



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



REGD. No. DA 781 | Vol. XXX No. 317 | AGRHAWAN 24, 1427 BS | **Your Right to Know** | RABIU SANI 23, 1442 HJRI | 16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00

"I firmly believe that during this unprecedented hour of global Covid-19 pandemic, platforms like Saarc have huge prospect to reunite the member states to address collectively the challenges emanating from Covid-19 pandemic."
FOREIGN MINISTER AK ABDUL MOMEN

"I think January is going to be terrible because you're going to have the Thanksgiving surge super-imposed upon the Christmas surge."
TOP US INFECTIOUS DISEASE EXPERT DR ANTHONY FAUCI

"I don't think we envision any countries creating a mandate for vaccination."
DIRECTOR OF THE WHO'S IMMUNISATION DEPARTMENT KATE O'BRIEN

INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY

ACC roar fades as cases pile up

Anti-graft focus keeps shifting with issues popping up one after another

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

On the very first day of this year, the Anti-Corruption Commission declared that it will hunt down those who had amassed wealth illegally through casino businesses. "We will keep on chasing the corrupt people. Big or small -- no one will be spared," said ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmood at a programme on January 1 while talking about the anti-graft watchdog's stance against the illegal business. After the Rapid Action Battalion busted casino dens in the city last year, some prompt action by the ACC, like freezing accounts and issuing foreign travel ban against some lawmakers, created hope among many. But the investigation lost pace gradually. Soon after the Covid-19 hit the country in early March, scams in relief distribution, health safety equipment procurement and irregularities in healthcare facilities popped up, and the ACC shifted its focus. "Whenever a new issue arises, we are directed to dive in to deal with the matter.

At the end of the day, we cannot make much progress in the cases. As a result, enquiries and investigation get piled up on our desks," said a deputy director of the ACC, preferring to be unnamed. "People's expectation of ACC is never met," added the official. With such frustrations, the country will be observing International Anti-Corruption Day today. This year's theme is "Recover with Integrity", with focuses on Covid-19 recovery through corruption mitigation. It emphasises that inclusive Covid-19 recovery can only be achieved with integrity, according to a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) press release to mark the occasion. **PENDING CASINO DRIVE ENQUIRIES** When the anti-casino drive was launched, names of several big shots, including some ruling party lawmakers, surfaced. The ACC took prompt measures to initiate enquiry, seized their bank accounts and issued embargo on their travel abroad. Lawmakers Nurunnabi Chowdhury SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



INCREASE IN PROJECT COST, TIME EXTENSIONS

Put an end to this

Says an irate PM at Ecneec meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed dissatisfaction over frequent time extension and increase in costs of government projects and directed the officials concerned to immediately put an end to such practices. She asked all concerned to complete the projects in time, shunning tendencies to revise projects and raise their costs. The premier also ordered the officials to find out the reasons behind the delay in implementation of many of the projects. The directives came at the weekly meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec). Over the last few months, scores of proposals for extending deadline for completion of government projects and raising their costs were approved at Ecneec meetings. Some of the projects saw their deadline extended for four or five times. The prime minister last year asked all concerned to ensure completion of projects in time. Planning Minister MA Mannan also echoed her call. Yesterday, the PM voiced her dissatisfaction while approving the proposals for extending time and raising the costs of two projects under the agriculture ministry and the road transport and bridges ministry, Planning Commission Member Shamsul Alam told reporters after the virtual meeting. One of the two projects titled "the Agriculture Information Service



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Uncertainty looms over vaccine drives

26,000 health assistants go on strike over pay hike

MOUDDID AHMED SUJAN

Uncertainty looms large over the expanded programme on immunisation (EPI) under the health directorate and possibly Covid-19 vaccination as around 26,000 field-level health assistants are on strike since November 26 demanding better pay. Representatives of Bangladesh Health Assistant Association (BHAA) said they would continue their demonstration until the authorities assure them of an amicable solution to their demand for pay-scale upgrade. Due to the BHAA's strike, the measles-rubella vaccination campaign for children scheduled for December 6 had to be pushed to December 12. Besides, routine vaccinations for at least 10 diseases, including TB, polio and diphtheria, have remained suspended across the country due to the strike. The upcoming Covid-19 vaccination could be hampered if things stay as they are, sources said.

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HEFAJAT-E ISLAM

Politicking in the garb of religion

RASHIDUL HASAN

Hefajat-e Islam is now more than a political party with a strategic disclaimer of having no political agenda. The recent leadership and their activities only proved that they are working just like a political party, observed political analysts about Hefajat, which made the headlines for the last few days by inciting hate against sculptures, including the ones of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. "Basically, they are a political party but in a very strategic way they are working in disguise of a non-political organisation," said Dr Tareque Shamsur Rahman. "They are using religion in a very strategic way to gain their political goal," he told The Daily Star. At least one-third of Hefajat leaders, who last month seized control of the new committee of the Qawmi madrasa-based organisation, have direct links with Islamist political parties that took part in elections alone or under the platform of the BNP-Jamaat alliance. The inclusion of leaders of Jamiyat-a-Ulamaye Islam, a component of the 20-party alliance led by the BNP, is the prime example. Thirty-four of its leaders made it to the 151-member new committee of Hefajat. Jamiyat is registered with the Election Commission as a political party. In fact, this is for the first time Hefajat made the general secretary of Jamiyat its secretary general, although there was an understanding that any active political leader would not be able to get top posts in Hefajat, said its leaders. Six top leaders of Khelafat Majlish, another component of the BNP-led alliance, were also included in the new committee.

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BANGABANDHU SCULPTURE

Punish the culprits

HC asks authorities to take action against those who defaced the structure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government authorities concerned to take appropriate legal and punitive actions against the culprits involved in damaging the sculpture of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The court also asked the director general of Bangladesh Islamic Foundation and the khatib of Baitul Mukarram national mosque to take necessary steps to build awareness among the people through print and electronic media and other means that monuments, statues, portraits, and murals of the Father of the Nation are symbols of the country's independence, history, heritage, and glory and that those are not contradictory to the religion. Besides, the HC issued a rule asking the authorities to explain in four weeks as to why they should not be directed to

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Truck-pickup collision kills 5 in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Five people were killed and another was injured early yesterday as a truck collided head-on with a pick-up on the Dhaka-Tangail highway in Gharinda Bypass area in the district. The accident occurred around 4:30am when the driver of the Dhaka-bound truck lost control over the vehicle and it hit the pick-up coming from the opposite direction, Sub-Inspector Mohammad Ziaul Haque of Elenka Highway Police Outpost told this newspaper. Four labourers, who were in the pick-up loaded with printing machines, and the helper of the vegetable-laden truck died on the spot. Another labourer was injured. The truck driver escaped. The dead are truck helper Bulbul Mia, 40, from Rajshahi, and labourers Babul Mia, 32, Abdus Sobhan, 34, Nazrul Islam, 35, and Riyad Mia, 30. Upon information, members of Fire Service and Civil Defence rushed

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WHEN NEWSIES RISK BEING NEWS ... Television journalists run across rail lines as a train approaches with its lights on in fog near Moghbazar Level Crossing around 4:00pm yesterday. While collecting news, many reporters forget about keeping themselves safe.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

UK starts Covid vaccination

Grandmother, 90, gets first jab; millions of Californians face lockdown amid surging US cases



AGENCIES

Britain became the first Western country to start a mass coronavirus vaccine campaign with a pensioner receiving the initial jab yesterday as across the Atlantic millions of Californians went into lockdown to stop surging US infections. The UK's rollout of the Pfizer-BioNTech jab -- the first country to start using the approved inoculations -- is one of several vaccines bringing hope for an end to the pandemic that has killed more than 1.5 million people worldwide and ravaged economies since first emerging in China late last year. British pensioner Margaret Keenan, 90, said she felt "privileged" to be given the injection, the first of millions expected to be administered over the coming months in one of the world's worst-hit countries. RELATED STORY ON PAGE 12

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BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,202
New cases in 24hrs



4,81,945
Total cases



6,906
Deaths



4,01,194
Recoveries



1,557,301
Deaths



68,292,981
Total cases

Stop them from fleeing abroad

BSEC asks police to ensure 6 businesspersons accused of graft stays in country

AHSAN HABIB

Stock market regulator has written to the police to take initiatives so that six directors of three listed companies cannot flee the country.

They are Azimul Islam of Alif Manufacturing Company, Tasbirul Ahmed Chowdhury of United Airways and Mohammad Ali, Jebunessa Akhter, Hamida Begum and Lokman Chowdhury of Imam Buton Industries.

On Sunday, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) sent the letter to the Criminal Investigation Department.

The companies raised funds from the stock market through initial public offering (IPO), repeat public offering (RPO) and rights share offering and they sold off their shares to the general stock investors, the letter read.

United Airways raised Tk 100 crore through IPO in 2010. In 2011, it again raised Tk 315 crore from the stock market through issuing right shares.

The airlines started its commercial operations in 2007 and flight operations have remained suspended since 2016.

After that it started to incur loss and then its directors began to sell their shares to the general investors.

At present, directors are holding 4.16 percent shares of the company and the rest are held by institutional and general investors.

But the listed companies' directors are ordered to hold at least 30 percent shares of their companies.

The directors have breached securities rules and that's why the BSEC is taking legal actions against them, it said.

The BSEC called the directors several times to come to the commission and give their explanations, but they did not do so, said the stock market regulator.

For several reasons, the BSEC assumes that the directors can flee the country and that why it urged the law enforcement agency to take necessary steps to bar their escape.

Alif Manufacturing raised Tk 109 crore through issuing right shares. Though the fund utilisation time was 2019, but it only used around 33 percent, according to the BSEC.

Imam Buton Industries is a Chattogram-based button producer that has been listed with the stock market since 1996.

The BSEC also sent copies of the letter to all land ports and airports of the country.



The mangled remains of a truck and a pick up after they collided head-on on Dhaka-Tangail highway in Gharinda Bypass area of Tangail early yesterday. The accident left five people dead and one injured. PHOTO: COLLECTED

ACC roar fades as cases pile up

FROM PAGE 1

Shaon and Shamsul Haque Chowdhury were among them.

Later on, the names of other lawmakers, including Afzal Hossain, Mahfuzur Rahman Mita, Pankaj Nath, Moazzem Hossain Ratan, Omar Faruk Chowdhury, Mahi B Chowdhury, Nazrul Islam Babu, Abdullah Al Islam Jacob, Kazi Shahidul Islam alias Kazi Papul and Selina Islam, also came up for their alleged involvement in corruption.

Of them, the ACC filed a case against Kazi Papul and Selina for laundering around Tk 148.41 crore.

The ACC also investigated corruption allegations against former lawmakers BM Mozammel Haque, Kamrul Ashraf Khan Poton, Abdul Awal, Sirajul Islam Molla and Shamsul Haque Bhuiyan.

After enquiry, it filed two separate cases against Shamsul and Awal.

Enquiries into corruption allegations against former BNP lawmakers Ruhul Quddus Talukdar Dulu, Asadul Habib Dulu, Abdul Momin Talukdar and former secretary general of Jatiya Party ABM Ruhul Amin Hawladar are still pending.

Without elaborating, an ACC director said they were working on the matters and "examining the documents."

Besides, the ACC filed 22 cases after the crackdown was launched on casinos and against ruling party men, among others, over illegal wealth.

So far, charge sheets in four cases have been submitted against former general secretary of Dhaka South Juba League Ismail Hossain Samrat, organising secretary Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan, Samrat's associate Jakir Hossain and online casino kingpin Selim Proddhan.

The investigation into irregularities

in health sector also did not see much progress.

Since the Covid-19 hit the country, the government took initiatives to procure masks, PPEs and other equipment to fight the pandemic.

Cashing in on the crisis, a quarter attempted to make quick money by supplying low standard masks. But some doctors protested it and brought the matter to light.

On June 18, the ACC formed a four-member committee, headed by a director, to investigate irregularities in purchase and distribution of PPEs, masks and other equipment.

The health division took a move to keep doctors, nurses and health workers, involved in treating Covid-19 patients, at hotels and made allocations in this regard. Allegations were raised that some top government officials misappropriated the fund.

The ACC quizzed some officials in this regard but there is not much progress, except for filing of some cases.

One case was filed against Abdur Razzaq, the chairman of JMI Hospital Requisite MFG Ltd, and six doctors over supply of fake N-95 masks.

The ACC also filed two cases against Regent Hospital boss Mohammad Shahed for corruption.

However, the anti-graft watchdog got something to cheer about.

According to a recently published Transparency International report, 86 percent respondents said the anti-corruption agency of Bangladesh is doing a good job in tackling corruption.

The survey titled "Global Corruption Barometer - Asia 2020" was conducted on 1,000 people.

'SOME PROGRESS SOON'

ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmood said the pandemic slowed their investigation.

Replying to a question about the delays in investigation, he said they needed to quiz doctors to enquire into the anomalies in the health sector.

"Since doctors are fighting the pandemic on the frontline, quizzing them at this moment might hamper healthcare services. That is why we're dealing the matter carefully."

Regarding the casino scams, he said enquiries and investigations were ongoing.

"Soon you'll see some progress," he told this newspaper on Sunday, adding their work was getting pace.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman compared the ACC with a toothless tiger.

"The primary factor is a dividing line it [ACC] has drawn for itself beyond which it is unwilling, incapable or fearful of going based on the identity and status of the individuals concerned," he said.

The other factor is that like most other instances of collusive corruption, casino business did not flourish in Dhaka without the participation, collusion and protection of powerful entities other than the frontliners.

"The local political elites knew it, the administration knew it, so did the law enforcement agencies," he said, adding, "The ACC may therefore be facing the risk of burning fingers if they went too deep into the scandals."

Iftekharuzzaman said some small fries may face a degree of inconvenience while the big fish are likely to enjoy the proverbial impunity.

Put an end to this

FROM PAGE 1

Modernisation and Digital Agriculture Information and Communication Strengthening" was supposed to be completed by June this year at a cost of Tk 68.70 crore.

A proposal was placed at yesterday's meeting for extending the deadline by two years with an additional cost of Tk 41.20 crore.

The premier asked the officials concerned to explain why the project got delayed and why its cost went up. The project director was not present at the meeting. The newly appointed agriculture secretary remained silent, Shamsul said adding that the agriculture minister is now abroad.

"Why the project implementation was delayed. By this time, the project should have been completed. And now you are seeking time extension for this project."

"Because of this, the project cost will rise to Tk 109 crore from Tk 68 crore. Take measures so that all the projects are completed in time. Find the reasons behind the delay in project implementation," the PM was quoted by Shamsul as saying.

The PM again expressed her resentment when another proposal was placed for time extension of the project titled "Charkhali-Tushkhali-Mothbaria-Patharghata Road Development and Widening" covering parts of Barguna and Patuakhali.

The proposal sought to extend the deadline for completing the project by two and a half years with an additional cost of Tk 44.57 crore.

The Tk 104.76-crore project was supposed to be completed by December 2018.

The PM sought explanation from the implementing agency why the project was delayed and why the cost would rise, Shamsul said.

"This project should have been completed within the stipulated time, as it involved development and widening of the existing road."

"You bring a proposal for time

extension that pushes up the project cost. Such tendencies have to be stopped. It cannot happen over and over again," Hasina was quoted by Shamsul as saying.

The PM also pointed out that the road which is being widened under the project is vital for communication in the region as the Padma Bridge is going to be open to traffic soon. Besides, construction of the Payra port is going on and there will be a cantonment in the area.

She instructed the officials concerned to make a master plan on roads in the southern region, keeping in mind the growing volume of traffic as well as increased movement of heavy vehicles once the Padma Bridge opens.

APPROVAL OF PROJECTS

The Ecnc meeting yesterday approved four project proposals involving Tk 3,903.61 crore. Two of those are for new projects.

It gave the nod to the Tk 2,242 crore project to widen the road and the elevated expressway from Panchaboti in Narayanganj to Muktarpur in Munshiganj.

The project will be completed in June 2025.

Citing a government study, the officials said once the project is implemented, it will reduce the travel cost by 62 percent and the waiting time by 74 percent. The average speed of vehicles on the road would increase by 4.45 times.

The PM asked the authorities concerned to change the title of the project to "double-decker road" instead of "elevated expressway".

Shamsul said the expenditure on consultancy in the project was raised to Tk 25 crore from the proposed Tk 10 crore following requests from the officials concerned.

The Ecnc also approved a project for improving civic amenities in Mymensingh City Corporation at a cost of Tk 1,575 crore. The work includes development of roads and drainage network in the city.

Uncertainty looms

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, the health directorate on December 3 issued a circular warning that action would be taken under the Government Employee Act 2018 if any staffer attempted to hamper the measles-rubella vaccination.

A health staffer at Pirgachha Upazila Health Complex of Rangpur told The Daily Star that health assistants assaulted an employee trying to carry vaccines to a centre yesterday.

Source said there are 1.2 lakh EPI vaccination centres across the country. The centres are manned by 26,000 health assistants. The government holds vaccination programmes once a month in each of the centres.

"We will go and talk to the honourable director general of the health director on Thursday [tomorrow]. We will decide our future programmes after the meeting," Sheikh Rabiul Alam, convener of the BHAA, told this correspondent yesterday.

He said, "We have been informed that the health ministry has not responded positively to the health directorate proposal on our demands. It should be considered that Bangladesh received four international recognitions for successes in vaccination, including the latest 'Vaccine Hero' title of honourable prime minister. We, the health assistants, are the contributors behind these achievements."

There are three types of staffers under the EPI programme of the directorate general of the health services (DGHS). They are: health inspector, assistant health inspector, and health assistants.

Under the pay scale, the health assistant post is 16th grade and they are demanding that EPI staffers' pay scales be upgraded to 11th, 12th and 13th grades respectively.

Rabiul said the prime minister had made promises to them in a conference on December 6, 1998. "We were assured several times that our demand will be met," he said.

He said they might withdraw their strike during the measles-rubella vaccination campaign.

"Hopefully we will get a positive response from the honourable director general on Thursday," he added.

Shamsul Haque Mridha, director of EPI at the DGHS, told this paper last night, "The problem is there are multiple factions among them. We, however, held a daylong discussion today [yesterday] with them. We agreed to their demand. We have placed a proposal to the health ministry, which has assured us of considering the matter. We hope the issue will be resolved this time."

32 DEAD; 2,202 INFECTED

Thirty-two more people died from Covid-19 and 2,202 new infections were recorded in the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release of the DGHS.

With this, the total number of deaths reached 6,906, which is 1.43 percent of all confirmed cases in the country.

The total number of confirmed cases rose to 4,81,945.

Against 17,084 tests, the positivity rate was 12.89 percent while the overall positivity rate was 16.65 percent.

Meanwhile, 2,571 Covid-19 patients recovered in the same 24 hours, raising the number of recoveries to 4,01,194.

The recovery rate is now 83.24 percent.

Among the 32 deceased, 25 were males and seven females.

One was aged between 21 and 30, three were aged between 41 and 50, six between 51 and 60, and 22 were above 60 years, added the release.

Politicking in the garb of religion

FROM PAGE 1

At least 16 leaders of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, four of Islami Oikya Jote and six of Khelafat Andolon were accommodated in the Hefajat's new committee.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis and Islami Oikya Jote earlier were in the BNP-led alliance and both are registered with the Election Commission as political parties.

On November 15, Junayed Babunagari was declared Hefajat ameer at the end of its council held at Darul Ulum Moinul Islam Hathazari Madrasa in Chattogram. Before this committee was announced, Junayed served Hefajat as its secretary general.

The council was held around two months after the death of Hefajat amir Ahmed Shafi, who passed away in September.

The formation of the new committee sparked an outcry within the organisation with Moulana Mainuddin Ruhil, joint secretary general of the previous committee, terming the new committee completely illegal.

He said Hefajat had never had any top leader who had affiliations with any political party.

Soon after the formation of the new committee, Hefajat hogged the headlines as it strongly opposed the construction of Bangabandhu's sculpture in the capital.

During a meeting on November 19 in the capital's Mohammadpur, Junayed Babunagari vowed that they were ready to sacrifice their lives to establish rule of Allah in the land of Allah.

He even warned the government of facing consequences if it did not meet their demands.

The political analysts said the presence of political leaders in its new committee and its recent activities and demands signalled that it has turned into a political party.

Different religion-based political parties are using the platform to gain popularity and achieve their political goals as Hefajat has thousands of its dedicated followers across the country, they said.

"Hefajat is indeed a political party and they are working targeting to achieve a certain political aim," said Serajul Islam Choudhury, professor emeritus of Dhaka University.

Hefajat's demand to change the existing structure of the state is nothing but a political demand which manifests that they want to go to power.

He said they don't bother to talk on different political interest issues.

"They are using religion to do politics and they are depending on madrasa students to do it."

Prof Serajul said the present government's "compromising and soft stance" was also responsible for

Hefajat's gaining strength and acting against the state.

Prof Dilara Chowdhury, another political analyst, said the present government is to be blamed if Hefajat enters politics.

She said Hefajat's activities were centred around Hathazari Madrasa in Chattogram. But through accepting all demands of Hefajat, the government has shown them that they can act as a pressure group.

"There is nothing to be surprised about Hefajat coming to politics as it was the present government that has invited them to politics," said Dilara, a former professor of political science at Jahangirnagar University.

Hefajat first appeared on the scene in 2009 by protesting a draft national women development policy that provided equal inheritance rights to women.

On April 6, 2013, Hefajat leaders and activists marched towards Dhaka and held a rally at Shapla Chattar with a 13-point demand, including enactment of anti-blasphemy act and stringent punishment of "atheist bloggers".

Then came the May 5 mayhem.

As Hefajat activists turned increasingly violent and kept Motijheel occupied for nearly 12 hours after their rally there on May 5, 2013, law enforcers swung into action after midnight and drove them away.

UK starts Covid vaccination

FROM PAGE 1

"My advice to anyone offered the vaccine is to take it," said Keenan, wearing a mask and a penguin T-shirt. "If I can have it at 90 then you can have it too."

British officials hailed the Pfizer-BioNTech jab as a turning point in the fight against the pandemic, and on what has been dubbed "V-Day", people rolled up their sleeves for an initial dose from early morning.

The UK's second jab reportedly went to a man named William Shakespeare. The over-80s, care home workers, and at-risk health and social care staff will be at the front of the line.

The British public has been largely supportive of the rapid approval of the vaccine, but ministers and health professionals are aware they still need to combat mistrust over treatments that risks hampering global efforts to fight the disease.

Russia on Saturday began vaccinating high-risk workers with its own jab and Beijing has also begun an emergency inoculation campaign with a medicine made in China.

Britain's start to its vaccinations came as around the world the virus picture darkens, with more countries reimposing curbs and around 30 million people in California placed

under stay-at-home orders to fight a deepening US crisis.

While the World Health Organization has warned that successful vaccines on their own will not immediately end the crisis, nations around the world are seeking safe candidates to administer to populations growing increasingly weary of restrictions and economic pain they cause.

CALIFORNIA LOCKDOWN
The floundering efforts to quell the pandemic in the US have been widely criticised -- the nation is the world's worst-hit with known infections approaching 15 million and more than 283,000 deaths.

The extent of the crisis was illustrated by the lockdown in California, the most populous American state, where authorities forced most offices to close and banned gatherings among different households.

Bars and services such as hair salons were shut and restaurants were only allowed to serve takeaways. Non-essential travel was also temporarily restricted statewide as California experienced record new Covid-19 cases.

"The overwhelming majority of Californians are now in this new stay-at-home order protocol," said state Governor Gavin Newsom,

who earlier warned that the state hospital system was at risk of being "overwhelmed."

The United States is expected to grant emergency authorisation for the Pfizer-BioNTech and another vaccine produced by Moderna, hoping to vaccinate millions by the end of the year.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Pfizer and BioNTech will deliver their first doses to his nation within weeks.

In India, two pharmaceutical firms -- including Serum Institute, the world's biggest manufacturer of vaccines -- on Monday sought fast-track approval for coronavirus shots.

India is the second-worst hit nation having already recorded more than 140,000 deaths.

And in Brazil's Sao Paulo state -- Latin America's coronavirus epicentre -- authorities will launch a campaign from January providing the Chinese-developed vaccine CoronaVac to healthcare workers, seniors and other vulnerable groups first.

RESTRICTIONS REMAIN
Even as hopes rise for vaccines and a resulting economic recovery, governments around the world are being forced to tighten restrictions to contain surges in infections.

Truck-pickup

FROM PAGE 1

to the spot. They recovered the bodies and took the injured labourer to Tangail General Hospital.

Rezaul Karim, assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Tangail, said the accident had occurred due to reckless driving by the driver of the truck that swerved off the lane and hit the pick-up coming from the opposite direction.

He mentioned that dense fog might have affected visibility on the highway.

Meanwhile, vehicular movement on the Bangabandhu Bridge was halted twice following two minor accidents on the west side of the bridge yesterday, said sources in the traffic control room of the bridge.

The first one occurred around midnight, bringing traffic movement on the bridge to a halt for more than half an hour.

Vehicular movement on the bridge was again suspended for about an hour after another mishap at about 3:00pm.

No casualties were reported, Kazi Aiyubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Bangabandhu Bridge East Police Station, told this correspondent.

Punish the ulprits

FROM PAGE 1

prosecute the perpetrators of the damage to Bangabandhu's monuments on charges of sedition and violating the constitution.

The HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Uttam Kumar Lahery seeking necessary directives on this issue.

Nahid Sultana Juthi, Shah Monjurul Hoque and several other lawyers appeared for the petitioner while Attorney General AM Amin Uddin represented the state during the hearing on the petition.

The under-constitution sculpture of Bangabandhu in Kushtia town was damaged on Saturday. The following day, Uttam Kumar filed the writ petition with the HC seeking its directives on the government to protect and preserve all sculptures, including those of Bangabandhu, across the country.

The respondents are duty-bound to protect all monuments under Article 24 of the constitution, the petitioner said, adding that setting up statue of the Father of the Nation is not contradictory to religion.

Secretaries to the ministries of home affairs, liberation war affairs and religious affairs, the inspector general of police, the director general of Bangladesh Islamic Foundation and the khatib of Baitul Mukarram national mosque have been made respondents to the rule and directive.

FOUR PLACED ON REMAND
Meanwhile, a Kushtia court yesterday placed four arrestees on remand in a case over vandalising the sculpture of Bangabandhu at Panch Rastar intersection in Kushtia town, reports our correspondent.

Kushtia Model Police Station Inspector Nishikanta Das, also the investigation officer of the case, produced the arrestees before Kushtia Senior Judicial Magistrate Enamul Haque seeking 10-day remand each for Ibn Masood (R) Madrasa students Abu Bakkar Mithun, 19, and Md Sabuj Islam Nahid, 20, and seven-day remand each for their teachers Al Amin, 26, and Md Abu Yusuf, 31.

The court, however, granted five-day remand for each of the students and four-day remand for each of the teachers.

ISLAMI ANDOLON TONES DOWN STANCE

Islami Andolon Bangladesh (IAB) yesterday apparently toned down its stance on construction of sculptures saying it did not express any opinion about demolition of sculptures or idols.

"We have opposed setting up of sculptures and idols in a logical way. But we did not make any comment on the demolition of any sculpture or idol. It is completely illegal if anyone gets involved in such an activity," IAB Amir Syed Mohammad Rezaul Karim said at a press conference at its central office in the capital.

In the statement, he said the country's Alem community and religious-minded general people can speak their mind against construction of sculptures.

"But it is the responsibility of the authorities concerned whether they will pay heed to it or not," Rezaul added.

The party came up with the statement a day after Hefajat-e Islam Bangladesh Amir Junayed Babunagari, Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque and IAB

Remove illegal structures on Karnaphuli banks within 2 months: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned of the government to remove all illegal structures along the Karnaphuli river at Lal Dariarchar area in Chattogram in the next two months.

The officials concerned have been directed to disconnect the water, gas and electricity lines of the illegal structures if those are not evicted by this time.

During hearing a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, the HC said the officials concerned will be directed to appear in person before this court if they don't comply with the order.

The bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Mohammad Ali also fixed March 9 next year for further hearing and passing order on the issue.

Chattogram Metropolitan Police's commissioner, its deputy commissioner, Chattogram

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Workers of Dhaka North City Corporation are busy painting Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial in Mirpur, ahead of December 14, the day commemorating some of the most brilliant minds of this country who were brutally murdered by the Pakistan army during the Liberation War. Many of the historic memorials in the city are not very well-maintained round the year, and it is only when such occasions are near that authorities hurry to spruce up the landmarks.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ONLINE CASINO 'KINGPIN' SALIM ACC clears charge-sheet, says he made Tk 57.79cr illegally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday approved the charge-sheet of a graft case against online casino "kingpin" Salim Proddhan, which accused him of amassing about Tk 57.79 crore illegally.

The commission brought another charge of laundering about Tk 22 crore to Thailand and the US.

A three-member committee gave the approval, confirmed ACC Public Relations Officer Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya yesterday.

Salim came to the fore last year when law enforcers conducted a drive against illegal casinos. He allegedly amassed the wealth from online casino business, say investigators.

ACC filed a case against him on October 27, 2019, accusing him of amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 12.27 crore. ACC Deputy Director Gulshan Anwar Proddhan was assigned to investigate the case.

Later in the investigation, it was found that the Salim accumulated about Tk 57.79 crore illegally.

In his 2011-12 income tax return, Salim mentioned that he owns 40 percent shares, worth about Tk 6.9 lakh, of Japan Bangladesh Security Printing and Papers Ltd.

However, the company, in its 2011-12 income tax return file, mentioned that Salim's paid-up capital was Tk 69 lakh and his share money deposit was worth about Tk 23.55 crore.

"Salim concealed information of Tk 23 crore in his tax return file," sources said.

Salim disclosed that he invested Tk 11.31 crore in FDR, share market and savings certificates but could not show the money's source.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Rabab Fatima elected VP of 3 UN agencies

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Ambassador Rabab Fatima, Bangladesh's permanent representative to the United Nations, has been elected vice president of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS executive board at the elections held in New York yesterday.

The ambassador of Bulgaria was elected president of the board, while the other vice presidents are ambassadors of the Netherlands and Gambia.

"This will enable Bangladesh to work closely with other board members and the leaderships of these three vital UN organs and provide them strategic guidance to their work," said a statement by the Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the UN.

The UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS have specific mandates to advance UN's development agenda in the field level. UNDP is the largest UN agency with primary focus on poverty

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Trawler owners' body seeks amendment to Marine Fisheries Act

Says some provisions could cause huge losses to the fishing sector

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Marine White Fish Trawler Owners Association has demanded amendments to the new "Marine Fisheries Act-2020". They claimed the law is creating obstacles for fishing in the Bay of Bengal.

They said this during a press briefing held at the Chattogram Press Club yesterday.

During the briefing, general secretary of the association Tajuddin Taj said, "Several sections and sub-sections of the new Marine Fisheries Act-2020 are creating obstacles to fishing in the Bay of Bengal. If these laws are not amended there will be huge losses in the fishing sector."

Reading out a written statement at the programme, Taj said the government has published the gazette last month after revoking the Marine Fisheries Ordinance-1983. However, due to the rigidity of the new act, trawler operators are now in a state of panic and have suspended netting fish.

He said "The law contains a provision that empowers the authorities to impose fines ranging from Tk 8 lakh to Tk 25 lakh in the event of a violation of fishing rules, without leaving any room for self-defense. The new act would create opportunities for dishonest marine fisheries officials to indulge in corrupt practices."

He alleged that the law was legislated without any prior consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Contacted, AHM Shafiquzzaman, director of Marine Fisheries Department Chattogram office, said "We are taking action against fishing trawler owners and sailors for violating various sections and sub-sections of the new law."

"Recently, they have been demanding amendment of this law. We informed the concerned department on behalf of trawler owners and sailors about their demand," he said.

"Since the law has been passed in the parliament, it is our responsibility to enforce it," he said. "Amendment or cancellation depends wholly on the government," he added.

Meanwhile, all skippers and sailors of fishing trawler under the Marine Academy Ex-Cadet Association have halted fishing in the Bay since December 5, in protest of the new law -- that was passed in parliament in November.

Govt instigating fundamentalism: Mirza Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The current government is instigating fundamentalism, claimed BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir while talking to reporters at his Thakurgaon residence yesterday morning.

"If there is anybody responsible for the rise of fundamentalism, it is Awami League," said Mirza Fakhrul.

He further said that Awami League always blames BNP and seeks excuses to destroy the opposing party. "This is dirty politics that harms the country," he said.

BNP has nothing to do with fundamentalism but it believes in religious freedom, claimed Mirza Fakhrul.

"I don't think there are any militants in Bangladesh. However, there is fundamentalism and it is the Awami League that is indulging and inciting fundamentalism," he continued.

In response to a question, Fakhrul said, "I don't want to talk about sculpture at the moment. Democracy is the bigger issue for us [having] it in the country is my right. It is a matter of importance to establish this constitutional right."

"Instability is prevailing in the country as there is no democratic government here. Foreign investors do not think Bangladesh is safe. The reason behind this is that the environment of the country is not investment-friendly," said Fakhrul.

"Those who come from abroad to do business have to pay bribe to get gas and electricity connection. The ruling party people also take toll from them. All this has had a negative impact," he added.

"Recently, six sugar mills in the country have been shut down. During the Covid-19 pandemic, a section of the working class are becoming unemployed. At this time, pushing the sugar mill

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Bangladesh no country for communal forces

Says Obaidul Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said communal forces will not be given any scope to strengthen their footing in the country that attained independence through the Liberation War in 1971.

"Defamation of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's sculpture is an assault on the hearts of millions of Bangladeshis who believe in the spirit of the Liberation War," the minister told a press conference at his secretariat office in the capital.

Quader, also general secretary of Awami League, said vandalism of Bangabandhu's sculpture is a challenge of the radicals to the country's Liberation War and its achievements. Those who are patronising and funding from behind the scene to carry out such incidents will be found, he added.

Quader said many conspiracies were hatched against Bangabandhu, his family and the Liberation War in the past and conspiracies are still ongoing. Those who are making evil attempts to create instability in the country centring Bangabandhu sculptures will be resisted with an iron hand, he added.

Investigation is going on to look into whether there is any local or international political conspiracy behind the issue, he said.

Mentioning that the unity of the pro-liberation forces is very firm, the minister said they along with people of the country will resist all evil efforts unitedly.

Quader said communal forces are using religion in their evil acts against the spirit of the Liberation War.

By giving support to the evil activities, BNP has cleared its stance and the party has already proved that they are the patrons of anti-liberation forces, he added.

About the construction of Bangabandhu's sculptures at different places, he said some sculptures have lack of similarity with Bangabandhu's picture and in some cases, the designs have some flaws. He urged everyone to refrain from constructing Bangabandhu's sculpture without taking permission from the Bangabandhu Trust.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'Latifur Rahman Naturenomics Award' launched

Balipara Foundation honours Transcom Group founder

CITY DESK

The Balipara Foundation has recently introduced "Latifur Rahman Naturenomics Award" -- a special award to memorialise the late founder chairman of Transcom Group, one of the leading figureheads behind ethical business in Bangladesh.

This award will focus on Sylhet, CHT and the Sundarbans-Khulna on creating a thriving ecosystem and livelihoods and will be instituted from 2021 in Bangladesh, said a press release.

The award was launched by Victor Banerjee, who delivered a touching memorial on Latifur Rahman, who worked tirelessly for creating social sustainability while maintaining the highest ethical and moral standards in the Eastern Himalayas.

The award was introduced at the eighth edition of the Balipara Foundation Awards, following a four-day virtual edition of the eighth Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics Forum 2020 on December 1-5.

The forum brought together global leaders and experts to discuss the theme of "Ecology is Economy".

The awards recognised the extraordinary visionaries of the Eastern Himalayas and their indomitable contribution, who continue to live in harmony with nature and adopt sustainable methods for greening the economy, added the press release.

Bringing together the award winners in a virtual avatar, the event began with words of encouragement from Indian actor Adil Hussain.

This year's national "Lifetime Service Award" went to Dr Parimal Chandra Bhattacharjee, an academic and a retired

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

'ANTI-STATE CONTENT' Block online portals, social media pages of Kanak Sarwar: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned of the government to immediately block all the online and digital portals of Kanak Sarwar, a Bangladeshi journalist who is now abroad, including his Facebook and YouTube channel for running "anti-state distorted contents" through the platforms.

The court also issued a rule asking the authorities to explain in four weeks why spreading such anti-state and distorted contents should not be declared illegal.

The bench of Justice Md Khasruzzaman and Justice Md Mahmud Hassan Talukder came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Imtiaz Uddin Ahmed Asif seeking necessary directives on this issue.

He filed the petition as a public interest litigation on November 17 saying that Bangladeshi journalist Kanak Sarwar broadcast an interview of Liberal Democratic Party President Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed on September 17 through his (Kanak) YouTube channel.

In the interview, Oli Ahmed claimed that Ziaur Rahman was the first acting president of Bangladesh, though Syed Nazrul Islam was the first acting president.

Oli Ahmed also made some derogatory comments about Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his interview which are distortion of the history and also against the state, he said in the petition.



"Who knows where we'll end up from here? Better take some selfies," said Munmun, one of the four young women pictured here. As they were automatically graduated from higher secondary school with HSC exams halted due to the pandemic, the four friends haven't gotten to see each other in eight months. They visited their alma mater, Viqarunnisa Noon College, yesterday to collect their HSC exam admit cards, considering the document may come in handy for university admissions.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

GRAFT CASE

HC questions legality of Khalidi's bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the legality of a lower court order that granted bail to Toufique Imrose Khalidi, editor-in-chief of online news portal bdnews24.com, in a corruption case.

The court issued a rule asking the state and Khalidi to explain in 10 days why the lower court order that granted him bail in the case should not be scrapped.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Sohel came up with the rule following a revision petition filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) challenging the lower court order of bail.

The ACC on July 30 filed the case against Khalidi, for allegedly depositing Tk 42 crore with no "legal source" to different banks.

Gulshan Anwar Pradhan, deputy director of the anti-graft watchdog, filed the case with ACC's integrated district office Dhaka-1, saying that Khalidi earned the money through illegal means by creating "fake documents". Khalidi, however, has denied the allegations of corruption against him.

A Dhaka court on October 20 granted bail to Khalidi in the case.

The ACC on December 6 filed a revision petition with the HC seeking cancellation of the lower court order that granted him bail.

Lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan argued for the ACC while Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik represented the state during virtual hearing on the revision petition yesterday.



A flower nursery, in Alonkarkathi village of Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila, wears a deserted look without buyers. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

COVID-19 FALLOUT

Nesarabad flower nurseries counting heavy losses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Thousands of flower nursery owners in Swarupkathi union of Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila, considered the nursery hub of Barisal division, are struggling to survive amid waning sales due to Covid-19 pandemic.

With educational institutions closed since March, the owners fear that at least a third of their flower saplings will go unsold.

It will be a devastating blow to the industry if they are unable to sell the saplings during this peak season -- between October and February, the nursery owners added.

There are about 2,000 nurseries, set up on 440 hectares of land, in Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila, where at least eight thousand people depend on the nurseries for their livelihood.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Banaripara upazila of Barisal, livelihoods of at least 200 workers depend on 68 registered nurseries, set up on 32 hectares of land in the upazila.

Chapal Krishna Debnath, agriculture officer of DAE in

There are about 2,000 nurseries, set up on 440 hectares of land, in Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila, where at least eight thousand people depend on the nurseries for their livelihood.

in the sector, with a market size of around Tk 150 crore, the DAE official added.

Sajjad Ullah, owner of Shanta Nursery in Swarupkathi, said he usually sells at least 10 thousand flower saplings each month, but his sales plummeted to seven thousand saplings a month now, when all educational institutions remain closed due to the pandemic.

The sale of flower saplings will be at least 30 percent lower this season, he anticipated.

Salam Hawladar, owner of Adarsha Nursery in Alonkarkathi village in the upazila, said he prepared about one lakh flower saplings for this season, but the sale so far has been poor.

The main challenge now is to support 10 workers at the nursery, he added.

Another nursery owner, Abul Hasnat, said he took a total of Tk 5 lakh loan from a bank and a cooperative for his nursery.

Worrying about how he would repay the loan with such poor sales, he urged the government to offer financial assistance for nursery businesses affected by the pandemic.

Nesarabad, said in Swarupkathi union, there is a nursery in almost every house.

Fruit and timber saplings sell well during summer and monsoon months, but flower saplings sell only during their flowering season -- from October to February.

Flower saplings from nurseries in Swarupkathi are sold across the country during the five months and about eight to ten thousand people are directly or indirectly involved

Ferry services resume after 11 hours

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Ferry services on Shimulia-Banglabazar route resumed yesterday noon after 11 and a half hours of disruption since Monday midnight due to poor visibility and dense fog.

The ferry operation began around 11:30am, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) Assistant General Manager Shafiqul Islam said, adding that currently 13 ferries are plying the route.

Man to die for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A court here yesterday sentenced a man to death in connection with a case for killing his wife for dowry in Mathbaria upazila in 20414.

The convict, Halim Dhali, 44, was tried in absentia.

Judge Mizanur Rahman also fined the convict TK 1 lakh.

Poachers active as migratory birds arrive in Narail

They catch around 400 birds every day and sell them in different areas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

With the beginning of winter, hundreds of migratory birds have started coming to Narail district from different parts of the country.

Like every year, the birds are seen flying and frolicking in the water of the beels. But the biggest disappointment is that bird hunting is rampant in the water bodies of the district.

Poachers are hunting birds from the beels and taking the birds to the markets and nearby villages for sale, said locals.

Unabated hunting and selling of migratory birds in the district are posing a serious threat to nature and biodiversity, they said.

The poachers have set up traps in the middle of Pateshri Beel in Kalia upazila of the district to catch the birds. The hunters catch around 400 birds from the beel every day and then sell them in different areas.

The poachers played the recorded song

of the bird species in the beel. Hearing the chirping, the birds started coming to the traps placed in the beel.

At midnight, the birds get stuck in the traps when the hunters chase the birds, said villagers, adding that thus, the poachers catch the migratory birds.

Wishing anonymity, a poacher said they were catching birds in the Pateshri Beel by setting up traps. Local people bought the birds from them.

Contacted, Kalia Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Md Nazmul Huda said they came to know that such illegal bird hunting was going on. They have already asked the law enforcers for conducting drives there.

He has recently fined some bird hunters Tk 10,000, said the UNO, adding that they will stop the bird hunting at any cost.

Narail Deputy Commissioner Anjuman Ara said the executive magistrates are conducting mobile courts to stop it.



Poachers set nets in the Pateshri Beel of Narail's Kalia upazila to trap birds.

PHOTO: STAR



Local people form a human chain and blocked the Tangail-Jamalpur highway in Porabari Bus Stand area for an hour yesterday, protesting the corruption of Ghatail municipality Mayor Shahiduzzaman Khan.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
EDUCATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
MANIKGANJ

e-Tender Notice (Open Tendering Method (OTM))

Memo No.-EED-Manikganj-ICT College/soil Test-2020-21/12 Date: 07-12-2020

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

SL No.	Tender ID	Name of works	Last date and time of selling documents	Tender Closing Date/Time	Tender Opening Date/Time
01	513863	Soil Test for Construction of Academic Building at Satoria Syed Kalu Shah Degree College, SatoriaUpazilla, Manikganj District.	29-Dec-2020 16:00 PM	30-Dec.-2020 13:00 AM	30-Dec.-2020 13:00 AM

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

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks branches up to 16.00 PM. on 29-Dec-2020.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(M. Mustafizur Rahman)
 Executive Engineer
 Education Engineering Department
 Manikganj.

GD-1957

The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd.
Gazipur
Website: www.spcbd.org.bd

Local/International e-Tender

Electronic tenders (e-Tenders) are hereby invited from the competent local/international manufacturers/suppliers for supply of the following items for this Corporation as per under noted schedule. e-Tender documents showing terms and conditions with specifications will be available at web: etender.spcbd.org.bd/114.130.43.56. It is to mention here that this is online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted and no hard copy will be accepted except price of e-Tender schedule and earnest money. To submit e-Tender bidders need to register on etender.spcbd.org.bd/114.130.43.56. For more details, please contact cell: 880-1534002183 & 880-1534002184. Necessary information is given below:

Sl. No.	Names of the items	Nature of e-Tender	Date of publishing e-Tender	Last date and time for submission of e-Tender	Date & time for opening of e-Tender	Value/set of e-Tender schedule (non-refundable)
1.	Supply of 500 reams CBS-1 Paper for Printing MICR Cheque.	International Re-e-Tender	09.12.2020	13.01.2021 up to 11.00am	13.01.2021 at 11.15am	Tk 1000.00
2.	Supply of 500 pcs. Blankets for Super Intaglio & Super Orlof Intaglio Printing Machine	Local/International e-Tender	09.12.2020	13.01.2021 up to 11.00am	13.01.2021 at 11.15am	Tk 400.00

Bidder may collect e-Tender schedule from the aforementioned website. Earnest money @ 3% (three percent) of the total quoted price shall have to be submitted in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order/irrevocable Bank Guarantee from any scheduled bank in Bangladesh in favour of The Managing Director, The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd., Gazipur along with the price of e-Tender schedule in the form of a separate Pay-Order/DD in the tender box kept at Corporation's office in Gazipur on or before the scheduled deadline for submission of e-Tender. In the case of international tender, Irrevocable Bank Guarantee may also be given as earnest money from any international commercial bank abroad with a counter guarantee from any scheduled bank in Bangladesh. e-Tender(s) without earnest money and price for procurement of e-Tender schedule shall not be acceptable. The e-Tender shall have to be submitted as per e-Tender guidelines mentioned at the above website. Offer(s) will be opened as per schedule mentioned above in presence of the tenderer(s) if any. 01 (one) e-Tender schedule is applicable only for one supplier/manufacturer for submitting one offer along with earnest money and price of e-Tender schedule. The authority reserves the right to reject or accept any e-Tender(s) without assigning any reason whatsoever. Submission of e-Tender after the specified time shall not be acceptable under any circumstances.

Rashid Ahmed
 General Manager (Foreign Purchase)
 Phone: 88-02-9205103

GD-1953

BSF shoots 2

FROM PAGE 12

Mashaldangi village while Najir Uddin breathed his last on way to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur, the OC added.

Speaking to The Daily Star over the phone, Commanding Officer of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) Battalion 50 Lt Colonel Shahidul Islam said a company commander-level flag meeting between the BGB and BSF was held at the Zero line at the same border over the issue around 2:00pm yesterday.

In the meeting, BGB officials strongly protested the killings. However, BSF officers claimed their members opened fire after being attacked by Bangladeshi men while entering India through the border illegally, the CO added.

Police filed a case with Haripur Police Station in this connection. The bodies were sent to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital for autopsies.

Rights body

FROM PAGE 12

documented in 2020 that the Digital Security Act is the weapon of choice used by the authorities to pursue critics, including those critical of its handling of the pandemic. Media workers, activists, academics and students have been targeted, including prominent journalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol, who was charged in May 2020 after he was forcibly disappeared for 53 days," stated the report.

"There has been a disturbing increase in press freedom violations. The authorities continued to block numerous news sites critical of the government, including investigative journalism websites," said the report. "There has also been violence by political activists against reporters in the field. Activists linked to the ruling party were involved in attacks on journalists during the covering of Dhaka municipal elections in February 2020," it added.

In order to make judgments about these, the report evaluated whether states endorse impunity for cases of physical attacks, disappearances, assault, illegal detention, verbal abuse, harassment and intimidation of civil society. They see if there is active involvement or support from the state in cover ups and undermining investigations and prosecution.

To rate the state of freedom of association in country, the monitor also evaluates whether activists are imprisoned, attacked or tortured, whether civil society organisations face barriers in operation.

Freedom of expression is evaluated based on whether journalists face legal or physical harassment, or risk their lives, and whether independent journalism is allowed.

In addition to Bangladesh, 43 countries (out of 196) were also classified as repressed.

Man dies

FROM PAGE 12

their fishes and constructed house on the madrasa's land, they added.

Liton's brother-in-law Mofizur Rahman Gazi said police held Liton around 4:00pm on Sunday on the basis of that complaint.

"Hearing the news, I rushed to the police station and saw Liton was sick. Some policemen were taking him to a local health complex," he said.

After providing primary treatment, on-duty doctors there sent Liton to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal where he died around 1:00am on Monday, he added.

Contacted, Anik Mitra, medical officer of Dashmina Health Complex, said they washed Liton's stomach twice for cleaning out poison then referred him to Barishal hospital.

Liton's wife Mazeda Begum said Liton was completely well when police held him. He fell sick being tortured by police. "I want justice," she said.

The victim's father-in-law Matlab Gazi said, "Liton did not take any poison. Rather, he was tortured to death."

Contacted, Mohammad Jashim, officer-in-charge of Dashmina Police Station, said police did not check his body when he was held.

Liton was carrying poison with him. As he was taken to the police station, he went to the toilet and took the poison. He started shouting a few moments later. Policemen rushed to the toilet and recovered a bottle of poison there, he added.

Police authorities formed a three-member probe body, headed by district's additional superintendent of police Mostafizur Rahman, to investigate the matter.

The probe body has been asked to submit report by five working days, said the probe body chief.

Meanwhile, a day after the incident, police claimed to have recovered a suicide note from an abandoned place of Liton's house.

The note read, "Bashbaria Rajjibia Dakhil Madrasa super Maulana Mohammad Shihab Uddin and a local Mohammad Mofiz Khan will be responsible for my death."



Animal rights activists, wearing monkey masks and dressed as prison inmates, demonstrate outside the Thai embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia yesterday, against what they claim is the exploitation of primates as labour in Thailand's coconut industry.

PHOTO: AFP

Twice Trafficked?

Covid-19 fuels fears for trafficking survivors

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, Dhaka

Parvez Morshed thought he was going to become a tailor in Saudi Arabia, but the Bangladeshi migrant was tricked by a recruiter and ended up working as a builder earning half the promised pay.

Unable to support his family and clear the loan he borrowed to get the job, Morshed returned home mid-pandemic to work in a garment factory that ran a programme hiring trafficking victims.

"The job in Saudi was supposed to be a way out for my family. But it put us in more trouble than before," Morshed told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone.

"It has been difficult to get jobs due to the coronavirus, so I consider myself fortunate to be working here. It saved my family from a lot of trouble," said the 30-year-old tailor, four months into his new job.

Morshed is one of the lucky few. Charities helping Bangladeshi migrants who have been tricked into fake jobs, ending up saddled with

debt or working in dire conditions, say workers now risk falling back into the same trap as the Covid-19 fallout eats into income opportunities at home.

At least 70,000 Bangladeshi garment workers lost work after big brands rushed to cancel orders early in the pandemic.

Jobs like Morshed's - at a legitimate factory with a living wage and free of debt - are now few and far between.

Organisations that work to get slavery victims back on track - then keep them safe - say most have lost earnings in Covid-19, and fear this leaves them newly exposed to re-trafficking.

"Survivors face unique push factors that make them an easy prey for traffickers," said Masud Ali, executive director of the research-based group INCIDIN Bangladesh.

"When a victim returns home and starts living with the family, but isn't able to contribute due to job cuts, he becomes a burden. He also has to deal with the stigma of being a survivor. These factors force survivors to move," he said.

Myanmar armed forces

FROM PAGE 12

and for federal democracy and sustainable peace.

Budget documents detail large-scale spending without parliamentary oversight and the allocation of funds to procure items from major corporations, including Caterpillar (USA), Alcatel-Lucent (France/Finland), Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG (Germany) and FANUC (Japan).

Data also shows the Myanmar military's failure to disclose the bulk of their business income.

The publishers assert this is evidence of wide-scale misappropriation of funds from military businesses at a massive loss for the people of Myanmar.

Justice For Myanmar Spokesperson Yadanar Maung said the information exposes the greed and corruption of the Myanmar military cartel, and its international business networks that enable the military's continued criminal conduct.

"We call on the Myanmar government and parliament to urgently rein in the Myanmar military's spending until they are fully under civilian control, respect human rights, are held accountable for their crimes and abide by Myanmar and international law. All assets stolen by the Myanmar military must be returned to the people of Myanmar."

The documents were also provided to the Organized Crime

and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), an international consortium of investigative journalists, which investigated some of the companies and exposed loopholes in the EU sanctions regulations. The OCCRP confirmed with a Jordanian source familiar with the C-295 deal that Jordan is selling the planes, although the source did not know which country the planes are being sold to.

Yadanar Maung said domestic and international businesses that supply the Myanmar military risk aiding and abetting the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

If the C-295 purchase goes ahead, they will likely be used to carry troops to ethnic areas, supporting the military's international crimes, Maung said.

"We call on the government of Jordan to refrain from selling arms to Myanmar military, including C-295 planes. We call for all businesses to cut ties with the Myanmar military and for foreign governments to sanction military leaders and military-owned companies."

Maung said Airbus and their partners must end all direct and indirect ties with the Myanmar military, including training and technical support. "Action is urgently needed to end Myanmar's 70-year long civil war and the people's suffering, and build a federal democracy and sustainable peace."

Bob Dylan sells rights

FROM PAGE 12

The deal is one of the biggest acquisitions in Universal's history and means the company will collect all future income from more than 600 songs, which includes towering classics such as 1965's "Like a Rolling Stone".

"The deal is the most significant music publishing agreement this century and one of the most important of all time," UMG said in a press release.

UMG declined to say how much the deal was worth but it was likely to have swelled the coffers of the man who once wrote "money doesn't talk, it swears" by many millions of dollars. The Financial Times said it could be in nine figures.

A Universal spokesperson told Reuters: "Can't discuss specific deal terms but essentially rights were with him."

Dylan, who emerged from the Greenwich Village folk scene in the early 1960s to become arguably the most acclaimed and influential artist

of the rock era, is still going strong at the age of 79.

His latest album "Rough and Rowdy Ways", released this year, was a critical and commercial success. Rolling Stone magazine said in its review: "Dylan is exploring a terrain nobody else had reached before yet he just keeps pushing on into the future."

The first songwriter to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, he was also playing about 100 dates a year on his "Never Ending Tour" until the coronavirus pandemic forced him to cancel his schedule. In recent years, he also produced his own whiskey, named "Heaven's Door" after one of his best-known songs.

The copyrights for songs spanning his 60-year career include such anthems as "Blowin' In The Wind", "The Times They Are A-Changin'" and "Tangled Up In Blue," as well as "Make You Feel My Love", which was huge hit for Adele, and "Things Have Changed", for which he won an Oscar.

Hundreds torn down

FROM PAGE 12

"We have decided to tear down illegal shops from all DSCC markets and as part of it, we are demolishing the illegal shops from the three markets under Fulbaria Supermarket-2. Such drives will gradually be conducted in other markets."

HOW SHOPS WERE BUILT

Some 2,300 shops were constructed at the Fulbaria Supermarket-2 following the main design. But 911 others were built illegally on different times. Of them, 308 are in block-A, 292 in block-B, and 311 in block-C.

DSCC sources said the construction of the illegal shops in the basement started in 1997 when late Mohammad Hanif was the mayor. With some conditions, he allowed the traders association concerned to run businesses in the basement temporarily.

During the tenure of late mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, some traders also got permission to run businesses temporarily.

But since 2012, the construction of illegal shops went on on a large scale following the then administrator's permission, they said.

DSCC sources said though the owners and traders got permission from the administration to temporarily run several hundred shops for rent, they made permanent structures and increased the number of shops to 911.

Firoz Ahmed, general secretary of Zakir Market's Owners Samity, said they got the allotment of 911 shops during the tenure of the DSCC administrator.

He added that they paid rent only for two months and after that the DSCC stopped taking rent. The other administrators and mayor Sayeed Khokon did not take any rent from them.

He said in 2018, they filed a writ petition with the High Court against

the DSCC move to demolish their shops.

After that, a section of DSCC officials took Tk 5 to 10 lakh from each of them as outstanding rent and giving them trade licences, he claimed.

Firoz said the DSCC did not give them any trade licence.

The DSCC again stopped taking rent after Taposh became mayor, he said, adding that they got the notice of eviction on December 6.

"We sought one month's time from the mayor, but we did not get it," he said.

Contacted, mayor Khokon told The Daily Star that illegal shops had been running there for a long time.

He said when they went to demolish those, the shop owners and traders filed a writ petition with the HC and following the HC directives, they revised their decision at a board meeting of the DSCC.

He said following the decision, they made the shops that paid their rents legal.

About taking money, Khokon said the DSCC did not take any money for giving the traders licences, it just took all the outstanding rent from them.

TRADERS IN CRISIS

Many traders, who took shops spending Tk 70 to Tk 80 lakh, are now in a serious trouble.

"I bought my shop for Tk 20 lakh from Firoz, a representative of the owners samity, in 2012. Later in 2018, I had to give Tk 10 lakh to the city corporation to make my shop legal," claimed Siddiqui Rahman.

He added that he would fall into a big financial trouble.

Rashedul Islam, another shop owner, said they had "purchased" two shops for Tk 75 lakh each.

He said the DSCC in 2018 closed their shops and they had to pay Tk 22 lakh to the city corporation for running their business.

Everest 'grows'

FROM PAGE 12

the rock base on the summit and not -- as with the new reading -- the covering of snow and ice on the peak.

Employing trigonometry hundreds of miles away on the Indian plains, British colonial geographers first determined Everest's height in 1856 at 8,840 metres (29,022 feet) above sea level.

Inconsistent

FROM PAGE 12

situation and reconstruction work. INDIAN ARTISTS CALL ON BANGABANDHU

Indian vocal artists Maya Sen, Arati Bagchi, Mira Banerjee call on Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Gono Bhaban today. The artists had come to Dhaka to participate in the Ustad Alauddin Music Conference being held at the stadium.

AUSTRALIA OFFERS TWO FOKKER PLANES

Australia offers to provide two Fokker friendship planes for Bangladesh Biman as grant. The two aircraft are expected to be delivered by April next year.

Sources: December 10, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, Ittefaq and The Daily Observer.

WHO against mandatory

FROM PAGE 12

ONLY 'RESPONSIBLE' CHOICE

"The vaccine story is a good news story. It is the victory of human endeavour, potentially, over a microbial adversary," said the organisation's emergencies director Michael Ryan.

"We need to convince people and we need to persuade."

As for making vaccines mandatory, he said: "I think all of us who work in public health would rather avoid that as a means for getting people vaccinated."

"We are much better served to

present people with the data and the benefits and let people make up their own minds.

"There are certain circumstances... where I would believe that the only responsible thing would be to be vaccinated," he added.

According to the WHO's overview of different candidate vaccines, 51 have entered human trials, 13 of which have reached final-stage mass testing.

A further 163 candidate vaccines are being developed in laboratories with a view to eventual human testing.

Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat

Administration Section

Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1225

Invitation for Tenders under Framework Contract

1.	Ministry/Division	Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat
2.	Procuring entity name	Senior Assistant Secretary, Administration Section, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat.
3.	Invitation for	Supply of Stationeries, Crockeries, Electric & Electronics, Lence, Photocopier Toner & Developer, Computer Printer's Toner, Computer Spare Parts, Printer Spare Parts, Medicine & Medical, Re-agent, Chemical and others accessories under Framework Contract.
4.	Invitation Ref. No.	11.00.0000.604.07.024.20/673 , Date: 06/12/2020
5.	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (National) Under Framework Contract
6.	Budget and Source of funds	Revenue Budget
7.	Tender Package/Lot name and short description of goods	Package-1(Lot-1)- Paper, Pens etc Package-1 (Lot-2)- Gum, Packaging tap, Stapler, Stapler Pin, Chain File, Binder Clip etc. Package-2(Lot-1)- Plastic's Bucket, Basket, Mug, File tray etc. Package-2(Lot-2)- Crystal's Plate, Mug, Jug, Tea-pot, Rice dish etc. Package-3 (Lot-1)- Electric kettle, Battery, Wall Clock, Calculator, Water Filter etc. Package-3(Lot-2)-Water Purifier Machine, Water Filter, PP Filter, Water Carbon Filter etc. Package-4-Insect Spray, Airfreshner, Sanitizer, Tissue Paper, Toilet Paper, Napkin Paper etc. Package-5- National flag, Towel, Umbrella, PVC Mat etc. Package-6(Lot-2)- Photocopier Toner & Developer. Package-6(Lot-3)- Photocopier Spare Parts & Duplicating Machines Spare Parts. Package-6(Lot-4)- Photocopier & Duplicating Machine Servicing. Package-7(Lot-2)- Fax Machines Spare Parts. Package-9(Lot-1)- Computer Toner (HP Brand). Package-9(Lot-2)- Computer Toner (Non HP Brand & Others Accessories). Package-9(Lot-3)- Computer Spare Parts. Package-9(Lot-4)- Computer Printers Spare Parts. Package-14-(Lot-1)-Medicine Package-15-Medical Re-agent, Chemicals & Other Accessories.
8.	Tender Schedule selling place	Block: Administration Section, North-East, Ground Floor, Room No-131, Parliament Secretariat.
9.	Tender selling date	13/12/2020 - 04/01/2021.
10.	Tender submission & opening date and time	Package-1- Lot-1, Lot-2, Package-2- Lot-1 & Lot-2 Submission date: 05/01/2021, Time: 9:30AM-12:00PM Opening date: 05/01/2021 Opening Time: Package-1- Lot-1: 12:05, Lot-2: 12:30, Package-2- Lot-1: 1:30 & Lot-2: 2:00 PM Package-3- Lot-1, Lot-2, Package-4 & Package-5 Submission date: 06/01/2021, Time: 9:30AM-12:00PM Opening date:06/01/2021,Opening Time:Package-3-Lot-1:12:05,Lot-2:12:30,Package-4:1:30PM & Package-5:2:00PM Package-6- Lot-2, Lot-3, Lot-4 & Package-7- Lot-2 Submission date: 07/01/2021, Time: 9:30AM-12:00PM Opening date: 07/01/2021,Opening Time: Package-6- Lot-2:12:05, Lot-3: 12:45, Lot-4:1:30 & Package-7:Lot-2: 2:00 PM Package-9- Lot-1, Lot-2 & Lot-3 Submission date:10/01/2021, Time: 9:30AM-12:00PM Opening date:10/01/2021, Opening Time: Package-9- Lot-1: 12:05, Lot-2: 12:45, Lot-3: 1:30 PM Package-9- Lot-4, & Package-15 Submission date: 11/01/2021, Time: 9:30AM-12:00PM Opening date: 11/01/2021, Opening Time: Package-9- Lot-4: 12:05 & Package -15: 12:45 PM: Package-14(Lot-1) Submission date: 12/01/2021, Time: 9:30AM-12:00PM Opening date: 12/01/2021, Opening Time: 12:05 PM
11.	Tender submission & opening place	Deputy Secretary (Admin-1), Level-7, Block-East, Room No-7, (Lift-13,14,15 & 16)
12.	Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	(a) Reputed supplier firms/Organisation having valid trade license (2020-2021), Income Tax clearance Certificate (2020-2021), Vat registration certificate (11Digit)/BIN, Experience Certificate, Authorization letter (If Applicable) (b) Detailed terms & conditions will be mentioned in tender schedule.
13.	Price of tender schedule	Per schedule price of TK. 1,000/- (One thousand)-3000/- (Three thousand) only (As mentioned in the schedule)
14.	Tender security & Tender Validity Period	Package-1(Lot-1): 1,50,000/-, 1(Lot-2): 65,000/-, Package- 2(Lot-1): 20,000/-, 2(Lot-2): 60,000/-, Package-3: (Lot-1):32,000/-, 3(Lot-2): 40,000/-, Package- 4: 1,20,000/-, Package-5: 70,000/-, Package-6(Lot-2):90,000/-, 6(Lot-3):78,000/-, 6(Lot-4): 16,000/-, Package-7(Lot-2):10,000/-, Package-9(Lot-1): 1,90,000/-, 9(Lot-2):75,000/-,9(Lot-3):83,000/-, 9(Lot-4): 22,000/-, Package-14(Lot-1): 3,00,000/- & Package-15: 95,000/-, Validity period: 120 days
15.	Name designation, address & Phone number of official inviting tender	A S M Humayun Kabir, Senior Assistant Secretary (Administration) Block: North-East, Ground Floor, Room No-131, Parliament Secretariat. (55029007, Intercom: 23062188.
16.	Special instructions	• Contract will be for 1(One) year initially and it may be renewed for next 2(Two) years, subject to satisfactory supply of goods. • Package/Lot based lowest bidders will be selected. • The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.

GD-1955

(A S M Humayun Kabir)
Senior Assistant Secretary
Phone: 55029007

How much plastic are you eating?

REUTERS

What's for dinner? Lego sushi, credit card burgers, or a well-done piece of PVC pipe?

These examples may sound extreme, but can easily represent over time the cumulative amount of microscopic pieces of plastic we consume every day.

People could be ingesting the equivalent of a credit card of plastic a week, a 2019 study by WWF International concluded, mainly in plastic-infused drinking water but also via food like shellfish, which tends to be eaten whole so the plastic in their digestive systems is also consumed.

Reuters used the findings of the study to illustrate what this amount of plastic actually looks like over various periods of time.

In a month, we ingest the weight of a 4x2 Lego brick in plastic, and in a year, the amount of plastic in a fireman's helmet. This may not sound like much, but it can add up.

At this rate of consumption, in a decade, we could be eating 2.5 kg (5.5 lb) in plastic, the equivalent of over two sizable pieces of plastic pipe.

And over a lifetime, we consume about 20 kg (44 lb) of microplastic.

Plastic production has surged in the last 50 years with the widespread use



of inexpensive disposable products. As plastic is not biodegradable, but only breaks down into smaller pieces, it ultimately ends up everywhere, cluttering beaches and choking marine wildlife, as well as in the food chain.

Standing on the shoreline of a wildlife-protected saltmarsh in southern England, Malcolm Hudson, a professor of environmental science at the University of Southampton, shows Reuters small, bead-like plastic pellets that permeate the marsh.

Hudson says that most research has been done on these microplastics, but there are increasing amounts of even smaller particles called nanoplastics in the environment that are far more difficult to detect, which we are likely ingesting as well.

"It could pass into our blood or lymphatic system and end up in our organs," said Hudson.



Communist Party of India (CPI) activists and supporters scuffle with police during a demonstration supporting a nationwide general strike called by farmers to protest against the recent agricultural reforms in Chennai, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

UN declares Dec 27 as day of 'epidemic preparedness'

REUTERS, New York

A year into a global battle against the coronavirus, the United Nations General Assembly on Monday declared Dec 27 will be the "International Day of Epidemic Preparedness" in a bid to ensure lessons are learned for any future health crises.

The Covid-19 virus emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year and spread globally, so far infecting more than 66 million people and killing some 1.5 million. The World Health Organization (WHO) called it a pandemic in March, a declaration that the United States and others said came too late.

The 193-member General Assembly adopted a resolution by consensus on Monday that recognizes the need "to raise the level of preparedness in order to have the earliest and most adequate response to any epidemic that may arise."

"Given that the General Assembly has previously declared international days devoted to chess, yoga and toilets it only seems fair that epidemics should have their day too," said International Crisis Group UN director Richard Gowan. He described the symbolic move as an attempt by the General Assembly to appear relevant as "a lot of smaller and poorer states worry that they won't have any part in real decisions about the coronavirus vaccine or recovery."

The UN resolution stresses the importance of international cooperation and multilateralism. "The pandemic caught us off guard, but it also has served as a wake-up call for improving our preparedness," Vietnam's UN Ambassador Dang Dinh Quy said as he introduced the resolution. "We believe that observing an International Day on Epidemic Preparedness will be a prominent way to achieve this goal."

PROTEST AGAINST CONTROVERSIAL AGRICULTURE LAWS IN INDIA

Farmers stage nationwide strike

AFP, New Delhi

Railway tracks and highways were blocked across India as farmers launched a national day of action yesterday against reforms deregulating the agriculture sector, upping the stakes after 10 days blockading the capital.

Tens of thousands of farmers have set up barricades on roads into New Delhi since November 26, vowing not to move until the laws are repealed in one of the biggest challenges to the Hindu nationalist government since it was re-elected in a landslide in 2019.

"We are worried, extremely worried. Our children will starve, what could be a bigger worry than this?" farmer Ved Singh told AFP ahead of the strike, echoing fears of his peers that large corporations would lower prices and destroy their livelihoods.

"There would be nothing to eat... How will we earn money? This is the biggest worry for us."

Authorities put on extra police in Delhi and boosted security in the rest of the country in a bid to head off any trouble.

The farmers were supported in their call for action yesterday by railway workers, truck drivers, teachers and other unions.

In many eastern and western states, protesters blocked railway tracks, roads and halted trains.

"We want to support the farmers' cause," a senior leader from the Communist Party of India told AFP in eastern West Bengal state.

The blockade and strike have taken on a political dimension with the national ruling Bharatiya Janata Party accusing opposition parties of opportunism by rejecting measures they had called for when in power.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's Common Man Party said he had been placed "under house arrest" since Monday by Delhi Police, which is controlled by the national

government, after he visited the farmers' blockade site. Police denied the claim.

Footage posted on Twitter showed an opposition Congress leader in western Gujarat state riding a scooter being chased by a police vehicle as he sought to join the strike.

Five rounds of talks have failed to narrow differences between farmers and ministers.

The laws will allow farmers to sell their produce on the open market -- including to supermarket chains -- instead of through state-run organisations that guarantee a minimum price. Farmers say the industry will be taken over by major firms that will force prices down.

The farmers are strongest in the north, but even the government in the southern Karnataka state suspended online school lessons for the day to show support.

Fresh talks on the reforms will be held today.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Afghan civilian deaths from air raids rose by more than 300pc

Deaths of Afghan civilians in air strikes jumped from 2017 after the United States loosened its criteria and escalated attacks on the Taliban, according to a report Monday. The number of civilians killed annually in US and coalition air strikes soared by 330 percent to some 700 civilians in 2019, said Neta Crawford, co-director of the Costs of War Project at Brown University. She said that in the first six months of 2020, 86 Afghan civilians were killed and 103 injured in Afghan Armed Forces air strikes. In the three subsequent months, as Afghan-Taliban talks continued in Doha, the toll intensified, with 70 civilians killed and 90 injured.

Australia to force Google, FB to pay for news content

Facebook and Google could be required to pay news outlets for their content in "world first" legislation set to be introduced to Australia's parliament today. In one of the most aggressive moves to check the power of the US digital giants, Canberra plans to compel the companies to pay media organisations when their platforms host their content or face millions of dollars in fines. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said the new rules, first mooted in July, will be introduced to parliament Wednesday and are expected to come into effect next year. The new media law will apply to Facebook's "News Feed" and Google searches. The initiative has been closely watched around the globe, as news media worldwide have suffered in an increasingly digital economy where advertising revenue is overwhelmingly captured by big tech firms.

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Unknown illness in India sends hundreds to hospital

Indian authorities are investigating if organochlorines used as pesticides or in mosquito control caused the death of one person and hospitalisation of more than 400 in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh in the past few days, a health official said yesterday. The unknown illness has infected more than 300 children, with most of them suffering from dizziness, fainting spells, headache and vomiting. They have tested negative for Covid-19. Organochlorines are banned or restricted in many countries after research linked them to cancer and other potential health risks. However, some of the pollutants remain in the environment for years and build up in animal and human body fat. It was not immediately clear how extensively the chemicals are used in India, though it is found in DDT applied for mosquito control.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Biden 'picks' first Black Pentagon chief

AFP, Washington

President-elect Joe Biden has chosen Lloyd Austin, who led US troops into Baghdad in 2003 and rose to head the US Central Command, as the first African-American secretary of defense, US media reported Monday.

A veteran of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the retired four-star army general, 67, beat out the favorite for the job, former under-secretary of defense Michele Flournoy, amid pressure on Biden to nominate more minorities for positions in his cabinet.

CNN, Politico and The New York Times cited unnamed sources familiar with the decision, after Biden said earlier Monday that he had made his choice and would announce it on Friday.

Austin would require Senate confirmation to take up the post. He would also require a special waiver from the Senate due to federal law that requires military officers to wait seven years after retirement before serving as the Pentagon chief. The rule is rooted in the view that only a civilian should serve as defense secretary.

The waiver has happened twice -- most recently for General Jim Mattis in 2017, President Donald Trump's first defense secretary.

But members of the Senate agreed begrudgingly, and several said at the time that they wouldn't want to do it again.

If confirmed, Austin would take responsibility for the 1.2 million active service members, of whom about 16 percent are Black.

Saving the Amazon's orphan monkeys

AFP, Amazonas

Far from the rifle cracks that occasionally rip through the rainforest as local tribesmen hunt mature primates for their meat and soft pelts, a sanctuary in a corner of the Colombian Amazon is offering new life to the orphaned monkeys left behind.

The refuge run by a local leader, Jhon Jairo Vasquez, is giving them a second chance -- while gradually changing attitudes in the area -- in the indigenous settlement of Mocagua on the banks of the Amazon.

Vasquez has proved to be a father figure for one of the orphans, a three-month-old female woolly monkey, or Lagothrix, he's named Maruja.

The pair have become inseparable on his hikes through the rainforest, carrying the little primate in a sack on his back.

"I have become the father, and she's become the daughter," said Vasquez, 38.

"An indigenous family ate the mother."

Long prized by indigenous hunters for their meat and furry pelts, the woolly monkey is now classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as Vulnerable, appearing on the IUCN's Red List of



Woolly monkeys surround Jhon Jairo Vasquez in the indigenous community of Mocagua, near Leticia, Colombia on November 18, 2020. Inset, Maruja, an orphan monkey, climbs to his head.

PHOTO: AFP

Threatened Species.

Given their thick brown coat and grey appendages, young woolly monkeys like Maruja are often hunted for the pet trade, with their mothers sometimes killed in the process.

Fourteen years ago, Vasquez helped found the Maikuchiga animal refuge located in the middle of the 700-strong Tikuna indigenous community in Mocagua.

Since 2006, he has been trying

to convince locals of the damage caused by "over-hunting," as well as a flourishing illegal wildlife market.

Reluctant at first, the Tikunas have developed a taste for eco-tourism. "Rehabilitated" hunters have become guides who now "protect their wildlife," says Vasquez.

But traumatized orphans continue to arrive in Maikuchiga from other parts of the Amazon. Since its creation, the refuge has rehabilitated about 800 monkeys, according to Vasquez.

The community is located at a spot in the Amazon called the Triple Frontier, where Peru, Colombia and Brazil meet.

There is a long history of monkeys being hunted here for meat or for ritual purposes.

They are still shot from trees, mother and baby entwined as they fall, says Vasquez.

"The mother does not let go of her baby. And the little one falls attached to its mother."

The adult's flesh is roasted on a wood fire, as the meat is prized. The small survivors are sold as pets.

The lucky ones are rescued by Corpoamazonia, the Colombian government agency in charge of environmental protection, based in nearby Leticia.

US sanctions 14 Chinese officials over Hong Kong

AGENCIES

The United States imposed financial sanctions and a travel ban on 14 Chinese officials over their alleged role in Beijing's disqualification last month of elected opposition legislators in Hong Kong, prompting China to say it will retaliate.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a news briefing on Tuesday that Beijing would take "firm counter-measures against the malicious actions by the US to safeguard our sovereignty, security and developmental rights."

The US move announced on Monday, which was first reported by Reuters, targeted the vice chairpersons of the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC), the top decision-making body of the Chinese legislature.

The Trump administration earlier slapped sanctions on Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam, the Asian financial hub's current

and former police chiefs and other top officials in August for what it said was their role in curtailing freedoms in a crackdown on the territory's pro-democracy movement.

Earlier, the House of Representatives voted to welcome Hong Kong residents to live temporarily in the United States, vowing to be a beacon for rights as China clamps down in the territory.

The House moved by consensus to issue so-called Temporary Protected Status for five years to Hong Kong residents, meaning that people from the financial hub will have the right to work in the United States and will not be subject to deportation.

Meanwhile, eight Hong Kong democracy activists including three former lawmakers were arrested yesterday for their part in a July protest, the latest in a broad crackdown by authorities under a sweeping new security law. They could face a maximum of five years in prison.

Beijing vows 'firm counter-measures against the malicious actions'

US House votes to open doors to Hong Kong residents

Eight Hong Kong activists arrested over security law protest

'We are a long way apart still'

Says UK PM on Brexit talks after agreeing to meet EU chief

AFP, London

Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday said that Britain and the European Union remain far apart, as he prepares to head to Brussels to try to salvage a post-Brexit trade deal.

"I am always hopeful, but I have to be honest with you, the situation at the moment is tricky," he said, touring a hospital in London for Britain's historic rollout of a coronavirus vaccine.

"Our friends have to understand the UK has left the EU to exercise democratic control. We are a long way apart still," he said, ahead of face-to-face talks with EU commission chief Ursula von der Leyen.

"It is looking very difficult at the moment. We will do our level best. I would say to everybody there's great options ahead for our country."

After the negotiating teams' latest session in Brussels -- and with just over three weeks until Britain leaves the EU's single market -- Johnson held a phone call with von der Leyen late Monday and secured an invitation to head over

in person.

"We agreed that the conditions for finalising an agreement are not there due to the remaining significant differences on three critical issues: level playing field, governance and fisheries," the pair said in a joint statement.



"We asked our chief negotiators and their teams to prepare an overview of the remaining differences to be discussed in a physical meeting in Brussels in the coming days."

It was not immediately clear whether Johnson's visit would be a separate event, or whether he might be slotted in before an EU summit tomorrow, with the other 27 EU leaders meeting in person.

The announcement of Johnson's trip came after a pessimistic day of talks, during which EU negotiator Michel Barnier told sceptical members of the European Parliament that Wednesday was the effective deadline for a solution ahead of the summit.

Barnier and UK counterpart David Frost were due to hold another session yesterday in Brussels.

In one olive branch, the UK government said it was ready to revoke clauses in Brexit legislation that have provoked legal action by the EU and undermined trust in London.

However, it kept the clauses intact as a "fall-back option" when the Internal Market Bill returned to debate in the House of Commons on Monday.

MPs voted to keep them in the text, rejecting a bid by the upper House of Lords to excise them.

Britain left the EU on January 31 and entered a transition period to allow negotiations to establish a trade relationship with zero tariffs and zero quotas.

Since when is peaceful protest a crime?

Police attacks on garment workers, madrasa teachers are reprehensible

WE condemn the attacks by police on several groups of peaceful protesters on the sidewalks outside the Jatiya Press Club at dawn on Monday. According to reports quoting victims and eyewitnesses, police charged the protesters with batons, teargas shells and water cannons while they were asleep and beat them "like animals", according to one victim, which left around 54 of them injured. Among them were former workers of Tazreen Fashions Limited—who had been staging a protest demanding proper compensation, rehabilitation and treatment for injuries sustained during a devastating fire at the factory in 2012—as well as the sacked workers of another factory called A One BD Ltd and independent Ebtedayee madrasa teachers, all demonstrating there with their own demands and for different lengths of time. Before being driven off the sidewalks, female workers were allegedly groped, and their clothes ripped off. Even elderly protesters and children weren't spared.

It hardly seemed to matter that all these people were representing their communities and peers as they voiced their grievances that needed to be heard and acted upon, not to be left unaddressed for 80 days, as was the case for the Tazreen workers. It hardly seemed to matter that they wouldn't have to occupy the sidewalks for so long if the state and those responsible for their fate had performed their duties in the first place. What happened instead looked a lot like retaliation for exposing their failures and inefficiencies so glaringly. It also amounted to protecting the interests of the powerful at the expense of the powerless. Police, unfortunately, have been used for such extrajudicial purposes for so long. It seems about time that the republic redefined the role of the police force to better represent what it has been brought down to do, or clarified to the uninformed citizens whether the constitution forbids peaceful protests.

Monday's incidents are a reminder, once again, of the dangerous slide in democratic norms and traditions in Bangladesh. Citizens have a right to express their legitimate grievances and the state has a responsibility to address them. While certain issues may take time to be resolved, there is no alternative to persuasion and fruitful engagement. The government must answer for what happened on Monday and find a way to responsibly engage and meet the demands of the protesters. Police brutality on peaceful protesters must stop.

International Anti-Corruption Day

Transform precept into example

AS we observe International Anti-Corruption Day today, there are good reasons for us as a nation to devote some of our time to deep introspection of the issue that has eaten deep into the very fabric of the nation. Nothing very much has changed since the time Bangabandhu remarked that he was surrounded by a group of corrupt people. Actors have changed, modus have changed but the phenomenon has thrived like a pandemic virus. Every year on December 9, the world observes International Anti-Corruption Day, and this year we observe the day in the backdrop of the world pulverised by the most damaging disease in the last 100 years. Like all international days that we observe under UN auspices, the purpose of this day is to educate the public on issues of concern, and to mobilise political will and resources to address the problem.

What the UN Secretary General has said in his message on this day this year is extremely appropriate and relevant to us, particularly when we are struggling to combat the pandemic. Apart from the deleterious criminal character of corruption, it is an ultimate betrayal of public trust, even more damaging in times of crisis. He has hit the nail on the head by saying that the pandemic is creating new opportunities to exploit weak oversight and inadequate transparency, diverting funds away from people in their hour of greatest need. This is only too applicable to us. In Bangladesh, we are witness to the way the pandemic has been exploited without compunction to reap a windfall profit at the expense of public health.

As per the Corruption Perceptions Index 2019, Bangladesh scored 26 out of 100 points and was ranked 14th from the bottom and 146th from the top among 180 countries. We have scored far below the global average score (43) and our position remains the second lowest for the seventh consecutive year among eight South Asian countries—lower than all except Afghanistan. The government may bin the report as much as it likes, but the reality cannot be wished away.

Opportunities for corruption and making black money, crony capitalism, and lack of oversight can easily be tackled if the administration wants to. The foreign minister has spilled the beans by revealing that politicians and bureaucrats are vying with one another in laundering ill-gotten money abroad. Corruption is bad, but corruption in high places is more damaging to national interest and state security. It needs political will to combat. Will it be forthcoming?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Save our rivers

It's a pity that illegal occupation of our rivers, canals, and other waterbodies continue to run rampant despite the many directives by the High Court. What is even worse is that many of these grabbers comprise of politicians and lawmakers. While the National River Conservation Commission is doing its part, all other river-related authorities need to cooperate to ensure river protection, navigability and development. Appropriate plans and policies need to be set immediately. Grabbers and polluters alike must be brought to book. As it is, we have already made many rivers lifeless. Hopefully, we won't kill whatever is remaining of our rivers.

Tanzila Akhter, Dhaka

ROKEYA DAY

Rokeya's vision for women

FIRDIOUS AZIM

THE streets of Dhaka have been animated by women marching in protest and rage against rape and the continued violence against women. The demand for women's freedoms—of movement, of expression, of choice—have found a new radical vocabulary and expression.

It is at this moment that December 9, Rokeya Day, marking both the birth and death anniversary of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, acquires greater significance. Looking back at the life and works of this great woman, the beacon of the feminist movement in Bengal, enables us to trace the history and the contexts in which women have struggled, written, conjured up visions of new forms of living, and continue to inspire us.

Let us begin by situating Rokeya, or Begum Rokeya as she is popularly known, in her own context and times. It is well to remind ourselves of the changes that accrue through time—she spelt her name as Roquiah, which has been "Bengalised" into the later Rokeya or even Begum Rokeya. This change is emblematic of the changes in time, pronunciation but most crucially in the forms of address applied to Bengali Muslims and more specifically in our case, the Bengali Muslim woman.

Identifying Rokeya as a Bengali Muslim woman draws attention not only to the time and place in which she was writing, that is early twentieth century Bengal, but also to the many factors that combine to create national and communal identity, with repercussions on how gender is conceived and gender identities formed. A spate of Muslim-edited journals made their appearance in that period, such as *Mohammedi* or *Nabanoor*, or the later *Saugat*. Making their debut in the first decades of the twentieth century, these journals were engaged in delineating a place for the Bengali Muslim in the anti-colonial struggles, and in the independent nations being imagined. The hotly-contested first partition of Bengal had taken place, the Muslim League had just

been formed, and the creation of Dhaka as a capital of the new province had created new centres of administration and was soon to see a new university. It is in this context that the flurry of intellectual activity and publication, mainly centred in Kolkata, but with smaller publications in Dhaka and the other cities of East Bengal, started to appear. This period and these activities marked the entry of the Bengali Muslim into the mainstream national and intellectual debates.

One of the most striking features of



this efflorescence of writing was the call to women writers. The editorial of the first edition of *Nabanoor* called to women to come out of the *antahpur* or the inner quarters and to grace the pages of the journal just as they graced the homes. And one of the first writers to respond to this call was Rokeya, whose 1906 article *Strijatir Abanati*, later edited into *Amader Abanati*, can be seen as a clarion call to all of us. Crucially, her call and address is not to Muslim women alone, but to all women, and she asks them to cast off the trappings of the patriarchy and to fulfil their duties as individuals. She says that God will call on all human beings to justify their existence on earth, and how will the women answer? This

depiction of women as autonomous and sovereign, as responsible for themselves, is indeed striking, and the couching of it in religious imagery, gives it a potency and an appeal that goes beyond sectarian divides.

Therein perhaps lies Rokeya's greatness: her ability to situate herself in the social and political realities, but to transcend them in her vision for a new and brighter future for women. It is this vision that propelled her through her life, in her writings, in her social activism and in the school for girls that she established in Kolkata. She imagines women as "judges and barristers", she draws examples from Turkey and Egypt, from the Parsi women in Bombay, to acquaint her readers with the larger world they inhabit. The contrast is with the denizens of *Aborodh Bashini* who are not allowed to raise their eyes to see beyond the walls of their houses.

Rokeya's literary style has often been commented on, from her use of satire to the rhetorical devices she uses to criticise and inspire. Her use of language is indeed remarkable. Writing in Bangla could not have come easily to her, having been schooled in Quranic Arabic and the Urdu of the upper-class, aristocratic or *ashraf* Bengali at home. The Bangla that she had gleaned from her brother is polished and taken to another level, making her a wonderful example of the language and identity debate of the period. The Bengali Muslim writer was making a place for him/herself in the literary sphere of Bangla writing. Hitherto, the language of the Bengali Muslim had been sidelined by communal and class considerations. The Muslim gentry in Bengal spoke and perhaps wrote in Urdu, failing to place itself in the Sanskritised literary language that had emerged during the mid-nineteenth century Bengal Renaissance. The *atraf* or the Muslim peasantry spoke and wrote in dialects that were not part of this literary scene, and the older (and still popular) language of *punthis* were hardly recognised by the literary establishment. The pages of the journals under consideration were involved

in a lively debate about language and the place of the Muslim writer. Rokeya enters this scene, writing confidently and unhesitatingly in clear and crisp Bangla prose. Her ability to transcend sectarian divides also gives her this ease and comfort with language.

And perhaps this ease is nowhere more visible than in *Sultana's Dream* (1905). Written originally in English, this is perhaps one of the earliest examples of a woman writing in English from our region. The subject matter of this short story continues to amaze us. It is read as a feminist utopia, where women rule, where scientific rationality reigns, where work and leisure are perfectly balanced. Gender roles are overturned, men are kept in the *murdana*, making the streets perfectly safe for women, where women are not taught to be demure and shy, but to be bold and confident, and peace and happiness reign supreme.

So right at the beginning of the last century, when the lineaments of the new nation(s) in the making were being laid down, Rokeya gave us a vision of freedom, of a world that is free of strife and conflict, where lives are ordered and cater to every need, where scientific innovations such as the harnessing of solar energy gives us a clean environment, and that is ruled by women. This vision of a just and compassionate society has continued to inspire us for over a hundred years.

Written in English as it was, it found publication in a women's journal in Madras, opening her readership beyond the borders of Bengal. My attention has been drawn to an anthology of science fiction published in Sweden a couple of years back, the first story of which is *Sultana's Dream*.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain stands as a beacon for the feminist struggle, for the struggle against injustice, and as we hold up the torch today, it is wonderful to have such an inspiring foremother to turn to.

Prof Firdous Azim teaches at Brac University and is a member of Naripokkho.

Decentralising public health for post-Covid recovery

SHAWKAT ALAM

THE coronavirus has had a disproportionate impact on developing countries such as Bangladesh. Although the number of cases and fatalities has been higher in developed countries, the absence of a sufficient surveillance and reporting infrastructure has meant that the toll of the virus in informal communities, peri-urban areas and secondary cities remains untold. Developing countries are also disproportionately impacted economically, with many poor households losing their jobs due to the coronavirus induced slowdown of the global economy, and not possessing the kind of jobs or technological capacity to engage in working from home, or the assets to buffer against economic shocks. Bangladesh in particular remains highly vulnerable in being able to address both the health and economic issues relating to the coronavirus.

Despite this, secondary cities (cities with populations in between 50,000 and three million) can improve Bangladesh' resilience to external shocks by diversifying economic opportunities and supporting the social environment. Critically, Bangladesh's secondary cities can relieve demand pressures on existing urban infrastructure in places such as Dhaka. This does not entail a relocation policy, but rather local investment and providing the stimulus to allow these cities to establish their own comparative advantages. Above all and in light of the pandemic, significant investment must be made in health infrastructure to create an enabling environment for growth in these areas and provide an opportunity for populations becoming increasingly displaced and disenfranchised by climate change.

In terms of healthcare, Bangladesh is crippled by an overwhelmed health infrastructure that remains highly concentrated in major metropolitan areas such as Dhaka or Chattogram. Although secondary cities constitute 40 percent of Bangladesh's urban population, state investment in its health infrastructure remains lacking. The absence of healthcare services has meant that citizens have been denied healthcare during a pandemic. The lack of healthcare in secondary cities presents a bidirectional problem; it prevents access to coronavirus-related treatment but also compromises the ability for epidemiologists to undertake effective surveillance of the coronavirus or other endemic diseases. In secondary cities such as Dinajpur, the absence of public hospitals has resulted in the private sector filling this void, leading to large out of pocket expenses and denying most people access to healthcare.

In order to remedy these issues, additional healthcare infrastructure is required in Bangladesh's secondary cities. These cities can act as crucial sites for applying therapeutic treatments for

complex and critical-level coronavirus cases. With secondary and tertiary healthcare services in major metropolitan cities already reaching capacity, building healthcare infrastructure in secondary cities can reduce the demand for specialised healthcare services in Dhaka, and reduce the need for patients to unnecessarily contribute to the community spread of coronavirus whilst seeking treatment.

In addition, deploying healthcare services in secondary cities will contribute to the monitoring and surveillance capacity of epidemiologists. By boosting local testing capabilities and providing additional healthcare services which can identify and report new coronavirus cases, epidemiologists will have more eyes on the ground to determine the prevalence, extent and severity of the disease on the local population. The clustering of private healthcare services around public healthcare institutions can directly address capacity constraints surrounding testing.



However, investments must be made in secondary cities so that an enabling environment is created for new private healthcare firms that can effectively complement healthcare service delivery. In addition, these services must be coordinated so that duplication of services do not occur, and that healthcare services can be delivered at a competitive price to the consumer.

Importantly, this decentralisation of healthcare services in secondary cities must be supported with consistent health guidance, policy and standard operating procedures that are enforced across public, private and NGO healthcare providers. Given the extent of fragmentation in the Bangladesh healthcare system across public, private and NGO providers, this will provide an added layer of complexity. However, failure to develop policy coherence can hamper healthcare delivery and surveillance, provide poor data to develop health policy and result in negative patient outcomes for communities in secondary cities and remote areas. Health authorities not only perform infrastructure building, but also provide

policy coherence at a national level.

From an economic perspective, the outbreak of the coronavirus has had a significant impact on Bangladesh's economy, especially in cities that are export-oriented. The lack of job opportunities in secondary cities have resulted in a concentration of people in the major metropolitan centres of Dhaka and Chattogram for work. The liberalisation of Bangladesh's economy has fuelled a demand for labour in export-orientated industries such as the garments sector. For decades, the supply has been met by rural migration resulting from declining agricultural productivity due to climate change. With the economic shutdown associated with the coronavirus, disrupted supply chains and reduced demand have heavily impacted Bangladesh's export-oriented industries, resulting in many urban households migrating back to rural areas in search for alternative sources of income and due to pre-existing social ties to the

to be in the forefront of the minds of policymakers and government officials alike, particularly within the present climate. With Dhaka already reaching its limit in terms of carrying capacity, secondary cities across Bangladesh are well placed to absorb climate change migrants and create diverse economic opportunities. The coronavirus makes addressing displacement, particularly with respect to resettlement, public health and employment, more urgent than ever.

It is to be noted that although planned resettlement may appear a novel policy solution, planned relocations have been implemented by other developing country governments to mixed success. According to the World Bank, regional development policies such as Export Processing Zones have fared well where there is already close proximity to established markets, with isolated zones performing poorly in Bangladesh. A revision of existing policy to help build a supportive environment to encourage voluntary resettlement to secondary cities is vital. Critically, adequate investment in human capital and innovation, as well as supporting infrastructure such as healthcare, promote local economic activity and can generate employment and allow secondary cities to identify their natural competitive advantages.

In this context, Bangladesh's secondary cities will play a critical role towards the transition to a middle-income economy and post-coronavirus recovery. The Bangladesh government has initiated a broad-based urban development policy which has focused on building Bangladesh's secondary cities to provide new job opportunities and build upon health infrastructure. The seventh Five Year Plan outlines a stronger emphasis on developing integrated health and urban planning policy, improved healthcare service delivery and the decentralisation of facility management. The Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-21 also calls for health facilities to be taken to the people's doorstep by constructing new local primary healthcare services in rural communities. These policies are a step in the right direction to address many of the drivers that have contributed to the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus in Bangladesh, both from a public health and economic perspective.

The new challenge is how to implement such an ambitious programme in the context of the coronavirus, which has impeded the ability of the government to implement new, integrated healthcare and urban renewal policies. However, with a focus on good governance and ensuring policy coherence and mobilisation, Bangladesh can begin to take steps to implement the necessary integrated urban renewal and healthcare service delivery reforms in its secondary cities.

Dr Shawkat Alam is a Professor of International Law and Director of International Engagement at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Email: shawkat.alam@mq.edu.au

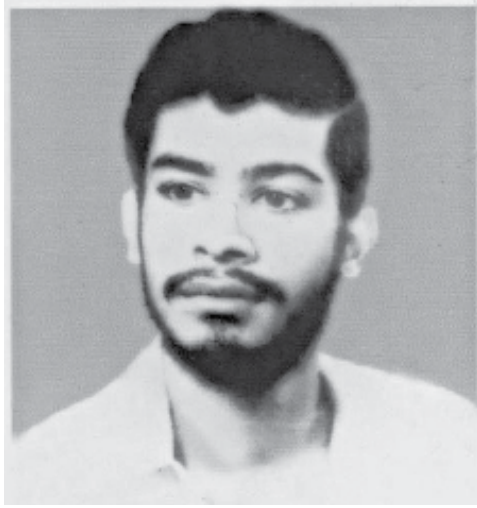
TRIBUTE

Kazi Salauddin: A warrior and a martyr

NUBAIRA FORKAN

So many of our memories of our nation's birth is tied to the people we have lost. Beyond our nation's collective joy and grief, every part of the country has a story. And even beyond that, every family has a story of a brave member who fought in the Liberation War and was lost to it. My family has such a story, a great son whose life and passing brings us grief, reverence and inspiration. His name was Kazi Salauddin, freedom fighter, leader, brother, student and martyr.

When the Liberation War began, Kazi Salauddin, my mother's oldest brother, was a second year student of ISC (Intermediate in Science). Overnight, he went from a college student to a revered warrior whose accomplishments were whispered and heralded throughout Faridpur district. He organised a group of brave hearts from different walks of life and established the "Salauddin Bahini" (Salauddin Force). Under the leadership of Kazi Salauddin, they fought skirmishes and ambush battles to cut off supplies and weaken Pakistani strongholds



Martyred freedom fighter Kazi Salauddin

across the district. From the early days of the war, Kazi Salauddin was instrumental in such battles as Chaader Haat battle, Bahirdia Operation, Barkhada Operation, Gyandia Operation, Howly Cutil Bridge (Goaland)

Operation, the Faridpur town water tank grenade attack, Nogorkhanda Thana weapon sting operation, the Padma river (Goaland) Ferry attack, operation in Momin Khar Hat, Goalertila and so on. Most notably, he was the commander in one of Faridpur's three major engagements, the Karimpur (Dhopadanga Chadpur) battle.

Around noon on December 9, 1971, Kazi Salauddin received intelligence that a Pakistani unit was entering the Karimpur area along the Faridpur-Jessore road, with a Pakistani captain at the helm. He immediately called the Salauddin Bahini to action. Along with his team, among them martyr Noufel (Salauddin's Second in Command), Kazi Farid (Salauddin's younger brother), Abdur Rahman and Khalilur Rahman, he hid along the roads and set up an ambush on the invading Pakistani unit. Kazi Salauddin was well known in the area, and so was his light machine gun (LMG). Many Pakistani soldiers fell that day, as many as 49. But word reached the Pakistani headquarters in Jessore, and within half an hour, the 36-member Salauddin Bahini was surrounded by an armoured convoy.

In the ensuing battle, six freedom fighters—Noufel, Wahab, Mujibur, Delwar, Adel and Sohrab—were martyred. The odds were now squarely in the favour of the Pakistanis; as the Bahini took cover, Kazi Salauddin decided there was only one way to save the remaining members of his unit. He jumped up and firing his LMG, pressed forward, giving his comrades an opportunity to disperse. As his ammunition was exhausted, he began to inch towards the greenery. If not for Kazi Salauddin's actions, every freedom fighter of Salauddin Bahini would have been martyred that day.

As Kazi Salauddin pressed forward firing his weapon, many Pakistani soldiers fell at his attack, but he sustained a bullet wound in his back and another bullet hit his LMG magazine. Bleeding and now without any weapons, he ran towards a house in the distance. The inhabitants of the house heard frantic knocking and yelling around the afternoon, answering the door to a wounded freedom fighter. They immediately offered assistance. However, it was to no avail. The Pakistani army followed Kazi Salauddin's trail to the house. In quick succession, they

killed the family inside the home and with the freedom fighter inside, lit the house ablaze.

Seven days later, on December 16, Bangladesh won the war and accepted the surrender of the Pakistani forces. As the new country rejoiced, the surviving Salauddin Bahini grieved the loss of their leader. On December 17, Kazi Salauddin's remains were recovered from the burnt husk of the house. He was buried in Alipur graveyard, Faridpur.

Today, Shaheed Salauddin is admired and remembered in the community he fought for. On the road to my grandfather's house in Faridpur, and town dwellers routinely refer to our house as "Shaheed Salauddin's house". A school and a road have been built in his name in the town. The Faridpur District Administration recognised December 9 as Karimpur Battle Day and the people of the district commemorate it in reverence. To our family, it is an honour to have our pain and pride so ingrained into the town around us. It is a credit to my uncle's memory.

Nubaira Forkan is currently pursuing a Doctor of Pharmacy from the University of Toronto, Canada. She is the niece of Martyr Kazi Salauddin.

INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY

'Corruption has spread over the whole society'

Dr Iftekharuzzaman is Executive Director, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). In this interview with Badiuzzaman Bay of The Daily Star, he talks about distinctive features of corruption in Bangladesh, the role of the ACC, the government's anti-corruption drive, and ways to curb systemic corruption.

What questions should we be asking about corruption in Bangladesh that we are not?

Corruption challenges in certain sectors are not much asked about. Media is one of them. Media and the space for it have always faced challenges, more so in recent times, and its implications for democratic progress has been the subject of some research. We all want things to turn around so the media can play its due role. But very little is heard about corruption in the media itself.

The media as a sector and media houses as individual organisations—both conventional and nonconventional ones—are powerful entities. It will be naive to think that this power is not being abused to serve or protect corporate interests. The tendencies of some media houses to deliberately target their corporate competitors are well-known. There are examples of media houses joining the bandwagon of sycophancy not merely to survive political pressures but also to promote vested interests. That's abuse of media power, another form of corruption. There are also allegations of media houses depriving their staff of due salaries and benefits. How many of them have their account books in a state to be proud of? Aren't there examples of gender-based discrimination? Is sextortion a non-issue? One can go on.

When it comes to social media, while abuse of power including arbitrary and motivated use of the Digital Security Act to control freedom of expression is rampant, the use of the same social media for propagating religious and other forms of extremist views, including those targeting minority groups, has been enjoying unqualified freedom.

The other industry that receives scant attention in the anti-corruption discourse is defence, which is vulnerable to corruption almost everywhere in the world. In our case, the credibility of this extremely important sector of public interest could be much higher if resources and commercial enterprises at their disposal were subjected to public scrutiny.

How would you describe the nature of corruption in Bangladesh? Is there anything distinctive about it compared to other countries?

For over two decades, Bangladesh has been performing commendably in many socioeconomic indicators

like GDP, but corruption remains widespread. Corruption costs the country at least 2-3 percent of GDP. Bangladesh is no longer at the bottom of the list of countries worst-affected by corruption as it was for five successive years from 2001 to 2005. It, however, continues to rank among countries where corruption is perceived to be most pervasive, and remains second lowest in South Asia, behind only Afghanistan. Parallel with other costs of corruption, money laundering is a major concern for Bangladesh, as conservative estimates put the amount of annual illicit transfers out of the country at over USD 10 billion, most of it through improper invoicing in foreign trade.

Corruption does exist everywhere in the world. In our case, regrettably, it has spread over the whole society and nearly become a way of life. One of our recent surveys showed that 89 percent of the victims of corruption in service delivery sectors are forced to pay bribes because, without it, there would be no access to such services.

The other striking feature of corruption in Bangladesh is the dichotomy. Corruption, officially, is subjected to zero tolerance as the head of government has repeatedly pronounced it as a pledge. I have not heard such firm pledges from many of her peers elsewhere in the world. However, the irony is that little concrete actions are seen to enforce this commitment.

Corruption in the health sector has been the main talking point this year, for obvious reasons. Does it mean other sectors have been less affected?

The coronavirus has pushed the discourse on corruption in the health sector to the forefront. Corrupt practices have long been tolerated in this sector, both at service delivery and higher levels. At the high level, procurement and supplies have been fodder for a festival of corruption by a section of vendors with political linkages who were allowed to form syndicates of triangular collusion thanks to the collaboration of a section of officials and politically powerful individuals. Their peers at the lower levels didn't want to be left out, as they also indulged in various corrupt activities including theft and misappropriation of relief materials.

However, it will be naive to consider the health sector as an exception. As per

TIB's research done over the years, it is rather one of those sectors moderately affected by corruption, with others, like law enforcement agencies, ranking much higher. Therefore, I suspect that if any other sector was put under such stress as the health sector was by coronavirus, one would find similar, if not higher, levels of vulnerability to corruption.

In an interview last September, you said that what we know of graft from media reports is but the tip of an iceberg. Most cases that come out involve junior to mid-level politicians, officials, politically connected businessmen, etc.—small fries, really, in the big scheme of things. So what (or who) else does the iceberg contain?



Dr Iftekharuzzaman

The iceberg contains the heavyweights. Generally, there are two broad categories of corruption. One is petty corruption at the service delivery level, involving a two-way transaction in which one party—the collectors or duty bearers—is the gainer while the bribe-payer, as a service recipient, becomes involved as the victim. What we usually observe is that some such bribe-takers, usually low- and lower-mid-level officers or staff, are investigated, which make headlines in the media.

However, the second category of corruption involves a win-win game in public contracting, supplies and bigger deals in which the triangular collusive arrangements take place, which are hardly brought to the net of the enforcement agencies like the ACC. Even if some of them are selectively

caught from time to time, the whole syndicate remains unperturbed.

A classic example of corruption in the financial sector is that of the loan defaulters of Basic Bank where the key decision-makers in the reported illicit deals continue to enjoy impunity. The much-talked-about Regent Hospital case may take the same direction. The individuals directly involved are being investigated, but the "iceberg"—or those who are responsible for making Regent the talk of the nation—will probably enjoy the proverbial impunity!

The Anti-Corruption Commission is clearly failing to perform its mandated duty. Given how it is allowed to function, is it realistic to expect the ACC to check corruption without a major overhaul?

Indeed, it is unrealistic to expect the ACC to fully deliver its mandate without a major overhaul. The question is what such an overhaul implies. Our successive research have shown that in terms of legal provisions and institutional mandate, the ACC has the potential to successfully control corruption. But its investigating capacity leaves much to be desired—in terms of the skills and expertise necessary, honesty and integrity of the staff, and sufficient internal control and oversight to prevent lapses and irregularities. In many cases, investigation is taken as an opportunity for rent-seeking by the relevant officials through collusion and often extortion with the investigated party.

There also seems to be a self-imposed dividing line drawn by the ACC authority beyond which it is unsure, unable, reluctant, or fearful of going, depending on the identity, status or linkages of the individuals concerned. There is a perception within the ACC that it should not antagonise the powers that be. As a matter of fact, the perception problem is seen at both ends. Since the ACC has been created by the government, a section of the government considers it to be a government body, as does the ACC. What's lost on both sides is that the ACC is supposed to be a state institution serving public interests rather than that of the government.

Do you think the government's anti-corruption drive has failed?

Anti-corruption efforts, commonly touted as "drive", have not succeeded because those were destined to fail. The

prime minister's personal commitment in this context is noteworthy. She declared that no one would be spared, including those from within her party. That's also the reason why it failed to deliver.

While the PM may have meant business, those whose responsibility it is to implement the pledge couldn't serve the cause as many of them are among beneficiaries, participants, colluders, protectors and promoters of corruption. Corruption is not only deeply institutionalised, but also a way of life for them. Political or governmental position or linkage is considered as a license for self-enrichment via abuse of power. This is as such a statement of fact as a determining factor for the enforcement agencies including the ACC.

Experts often talk about the importance of depoliticising the administration which would lead to stronger mechanisms of accountability. This is easier said than done, of course. What measures should we take that can realistically help us curb systemic corruption?

I agree that dysfunctionality of institutions due to politicisation has become so entrenched that it cannot be changed overnight. But we need to get the ball rolling. This could start from ensuring open, fair and genuinely competitive processes of recruitment, transfers, postings and promotions. We have laws, rules and regulations for that. What's missing is their application. One of the powerful keys is to disclose income and wealth statements of all public officials and publicly exposed persons for scrutiny of accumulated wealth against legitimate incomes. Managing conflict of interest to prevent any business relation of publicly exposed persons with the government funds could make a difference. Equally important is the adoption of global standards for automatic exchange of information on financial accounts that could facilitate robust tracking of financial flows within and across borders preventing various forms of money laundering.

Depoliticisation of administration will not happen by administrative action alone. It has to be a political decision. Our politicians have to face the mirror and rediscover what politics is about and realise that, whatever it is, politics is not about plundering public resources by abuse of power.

Depoliticisation of administration will not happen by administrative action alone. It has to be a political decision. Our politicians have to face the mirror and rediscover what politics is about and realise that, whatever it is, politics is not about plundering public resources by abuse of power.

QUOTABLE Quote

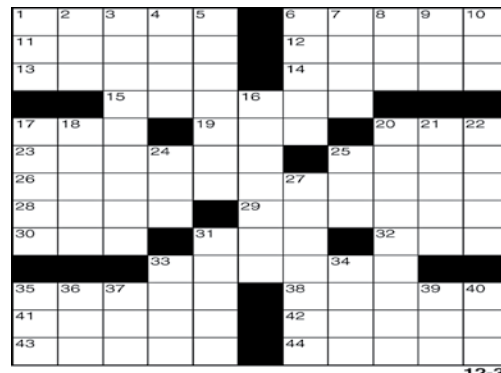


SELMA LAGERLÖF (1858-1940) Swedish author who became the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Never repeat a rumor before you have verified it. And if it is true, hold your tongue all the more.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Electrical problem
 - 6 Tightfisted
 - 11 Hawaiian island
 - 12 Blood line
 - 13 Sean of "The Lord of the Rings"
 - 14 Hollowed out
 - 15 Like vehicles not made for all terrain
 - 17 Pound sound
 - 19 Singer Yoko
 - 20 CIA's forerunner
 - 23 Gangster's gun
 - 25 A lot of
 - 26 Visitor who's crossed a border
 - 28 Hearty dish
 - 29 Regal seat
- DOWN**
- 1 Reggae's kin
 - 2 Possesses
 - 3 Not fitting in
 - 4 Forecast word
 - 5 Shack topper
 - 6 Chocolate source
 - 7 Parka part
 - 8 Screw up
 - 9 Finished off
 - 10 Spot to jot
 - 16 Commodore's insignia
 - 17 Stood up
 - 18 One-sided wins
 - 20 Obsolete
 - 21 Play part
 - 22 Tear into tatters
 - 24 Farm grazer
 - 25 Spoil
 - 27 Prickly plant
 - 31 Melodies
 - 33 Place to put in
 - 34 "— go brag!"
 - 35 Take notes
 - 36 Imitating
 - 37 Caret's key
 - 39 Silent
 - 40 Mole, e.g.



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

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

BEETLE BAILEY



BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES



BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

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

YOUNG PEOPLE IGNITING TRANSFORMATION – YOUTH INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2020

A competition was launched jointly by The Daily Star and ActionAid Bangladesh in October 2020 and in the span of over a month, a large number of ideas have been submitted. Among them, five teams were chosen who presented their projects before an esteemed panel of experts and policy makers in a programme titled Young People Igniting Transformation which was held on November 21, 2020. The distinguished panellists made important observations and gave various recommendations on the respective projects to carry forward while focusing on the issue of sustainability and effective planning. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.



Farah Kabir,
Country Director,
ActionAid Bangladesh

ActionAid has been working in the field of the development of the youth for decades through its multiple programmes. ActionAid has dedicated programmes for youth development which includes leadership skills that encourages them to make contributions to society and solve problems in innovative ways.

The core belief of ActionAid has always been that young people are more than capable of achieving great things if they are provided with the right platform to express their ideas. We also believe that young people require continuous mentoring and support from government and non-government institutions to realise their dreams.

The focus of today's innovation challenge is: how can the youth navigate this pandemic-ridden world? The young people of our country in this backdrop must develop certain attributes such as critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership skills, and cooperation.

Today's challenge will be highlighting these attributes of the five teams who are going to be presenting their ideas in the competition. I really hope the proposed solution will be effective to address some of our social, political, environmental, and economical challenges in the country.



Nazmul Ahsan,
Manager-Young
People, ActionAid
Bangladesh

Our goal is to empower the youths of our country. This empowerment can only be achieved if they are provided proper platforms to share their innovative ideas and have the necessary tools to scale-up their ideas and bring them to fruition. "Young People Igniting Transformation - Youth Innovation Challenge 2020" aims to do just that. This project was initiated in collaboration with the Daily Star in May 2020 and consisted of two distinctive phases. The first phase was advocacy on the various issues of young people which ended in September 2020 and then we started the activation phase. The activation phase aims to provide a space for the young people to showcase their innovative ideas to everyone so that they can receive the necessary support from both the public and private sectors.

Since we launched this competition, we have received more than 170 submissions and from these submissions, a committee has chosen five finalists to present their ideas in today's event. The main objective of the challenge is to come to the realisation that these young people require both recognition and proper policy support to take their small initiatives to the next level. Furthermore, building up a connection with the private and public sector and financing is just as important.

The three winners will be picked at the end of the discussion.

Ideas



Ashreen Mridha,
Deshi Ballers

Deshi Ballers is primarily working in the field of women in sports with particular focus on basketball. Our work is divided into two pillars. Firstly, we try to develop the participation of women in basketball through youth camps, annual tournaments, and outreach programmes for girls. The other pillar consists of carrying out a lot of women empowerment activities which include advocating for girls' rights to participate in sports. We are also preparing senior athletes to become female coaches, mentors, and referees for the future.

Our big idea is to conduct sports parenting workshops which would help female athletes and their parents embrace sports as a positive tool for success. The objective of Deshi Ballers is to stand as a bridge between these female athletes and their parents so that they do not see each other as enemies but rather embrace sports together. Our target audience includes high school and college athletes aged between 15-25 years old who are active participants in sports and the parents of these athletes. We plan on conducting two workshops with the first one being directed towards the young female athletes and helping them attain mindfulness. The second workshop will be for the parents so that they can support their daughters' athletic career and build a positive home environment. The workshops are going to be held virtually due to the ongoing pandemic. We believe parental support is crucial for the participation and success of female athletes.



Md Momin Sarkar,
e-Krishi Clinic

e-Krishi is a non-profit organisation which is focused on providing a digital platform for crop disease management and agricultural services. We are made up of a team of agricultural background students and we dream of creating a smart agro management system for farmers via technology. We believe a sustainable agricultural system and organic farming can foster economic growth.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we noticed that many farmers were unable to get proper information about crop cultivation. Furthermore, in Dhaka city, five lakh rooftops have space for rooftop farming and this can prove to be a potential source of income for many as well as being an outlet for recreation

Team name	
SakibNasir, Circular	Winner
AninditaAtoshi and OrobiBakhtiar, Prarombho	1st Runner up
Md MominSarkar, e-Krishi Clinic	2nd Runner up

among the city dwellers. This pandemic has had a negative impact on the employment sector. During this crisis, farming can be a great option for youths in search of jobs.

We have noticed that many youths have gotten involved in agriculture but many seem to lack proper knowledge about this sector. There is also no scope of internships for agricultural science students. This led to the beginning of our journey.

On the basis of demand and opportunity, on August 22, 2020, we started a pilot project called Tele Krishi Consultancy by e-Krishi Clinic which provides services and training programmes to students under our "connecting farmers" programme. Our mission is to create a smart agricultural system and provide knowledge transfer and skill development programmes.



Fardin Khan,
Tutors Home

We are aware that tuition services play a vital role in our country. Around 92 percent students avail home-tuition services in our country. For many students and bachelors, providing tuition services is an essential source of income. Unfortunately, there is a huge loophole present in the whole system. The core issues include lack of secure and reliable platforms for tuition services along with an imbalanced payment system. The search for the right tutor is also time-consuming.

The Tutors Home application aims to provide a secure, customisable, and convenient way of providing online and offline tuition. We have an equal basis payment system and provide a secure platform with NID registration and tracking.

Our target audience includes students from both rural and urban areas who are in search of tutors and tutors who are willing to provide academic and extracurricular tuition services.



Anindita Atoshi and Orobi Bakhtiar,
Prarombho

We often see a particular group of people ostracised from our society. Our "Hijra" or transgender community is a vulnerable group and they are often denied social, economic, and political rights because they are deemed different and cannot be included in categories.

Currently, there are over 100,000 of them marginalised and associated with illegal professions. Government initiatives such as job opportunities, medical care, or political inclusion have been unable to pull them out of the dark chasm of social stigma. The problem here is that although there are opportunities, aid, and scope, the transgender community faces major discrimination which stands in their way of entering the job market. As they are unable to contribute to the economy of the country, they are often labelled as a burden to our country.

Our organisation works towards raising awareness to remove the social stigmas against the transgender community. Prarombho is an organisation dedicated to the socio-economic development of the transgender community by training them in ready-made garments making and outsourcing for SMEs. This will generate employment and help them become

independent. In the future, we also plan on developing their computer skills and educating them following the national curriculum so that they can join their desired professions.



Sakib Nasir,
Circular

Circular is an early-stage social business start-up working in the plastic waste management space. We have been working on innovative models to recover and recycle plastic. Due to COVID-19, plastic consumption has risen. Our campaign idea is to create responsible disposal of protective gears used to prevent against COVID-19, along with other streams of plastics.

Bangladesh has recently become the fifth-largest contributor to ocean plastic pollution. Waste Concern stated that 92 percent of the plastic masks we have been using end up in the rivers. As a solution to the plastic pollution problem in Bangladesh, we have been raising awareness among people, going door-to-door to collect plastics from households, and ensuring responsible disposal and recycling of the plastics. Waste pickers are essential stakeholders in this process, and so we plan to educate them, build their capacity, and provide them with protective gears.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Ensure transparency of the financial aspect of businesses
- » Come up with business ideas and initiatives that are scalable and can reach the masses
- » Plan a sustainable revenue model
- » Conduct training programmes for soft skill development of youths
- » Conduct a full-fledged risk analysis and determine risk mitigation strategies during the planning phase of the business
- » Assist entrepreneurs in the legal processes of establishing a business

Panel Discussion



Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem,
Research Director,
Centre for Policy
Dialogue (CPD)

It is difficult for young entrepreneurs to interact in the public process since contacting government offices is now a networking issue. The financial aspects of businesses should be kept transparent. They have to figure out how to finance their start-ups through commercial ventures. They also need to consider whether scaling up the business is possible. User and supplier linkage should be ensured.

Deshi Ballers' idea of developing young girls into athletes is excellent, but they should also help out the participants in terms of linkages. Tutors Home should create distinctions between rural and urban areas, due to there being differences in income structures. They could even consider providing free online lectures before exams. Prarombho must work on their marketing. Circular should keep in mind that people are used to the existing model of plastic management, and so they have to find a way to incentivise people to switch to their new management method.



Dr Atiur Rahman,
Professor,
Development Studies,
University of Dhaka

The results-based initiatives by our youths show that they care about solutions to grassroots issues. Deshi Ballers has a fantastic initiative of trying to connect directly with parents. Parents usually do not allow girls to play sports due to social stigma and so including parents in the process is a great idea. The fact that their initiative is for all ages is also excellent.

Each of the start-ups needs to think about their business solutions, but just starting the work is also essential, regardless of whether they achieve success or not.

e-Krishi clinic can do well if it can be connected with urban rooftop gardening. Due to the pandemic, many people are stuck at home and are looking for work. Therefore, this initiative can play a significant role in generating work for these people.

Prarombho is an excellent initiative in promoting transgender rights. Circular can be important for the economy, but there remain questions about financing. Business entrepreneurs must manage their initial capital from family or friends. Once the business kicks off and becomes more successful, many financing opportunities will open up from organisations like IPDC Finance or IDLC Finance Limited.



Fahim Ahmed,
President & CFO,
Pathao

Igniting transformation is a vast topic. You have to identify and tackle problems that exist at scale today. The solution to these problems has to be scalable. Since we are dealing with issues that affect the masses, we cannot create solutions for only a handful of people. The initial approach of a business is different from the subsequent scaling approach. We might opt for a community-based approach initially, but we have to gradually implement the solution nationwide. Deshi Ballers and Tutors Home should think about what kind of platform they can use to implement their initiatives across the country.

If a solution does not have an adequate financial foundation, it is usually not viable. Many different approaches can be explored, such as not-for-profits or social businesses, or commercial businesses. However, in all cases, initial funding is required. You need to carefully think about how much funding is necessary to scale up your business. The business also needs to be made viable so that it is continually growing.

You cannot operate these initiatives alone. You need to find other people who share

your vision and have complementary skill sets. Finally, you have to focus on finding the solution.



Tahsinah Ahmed,
Executive Director,
Underprivileged
Children's
Educational
Programmes (UCEP)
Bangladesh

Sustainability is the most crucial factor when it comes to revenue models. Entrepreneurs should hold training sessions for their team members so that they are aware of what it means to have a sustainable revenue model. Business veterans should act as mentors for youth entrepreneurs.

When establishing businesses, people struggle the most with soft skills. Market analysis, negotiation, communication, and marketing are skills that do not come naturally – they need to be developed and strengthened through training. The training programmes should also have proper assessment and accreditation. Accreditation can be from both the public and private sector.

Contact with regulatory bodies should be maintained. Entrepreneurs must figure out what legal and formal processes exist to register and run their businesses. Conducting a full-fledged risk analysis and determining risk mitigation strategies is essential during the planning phase of any business.

Young people tend to focus on social media marketing. However, social media is not the only marketing tool. There are many more traditional marketing tools which are equally effective. You must find out what age-old successful marketing strategies you can incorporate in your business model.

Prarombho's work is entirely focused on social inclusion, but all other initiatives should also work on including women and people who have been left behind.



Shuvashish Roy,
Digital Marketing
Manager, The Daily
Star

If we do not utilise our demographic dividend properly, it can turn into a demographic liability. We need to take action to engage our youths. The youths can come up with initiatives that can solve the issues we face today.

What you need to achieve innovation is divergent thinking. All innovation models have two common aspects: ideation and validation. Our youths can be expected to come up with these out-of-the-box ideas that will support innovation. For example, we learned about mindfulness from Deshi Ballers.



Sarah Kamal,
National President,
JCI Bangladesh

Social initiatives should include the government, businesses and civil society to make their businesses more relevant and successful. Collaborations with other sectors of society make businesses more meaningful and increase reach.

Even though all five of the start-ups might not achieve success, the fact that these initiatives were taken up is applause-worthy. I believe the youth of today are the future and light of tomorrow.



Ismat Jerin Khan,
Managing Director,
JERMAITZ LTD
and Director, SME
Foundation

We have noticed that agriculture has given us great support during this pandemic. We should focus on motivating the youths to work in the agricultural sector and create more relevant opportunities for them.

Mentorship or five-year incubation programmes should be established to nurture the ventures of the youths. We could also create a linkage between financiers and young entrepreneurs.

The entrepreneurs should be introduced to angel funds since many of the businesses are struggling to create a proper marketing plan. They should also be assisted in the legal processes of establishing a business. The innovation ideas must be given access to the marketplace as well.

Plastic waste management, which Circular is working on, can be scaled up to be a significant initiative where youth volunteers can be involved. The initiative can be merged with other organisations working on creating a more eco-friendly environment. Long-term planning is needed in this regard.



Robert Stoelman,
Project Manager,
Partnership for
a Tolerant and
Inclusive Bangladesh
(PTIB), United
Nations Development
Programme (UNDP)

At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic we saw the social media space in Bangladesh being flooded with disinformation and propaganda. However, over time, right information has prevailed. In October 2020, we did not find any disinformation regarding Covid-19 in Bangladeshi social media. Young people can play a big role in countering such menace. We all need to discuss more and understand better social media ethics. Social media should be seen as a public good like streets and parks. We must know how to behave in this public space.



Nahim Razzaq,
MP, Member of
Parliamentary
Standing Committee,
Foreign Affairs and
Co-chair, UNYSAB
Trustee Board

This is really an inspiring initiative. The two most important things to focus on are mentorship and leadership. We have to provide proper mentorship to our brilliant young people to make them inspiring leaders of the future.

Youths are the driving force of new initiatives. The government also has to play the supporting role to make these initiatives successful. The government has many good policies for the young people but there is huge gap in implementing these policies properly. I have a feeling that the corporate sector in Bangladesh has not done enough to support new initiatives undertaken by the youth. Bangladesh is moving forward with a positive mindset. We all have to work together to keep up the momentum.

Farah Kabir

I want to congratulate all the participants and winners of this competition. All the ideas presented were brilliant. We, from ActionAid, will continue to support these ideas.

I urge the policy makers to include research and innovations in long-term policy and planning initiatives. I would also like to request both the public and private sectors to come forward to provide mentorship and support the young talents with their innovative enterprises.



(L-R) Kamrul Islam's last-over hat-trick dented Minister Rajshahi's confidence in the final over of the first innings after they had made a Bangabandhu T20 Cup-high total of 220 on the back of Najmul Hossain Shanto's century, a tournament first. That shift in momentum was seized by 18-year-old Parvez Hossain Emon, who recorded the fastest T20 century by a Bangladesh as he hit a 42-ball 100 to lead Fortune Barishal to a thrilling win.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Parvez announces himself

SPORTS REPORTER



What is a safe, defendable T20 score? Many people like to say 180 is a good total to defend. But Parvez Hossain, an 18-year-old left-handed batsman from Chattogram, proved yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur that it is the most difficult question to answer in the shortest version of the game.

It seemed like an impossible task for Fortune Barishal after Minister Group Rajshahi captain Najmul Hossain Shanto scored a blazing hundred (55-ball 109), the first three figure-mark of the tournament, to put 220 runs on the board in the day's first game of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup.

But a nonchalant Parvez took the opportunity with both hands and prove his big-hitting ability, turning the contest into a blockbuster one on way to keeping his side's hopes alive in the competition. Barishal captain Tamim Iqbal could only say that he enjoyed watching the youngster's innings.

The risks involved with going all-out are too big when chasing such a big target, but the former Bangladesh under-19 batsman looked self-assured all through his unbeaten 42-ball 100, an innings featured seven sixes and nine fours and guided his side to an eight-wicket win with 11 balls to spare.



After Gemcon Khuina won the lottery for his services, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza returned to cricket for the first time since a Dhaka Premier League on March 16 this year. The former captain gave away 28 in his four overs and scalped one wicket in yet another thrilling Bangabandhu T20 Cup game. But Chattogram's Shamsur Rahman stole the show with a 30-ball 45. With one needed from the final delivery, Shamsur hit Mustafizur Rahman for six to clinch a three-wicket win in style.

PHOTO: STAR

HIGHLIGHTS

- Rajshahi posted the first 200-plus total of the tournament as they reached 220 for 7. Barishal, in reply, chased it down with eleven balls and eight wickets to spare.
- It was the highest successful chase in T20s at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The previous highest was when Khuina Tigers chased down the 206 runs posted by Dhaka Platoon in the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League in 2019.
- It was the first time on the Mirpur surface that players from both sides had scored centuries in T20 cricket. Najmul Hossain's 109 for Rajshahi was the first century of the tournament while Barishal's Parvez Hossain scored his maiden in the second innings.
- Najmul Hossain struck eleven sixes in his innings, equalling Tamim Iqbal's record for most sixes in a T20 innings by a Bangladeshi.

Najmul, the first centurion of the day, has been in the national set-up for some time, but young Parvez was like a bolt out of the blue yesterday.

Many might have been surprised watching him bat with the prowess and the courage of taking the challenge on but it was no surprise for those who knew him closely from his early age. The former student of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) had developed the reputation of being a big-hitter right from age-level cricket.

"He has always been an attacking cricketer who wants to hit right from the word go. He has been doing this since the under-15 days when we first spotted him. He was keen on going out in the middle and taking the challenge and we found some similarities between him and Tamim Iqbal, who was like this too in his early

days. He is a special talent who has born in the T20 culture and he wants to express himself which makes him a fearless cricketer," Hannan Sarkar, the age-level selector, told The Daily Star.

Much like Tamim, who was known for hitting big sixes during his teenage years, this young Chittagonian batsman always wants to express himself.

Whether it was his straight-batted six over long-on to a pacer or a slap back past cover region, Parvez was in his own zone yesterday.

The left-hander showed glimpses of his talent striking a fifty in the first match of the tournament, but it was indeed refreshing to witness him express himself under the huge pressure in yesterday's match. And it certainly gives hope to everyone that new star for the Tigers might be in the making.

Maradona joked with the football, says Cafu

AGENCIES

Watching Diego Maradona play was "the best thing in the world" for Cafu, who has described the late Argentina great as a genius.

Cafu may have represented Brazil - Argentina's rivals - but is full of admiration for Maradona, whom he says sits on the same level as Pele when it comes to discussing the greatest of all time.

"He was one of the best ever, without any doubt," Cafu told Stats Perform News courtesy of Nissan. "There are only two best ever: Dieguito, as I called him, and Pele."

"Football lost the magic of touching the ball. Dieguito cared for the football like you care for a child. He really joked with the football and the sport."

"For us, fans and players, to watch him play was unbelievable, the best thing in the world. I remember a set-piece he took inside the box [against Juventus], he just

caressed the ball and laid it in the goal. "Now our world is mourning not because we lost a player, but because we lost a football genius."

Pele himself described Maradona as a "true legend" in a heartfelt Instagram post following the news of his friend's passing last month.

"Many people loved to compare us all their lives. You were a genius that enchanted the world. A magician with the ball at his feet. A true legend. But above all that, for me, you will always be a great friend, with an even bigger heart," Pele wrote to accompany a picture of the pair.

"Today, I know that the world would be much better if we could compare each other less and start admiring each other more. So, I want to say that you are incomparable."

Napoli, meanwhile, now play at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona, the name of the ground having been changed in honour of their former player.



Napoli striker Lorenzo Insigne has paid a lasting tribute to club hero Diego Maradona by getting a tattoo of the late Argentina icon on his left leg. The Serie A club had renamed their stadium in the 1986 World Cup winner's honour after his death last month. Insigne paid his own tribute during the league clash with Roma on November 30, celebrating with a Napoli top with the name Maradona on the back in his famous No 10. And now he has added to that homage with a more personal touch, getting a huge portrait of the former world star inked on his leg.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Zidane 'not thinking' about sack ahead of crunch showdown

REUTERS, Madrid



Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane insisted he is not contemplating losing his job if his side fail to progress from the Champions League group stage.

The 13-time European champions, who have never failed to make it out of the groups, host Group B leaders Borussia Monchengladbach on Wednesday needing to better Shakhtar Donetsk's result against Inter Milan in order to progress.

Local media reports suggest that Zidane will be sacked should Real not go through to the last 16, however the Frenchman insisted his only focus is on getting the three points, rather than his future.

"The club will do what they have to do (in the event of not qualifying), as they always do, but I'm only thinking about the game," Zidane told a news conference.

"I'm not thinking about anything else other than

winning. I'm focused on tomorrow's game and we know what we have to do. It'll be tough, but we need to be able to walk off the pitch satisfied with our work."

"We know there's another game going on (Inter versus Shakhtar), but we're only thinking about our game. We're up against a tough side who will make life difficult for us."

"We know exactly what the situation is. We want to get the three points and finish top of the group; that's what we're all thinking about. All matches are important but this is a great chance to show what we are as a team."

Zidane will welcome back captain Sergio Ramos to the side after the defender missed the last six games through injury.

Full back Dani Carvajal also took a full part in training on Tuesday, having been absent for the side's last four matches. However, forward Luka Jovic will miss out after suffering an adductor problem.



Zinedine Zidane will be able to call upon fit-again captain Sergio Ramos as Real Madrid prepare for their final Champions League group-stage game, a must win encounter against Borussia Monchengladbach tonight.

PHOTO: REAL MADRID

FEDERATION CUP

Walton remain title sponsors

SPORTS REPORTER

Walton, one of country's leading conglomerates, retained the title sponsorship for the upcoming Federation Cup starting from December 22 at Bangabandhu National Stadium with the participation of 13 Bangladesh Premier League clubs.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has also roped in two private banks -- Premier Bank Ltd and IFIC Bank -- as co-sponsors for the season's curtain-raising tournament amidst the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the signing ceremony at the BFF House yesterday, BFF senior vice president and professional league committee chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy thanked the sponsors for extending their support to football.

"You all know that the second wave of coronavirus has started across globe and infection rates have also risen significantly. Despite the pandemic, sports are being held across the world and also have to keep rolling all types of competitions by maintaining health guidelines prepared by the health and sports ministry. We are close to holding the Federation Cup, which will get underway on December 22," said Murshedy.

The BFF did not disclose the amount three companies are giving them away but the each of participating clubs will receive Tk 2 lakh as participation money while the champions and runners-up will be given Tk 5 lakh and Tk 2 lakh respectively.

SHORT CORNER

POGBA COULD RETURN TO JUVE, SAYS AGENT

Agent Mino Raiola has admitted Paul Pogba is 'unhappy' at Manchester United. The former Bianconero has a contract until June 2022 at Old Trafford, but Raiola hinted he could be on his way already in January. "It's useless to go around it, he's unhappy in Manchester," Raiola told Tuttosport. "He can no longer express himself as one would expect from him and how he wants to. "He would like to. He has to change team, change the air. He has a contract that will expire in a year and a half, but I think the best solution for the parties is to sell in the next transfer market. If not, Manchester would risk losing him on a free transfer, given that he's not intending to extend his contract." Pogba has been linked with a return to Juventus in recent years and Raiola said the Old Lady 'could be' an option. "Maybe Juventus could be his next destination," Raiola continued. "Why not? Among other things, the relationship with the club and his former teammates is excellent. At the

time of COVID, not many can afford Paul. The important thing is to want him."

I'M A TOP FIVE STRIKER, SAYS LUKAKU

Inter forward Romelu Lukaku has claimed he's 'one of the top five strikers in the world' and said the Nerazzurri 'must fight to win the Scudetto'. "I'm one of the top five strikers in the world," Lukaku told France Football. "I can't do anything wrong from a tactical point of view or even the movements. If Cristiano Ronaldo, [Lionel] Messi or [Robert] Lewandowski have exceeded their limits, why can't I do it too?" Lukaku said it's 'a bit early' for the comparisons with former Nerazzurri forward and Brazil international Ronaldo. "He scored more than 100 goals for the national team, it's a bit early to make comparisons," Lukaku added. "In Milan everyone was talking to me about Ronaldo's 34 goals in his first season. I'm glad I matched it, yes. But he won the UEFA Cup, and I lost the final. Now, I work to win trophies."

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ILLEGAL SHOPS IN FULBARIA
Hundreds torn down
Traders 'attack' DSCC team on drive, stage protest

HELEMUL ALAM
 Dhaka South City Corporation yesterday demolished several hundred illegal shops at Fulbaria Supermarket-2 in Gulistan, which was built violating the main design of the supermarket.
 Traders and shop owners protested the DSCC move. Some 911 shops were constructed illegally in the open and parking spaces of the market's A, B, and C blocks (City Plaza, Nagar Plaza and Zaker Plaza) over the years. Previous mayor Sayeed Khokon marked most of the shops as illegal and current Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh started the demolition.
 Sources said crores of taka were spent in underhand dealings for constructing and running the illegal shops over the years.
 DSCC officials initially faced obstruction from shopkeepers when they went to knock down the illegal parts of the supermarket.
 Yesterday, shopkeepers threw brick chunks from inside the market at the DSCC team. Police fired teargas canisters to bring the situation under control.
 Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh after a programme at the Nagar Bhaban yesterday said many shops were constructed violating the main design of the DSCC supermarket.
 He said people on different occasions built the shops in the open and parking spaces.



With slogans hurriedly printed out on pieces of paper, traders at Fulbaria Supermarket-2 in Gulistan stage a demonstration yesterday after Dhaka South City Corporation demolished, inset, hundreds of illegal shops there. The market had at least 911 shops built violating its design.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

CIVIL LIBERTIES
Rights body classifies Bangladesh as 'repressed'
 STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civicus, an international non-profit that fights for civil liberties and civil rights globally, released a report yesterday classifying Bangladesh as "repressed".
 The annual report from Civicus titled "People Power Under Attack 2020" rates and tracks respect for fundamental freedoms in 196 countries.
 The categories used to judge countries include freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.
 Countries are rated as "open", "narrowed", "obstructed", "repressed" and "closed". Canada for example is rated as "open". Pakistan, India, Myanmar are also rated "repressed" while Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan are classified as "obstructed".
 In Bangladesh, the Civicus Monitor

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Myanmar armed forces plagued by corruption
Says rights body unveiling leaked documents

UNB, Dhaka
 Justice For Myanmar yesterday published data from Ministry of Defence budget documents, spanning a period from the 2016-17 financial year to 2020-21, exposing the greed and corruption of the Myanmar military cartel, and its international business networks that enable the military's continued criminal conduct.
 In addition, Justice For Myanmar has published files related to the proposed purchase of two Airbus CASA C-295s, for a total of \$38,600,000, and the VIP conversion of an Airbus A319-112, formerly used by Myanmar Airways International (MAI), for \$4.8 million.
 The C-295 proposal involves Airbus certified training and after-sales service.
 UK-based Swire Group subsidiary HAECO Xiamen is contracted for the A319-112 conversion.
 Justice For Myanmar, a group of covert activists campaigning for justice and accountability for the people of Myanmar, is calling for an end to military business

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES
Inconsistent laws will become void on Dec 16

December 9, 1972
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN
ANTI-PEOPLE PROVISIONS UNDER SCRUTINY
 Substantial progress has been made by the government in scrutinizing existing laws to identify the provisions which will automatically become void with the commencement of the constitution on December 16, informs Law Minister Dr Kamal Hossain. He adds that all existing laws inconsistent with the constitution would become inoperative as the supreme law of the land unambiguously provides for immediate enforcement of the fundamental rights, which have been guaranteed.
BANGABANDHU GARLANDED
 The convener of Bangladesh Jatiya Hawkers League Mustafa Kamal on behalf of the hawkers garlands Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Gono Bhaban today. He also presents the premier a golden replica of boat for receiving the Julio Curie medal. Earlier, the hawkers assembled at Baitul Mukarram and marched to the Gono Bhaban in a procession.
CABINET MEETING
 Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today presides over a meeting of the cabinet at the secretariat. The meeting continues for four hours. The cabinet discusses various issues including food



SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Man dies in police custody
Police say suicide; family claims tortured to death
 OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver died in custody at Dashmina Police Station in Patuakhali.
 The victim's family alleged police tortured him to death. The law enforcers, however, claimed that the man took poison in custody.
 The dead -- Liton Kha, of Bashbaria village in Dashmina upazila -- used to drive a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in Dhaka.
 According to the victim's relatives, Liton had a longstanding land-related dispute with the authorities of a local madrasa.
 Following the dispute, the madrasa authorities recently filed a complaint with police and upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) mentioning Liton killed

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Everest 'grows' as China, Nepal agree new height



AFP, Kathmandu
 The highest point on Earth got a bit higher yesterday as China and Nepal finally agreed on a precise elevation for Mount Everest after decades of debate.
 The agreed height unveiled at a joint news conference in Kathmandu of 8,848.86 metres (29,031 feet) was 86 centimetres (2.8 feet) higher than the measurement previously recognised by Nepal, and more than four metres above China's official figure.
 The discrepancy was due to China measuring

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Bob Dylan sells rights to all his songs
 REUTERS, London

US singer-songwriter Bob Dylan has sold the rights to his entire song catalogue to Universal Music Group (UMG).
 PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 9
 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

BSF shoots 2 Bangladeshis dead
 OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Two Bangladeshis died of bullet wounds after being shot by Indian Border Security Force on Betna border in the district's Haripur upazila early yesterday.
 The victims -- Najir Uddin and Rabiul Islam, both aged 30, -- were residents of Manikkhari village in Haripur upazila and Mashaldangi village in Baliadangi upazila respectively.
 Quoting locals, Haripur Police Station OC Awrangajeb said the two were hit by bullets when members of Koaligar BSF camp opened fire on a group of 7-8 Bangladeshis near the border pillar no-367/2-s around 6:30am. The group was trying to enter India without valid documents.
 Soon after the shooting, the fellow Bangladeshis somehow managed to rescue the injured.
 Rabiul died of his injuries on way to

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Three brokers harass a passenger at Mawa Launch Terminal yesterday as the trio try to get the passenger on board the bus they work for. The man in the centre had just arrived in Mawa crossing the Padma and is heading for Dhaka.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

COVID-19 PANDEMIC
WHO against mandatory vaccination
 AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization said on Monday that persuading people on the merits of a Covid-19 vaccine would be far more effective than trying to make the jabs mandatory.
 The WHO said it would be down to individual countries as to how they want to conduct their vaccination campaigns against the coronavirus pandemic.
 But the UN health agency insisted making it mandatory to get immunised against the disease would be the wrong road to take, adding there were examples in the past of mandating vaccines use only to see it backfire with greater opposition to them.
 "I don't think that mandates are the direction to go in here, especially for these vaccines," Kate O'Brien, director of the WHO's immunisation department, told a virtual news conference.
 "It is a much better position to actually encourage and facilitate the vaccination without those kinds of requirements."
 "I don't think we envision any countries creating a mandate for vaccination."
 O'Brien said there may be certain hospital professions in which being vaccinated might be required or highly recommended for staff and patient safety.
 But WHO experts admitted there was a battle to be fought to convince the general public to take the vaccines as they become available.

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