-ur Rahman, engineering manager of Sonargaon zone distribution office of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd, filed the case with Arahazar Police Station against 33 named accused and around 500 unnamed ones.

Shawkat Hossain, inspector (investigation) of the police station, said the case was filed against the accused on charges of providing gas connections illegally, obstructing police duties, and carrying out the attack during the drive in Jhaugora Uttarpara area of the upazila on Sunday.

He said nine people were detained on Sunday following the attack.

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Giant vertical farm opens in Denmark



AFP, Taastруп

A purple glow illuminates stacked boxes where lettuce, herbs and kale will soon be sprouting at one of Europe's biggest "vertical farms" which has just opened in a warehouse in an industrial zone in Copenhagen.

Fourteen layers of racks soar from floor to ceiling in this massive, 7,000-square-metre (75,350-square-foot) hangar used by Danish start-up Nordic Harvest.

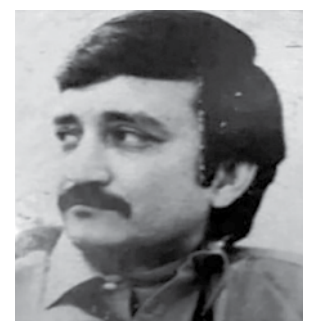
The produce grown here will be harvested 15 times a year, despite never seeing soil or daylight. It is lit up around the clock by 20,000 specialised LED lightbulbs.

In this futuristic farm, little robots deliver trays of seeds from aisle to aisle.

The large aluminium boxes are mostly empty for now, but lettuce and other leafy greens will soon be growing.

Some 200 tonnes of produce are due to be harvested in the first quarter of 2021, and almost

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Akram Ahmed Bir Uttam passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Valiant freedom fighter Captain Akram Ahmed Bir Uttam died at Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka yesterday morning.

He was 74. Captain Akram, who was working as a senior consultant and flight operations inspector at the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, had played a

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 8
 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

Nuke scientist killed by 'AI' machine gun

Iran says satellite-controlled weapon fired 13 rounds

AFP, Tehran

A satellite-controlled machine gun with "artificial intelligence" was used in last week's assassination of a top nuclear scientist in Iran, the deputy commander of the Revolutionary Guards told local media on Sunday night.

Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh was driving on a highway outside Iran's capital Tehran with a security detail of 11 Guards on November 27, when the machine gun "zoomed in" on his face and fired 13 rounds, said rear-admiral Ali Fadavi.

The machine gun was mounted on a Nissan pickup and "focused only on martyr Fakhri-zadeh's face in a way that his wife,

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Sinks installed for washing hands at the capital's Karwan Bazar on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue appear to have been not used for quite a while. There was no water supply or soap there when this photo was taken yesterday. Coronavirus infections and deaths caused by the pathogen are on the rise.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

ASTRAZENECA'S COVID VACCINE

India's Serum Institute seeks urgent approval

AGENCIES

Serum Institute of India, the world's largest producer of vaccines by volume and India's main hope of large-scale supplies, said yesterday it had lodged the first formal application for emergency use approval for AstraZeneca Plc's Covid-19 vaccine.

The UK pharmaceutical giant is chasing rivals Pfizer Inc and Moderna Inc with a vaccine that has less stringent storage requirements and is expected to be easier to distribute and faster to scale up in

production than others. But it is also facing queries from scientists over its trial data, which showed a 1.5 dose regimen delivered more than 90% efficacy and a full two-dose regimen just 62%, both administered over two stages.

Astra said two weeks ago that it could launch an additional trial to evaluate the lower dose regimen, but Serum Institute has said it would continue to test only the two full doses as it would delay trials.

Serum Institute, seeking to deliver

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Ashraf Haq Amin
 14 November 1975 - 07 December 2020

WE MOURN

We, the members of ONE Bank Family, deeply mourn the loss of our beloved colleague Ashraf Haq Amin, Executive Vice President, CFO & Head of Finance Division of ONE Bank Limited. He passed away due to Brain Hemorrhage in the early hours of 7th December, 2020.

Ashraf Haq Amin was a good natured, warm hearted personality. He had an ever smiling face. His attachment to our Bank commands regards.

We will always deeply miss him. May his departed soul rest in peace. May Almighty grant him the highest place in heaven.

