



# The Daily Star

www.thedailystar.net

Your Right to Know

SECOND EDITION



REGD. No. DA 781

Vol. XXX No. 321

ACRAHAN 28, 1427 BS

RABUS SANI 27, 1442 HJRI

16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00

## Sinha murder pre-planned

*Finds Rab; charge sheet soon; 13-15 to be charged; Shipra, Sifat cleared of narcotics charges*

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and ZYMA ISLAM

Investigators have found that the murder of Maj (retd) Sinha Rashed Khan was pre-planned and they will mention it in the case's charge sheet, which will be submitted to court soon.

As per a plan of Pradeep Kumar Das, then officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, Liaquat Ali, an inspector of the same police station, shot Sinha leaving him dead, highly-placed sources at the Rab, which is probing the murder case, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The sources said the investigators came to the conclusion scrutinising evidence, including footage found from Sinha after his death.

Meanwhile, sources at the Rab headquarters said the investigators would press charges against 13 to 15 people for the murder.

The investigators, however, will drop the name of one accused -- an arrested policeman -- from the case and show him as a witness during trial, said the sources,

without going into details.

Lt Col Ashiq Billah, director of Rab's legal and media wing, said the charge sheet was being prepared and it would be submitted to the court soon.

A total of 14 people were arrested between August and September in the case. Since 13-15 people would be named as accused and one arrested cop would be named as witness, it is possible that a new accused could be included in the charge sheet, said Rab sources.

The key accused in the case included Pradeep, Liaquat Ali and sub-inspector of Teknaf Police Station Nandadul Rakshit. Other accused included three members of the Armed Police Battalion (APBn) -- Assistant Sub-inspector Md Shahjahan and constables Razib and Md Abdullah.

Sinha was killed at an APBn check point on the Cox's-Teknaf highway on July 31. Local police said Inspector Liaquat's team had taken over the check point from the three APBn officers before the incident happened.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Clockwise from top left: Abdul Mukhtar, chairman and managing director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals, Rupali Chowdhury, managing director of Berger Paints Bangladesh Ltd, SM Khaled, managing director of Snowtex, and Abul Kashem Md Shirin, managing director & CEO of DBBL, pose for photograph after receiving the 19th DHL-The Daily Star Bangladesh Business Awards at a virtual ceremony.

IMAGE: SCREEN GRABS FROM ZOOM MEETING

## Covid-19 deaths cross 7,000 mark

*34 more die, 1,329 infected in 24 hours*

STAR REPORT

Thirty-four more people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to a release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With this, the total number of deaths from the virus in the country has reached 7,020 and the death rate now stands at 1.44 percent.

A total of 1,329 new infections were recorded during the same 24-hour period, taking the total number of infected people to 489,178.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

## DEFACING BANGABANDHU SCULPTURE

## Protests continue, govt officials join in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Judges, government officials and businesspersons were among the people who demonstrated yesterday against the attack on a sculpture of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

They said disrespect towards the Father of the Nation would not be tolerated and an attack on Bangabandhu was an attack on the state and the constitution.

Protesters under the banner of Government Official Forum held rallies, discussions and human chains across the country.

The programmes were coordinated by the Bangladesh Administrative Service Association (BASA).

Protests have been going on since December 5 when an under-construction sculpture of Bangabandhu was vandalised in Kushtia on December 5.

Two students and two teachers of a local madrasa were arrested in this connection.

Some of the arrestees told police that they were inspired after hearing Hefajat-e Islam leaders denounce sculptures at public events.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two individuals and two companies yesterday won the prestigious Bangladesh Business Awards for creating jobs and contributions to the society and the economy.

Rupali Chowdhury, managing director of Berger Paints Bangladesh, received the award in the Outstanding Woman in Business category at the 19th Bangladesh Business Awards, an initiative of DHL Express and The Daily Star.

Abdul Mukhtar, chairman and managing director of Incepta Pharmaceuticals, scooped the

## HONOURING BUSINESS LEADERS

## Persevering through the pandemic



Tipu Munshi

award as the Business Person of the Year.

The Best Financial Institution award went to Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd (DBBL) and the Enterprise of the Year award to apparel manufacturer and exporter



Binod Chaudhary

Snowtex Group.

They were recognised in virtual presence of Tipu Munshi, the commerce minister, Binod Chaudhary, the wealthiest and most successful industrialist in Nepal, and Nurhayati Abdullah,

managing director of DHL Express Emerging Markets, along with business luminaries of the country, corporate leaders, and eminent citizens.

The event began with a tribute to late Latifur Rahman, one of the founders of The Daily Star and founder chairman of Transcom Group. The successful entrepreneur, known for his ethical business practices, died in July.

During his keynote speech, Binod Chaudhary, an entrepreneur, politician and philanthropist from Nepal, called Latifur Rahman a great entrepreneur and visionary.

In 2000, DHL Express and The

MORE ON B1

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

www.bsrm.com

দেশের ১ নম্বর স্টিল এক্সপার্ট

৫ বছর আগে বাঙালির নতুন এক জয়যাত্রা শুরু হয়েছিলো। পদ্মা সেতুর ভিত্তিপ্রস্তর উন্মোচিত হয়েছিলো দৃঢ়প্রত্যয়ী প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা'র হাতে। বিজয়ের এই মাসে সেই জয়যাত্রা আজ সম্পূর্ণ হলো— দৃশ্যমান হলো সম্পূর্ণ পদ্মা সেতু।

## আবাস বাংলাদেশ!

ষোল কোটি সাহসী স্বপ্নের সাথে  
একজন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দৃঢ় প্রত্যয়,  
প্রমত্তা পদ্মার বুকে দৃশ্যমান আজ  
বাঙালি জাতির অদম্য পরিচয়।  
স্বপ্নের পদ্মা সেতুর শুরু থেকে শেষ  
আমরা ছিলাম, আছি, থাকবো অনিশ্চেষ্ট।

কৃতজ্ঞতা জানাই—

- বাংলাদেশ সরকার • সড়ক পরিবহন ও সেতু মন্ত্রণালয় • বাংলাদেশ ব্রিজ অথরিটি (বিবিএ)
- কোরিয়া এক্সপ্রেসওয়ে কর্পোরেশন (কেইসি) অ্যান্ড অ্যাসোসিয়েটস • চায়না রেলওয়ে  
মেজর ব্রিজ ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং গ্রুপ কর্পোরেশন • বাংলাদেশ সেবাবাহিনী-কে।



**BANGLADESH  
UPDATE**



**1,329**  
New cases in 24hrs



**489,178**  
Total cases



**7,020**  
Deaths



**4,17,503**  
Recoveries

**GLOBAL  
UPDATE**



**1,604,507**  
Deaths



**71,604,682**  
Total cases

## US okays Pfizer's vaccine for use

*WHO warns Christmas celebrations could turn to tears as global cases soar*

AFP, Washington

The US green lighted the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine late Friday, paving the way for millions of vulnerable people to receive their shots in the world's hardest-hit country. President Donald Trump immediately released a video on Twitter, where he hailed the news as a "medical miracle" and said the first immunizations would take place "in less than 24 hours."

It comes as infections across America soar as never before, with the grim milestone of 300,000 confirmed deaths fast approaching.

The US is now the sixth country to approve the two-dose regimen, after Britain, Bahrain, Canada, Saudi Arabia and Mexico.

The move came earlier than expected, and capped a day of drama after it was widely reported that the White House had threatened to fire Food and Drug Administration chief Stephen Hahn if he did not grant emergency approval Friday.

Trump's intervention reinserts politics into the scientific process, which some experts have said could undermine vaccine confidence.

The US is seeking to inoculate 20 million people this month alone, with long-term care facility residents and health care workers at the front of the line.

The government also said Friday that it is buying 100 million more doses of the Moderna vaccine candidate, amid reports the government passed on the opportunity to secure more supply of the Pfizer jab.

The purchase brings its total supply of Moderna doses to 200 million, enough to immunize 100 million people with the two-shot regimen that could be approved as early as next week.

Both frontrunners are based on mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid), a major victory for a technology that had never previously been proven.

Two other vaccine candidates stumbled Friday: France's Sanofi and Britain's GSK said their vaccine would not be ready until the end of 2021.

And in Australia, the development of a vaccine at The University of Queensland was abandoned Friday after clinical trials produced a false positive HIV result among subjects involved in early testing.

The mixed news on the vaccine front comes as infections accelerated fast in North America and parts of Africa but started to stabilize in Europe and drop in Asia and the Middle East.

Around the world more than 1.58 million lives have been lost to Covid-19 since it emerged in China a year ago, according to an AFP tally from official sources.

## Outstanding woman in business

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rupali Chowdhury took Berger Paints Bangladesh to new heights after taking the helm of the paint manufacturing company in 2008.

Since then, the corporate leader led from the front and made Berger the number one company in Bangladesh's paint industry. Its net sales grew nearly six times to Tk 1,882 crore in 2020 from Tk 352 crore in 2007.

Obtaining an MBA from University of Dhaka's Institute of Business Administration, Chowdhury started her career in 1984 with Ciba Geigy (Bangladesh), a multinational pharmaceutical and chemical company.

In 1990, she joined Berger Paints Bangladesh as a planning manager and later served in different capacities at various departments, including marketing, sales, distribution and planning.

Also the chairman and managing director of Jenson & Nicholson (Bangladesh), a subsidiary of Berger Paints Bangladesh, Chowdhury worked relentlessly to build an organisational structure where meritocracy reigns supreme.

During her tenure, the company diversified to a number of business segments, including adhesives, textile emulsions and printing ink, brought new technologies to the industry and launched environment-friendly, lead-free and odourless paints.

She emerged as a great leader when the coronavirus pandemic slashed the company's sales by almost 50 percent in the April-June quarter to Tk 228.5 crore from that in the previous quarter.

Despite the huge fall in business, the company provided its painters with over Tk 1.75 crore to help them recover fast.

The passionate businesswoman also made it possible for Berger Paints Bangladesh to achieve 81 percent of last year's sales in the April-September period of 2020.



## Business person of the year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After spending 15 years in the pharmaceuticals sector, Abdul Muktaadir decided to become an entrepreneur and started Incepta Pharmaceuticals in 1999.

Muktaadir, who studied pharmacy at the University of Dhaka and industrial pharmacy at Long Island University in the US, said he was confident he would pull this off.

In just eight years, Incepta Pharmaceuticals became the second-largest drugmaker in Bangladesh, a rare feat for a small market with many competing companies.

Today, the company's annual turnover is Tk 2,755 crore.

His success largely stemmed from his unwavering focus on launching new products. Incepta has introduced as many as 175 new generic drugs in the local market, thanks to its large investment in research and development.

"I am always focused on innovation, uniqueness and quality, and these qualities have made us successful," said Muktaadir.

Under his leadership, Incepta has become the first company in Bangladesh to roll out insulin, biotech products, and vaccines.

By producing these locally, the company has been able to bring down the prices significantly.

He was able to create a successful enterprise that now employs about 10,000 people, a huge progress from the less than 100 he had started with.

Today, Incepta exports medicines to 67 countries. The company clocked a 26 percent growth rate in export earnings in the last fiscal year.

The firm has won the National Export Trophy for four consecutive years since 2016-17.

"Medicines are being exported to 130 countries from Bangladesh. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. Soon, Bangladesh will be known as a producer of high-quality medicines," he said in an interview last year.



## Best financial institution of the year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd (DBBL) has become the people's lender by providing numerous financial services to both tech-savvy youths and underprivileged people.

Through its efforts, DBBL has succeeded in bringing many of the country's unbanked into the formal financial system. It also introduced several firsts in the banking sector.

In 2004, DBBL rolled out its automated teller machine (ATM) service, which was a first of its kind initiative among the local lenders.

Over time, the bank has built Bangladesh's largest ATM network, with around 5,000 units dotting across the country.

The DBBL also set up Fast Track centres, a branchless banking facility featuring several ATMs, in every upazila, giving a much-needed boost to financial inclusion in rural areas.

The lender also became the country's first debit card issuer in 2004. It has since disbursed 80 lakh debit cards, the highest number of cards issued by a single bank.

The DBBL invested about Tk 12 crore in developing an e-commerce platform in 2010 when digital banking systems were mostly absent in the country.

A torchbearer in mobile financial service, the bank introduced Bangladesh's first MFS in 2011.

When it comes to agent banking, DBBL has enjoyed tremendous success since the venture began two and a half years ago. This was around the same time that it rolled out NexusPay -- a mobile application for cardless transactions.

Thanks to its various financial inclusion programmes and digital banking services, there are about three crore active accounts with the bank.

Having begun its journey back in 1996, DBBL invested heavily in the expansion of its extraordinary services and is now seeing returns on those initiatives.

The bank's net profit stood at Tk 434 crore in 2019, up from Tk 420 crore the year before.



## Enterprise of the year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Snowtex began its journey in 1998 as an accessories and trims supplier for local garment manufacturers and soon after a buying house connecting buyers and retailers to manufacturers.

A few successful years past exporting garments to the US and Canada, it accepted American brand Berne Apparel as a partner to establish its first factory, Snowtex Apparels, in 2004.

To cater to an increasing number of work orders, Snowtex in a joint venture with Berne set up another factory, Cut N Sew Ltd, in 2009.

It then adopted modern, green and sustainable manufacturing concepts in founding Snowtex Outerwear in 2014 and Snowtex Sportswear in 2019.

The readymade woven garment maker now has a yearly turnover of \$250 million and employs more than 16,000 people.

Its products range from a variety of jackets, purpose-based wear, vests, overalls, coveralls, and bottoms.

The company lists some 50 countries as export destination and top buyers such as Berne Apparel, Decathlon, Columbia Sportswear Company, VF Corporation and BESTSELLER.

Dedicated to the task is 11.50 lakh square-feet production floor sitting on over 20 acres of land in Dhamrai currently making use of 11,000 machines in 180 production lines.

A 2D and 3D computer-aided design (CAD) section collaborates in cutting, printing, embroidery, wetting, sewing, and finishing, all designed with technologically advanced machineries.

Apart from a sample section, an inventory system runs an organised warehouse of nearly 2 lakh square feet.

To ensure shipments make it out smooth, the company has its own inspection, clearing and forwarding (C&F) firm and logistics support.

Snowtex made its foray into the local market in 2018 with SaRa Lifestyle. With a 100 per cent annual growth, it now has five outlets and plans another five by 2021.

Snowtex Outerwear has attained a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification as a "Green Factory" from the US Green Building Council.



## Israel-Morocco deal 'betrayal of Islam': Iran

AFP, Tehran

An adviser to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has condemned Morocco's normalisation of ties with the Islamic republic's arch foe Israel, calling it a "betrayal of Islam".

The kingdom on Thursday became the fourth Arab state this year to normalise relations with Israel, in a deal announced by outgoing US President Donald Trump.

In return, Washington fulfilled a decades-old goal of Rabat by recognising its sovereignty over disputed Western Sahara.

## Sinha murder

FROM PAGE 1

Sinha was shooting videos for his YouTube channel at the village of Marishbunia right before he was shot. He had been residing in the area for a month for filming.

The law enforcers claimed that they tried to search the vehicle of Sinha Md Rashed Khan, but the former army official aimed his pistol at them, prompting them to shoot in self-defence.

They also claimed that they seized drugs from the vehicle.

However, witnesses gave different accounts of the incident. They said Sinha got down from his car, put his hands over his head, and then the police members shot him.

Sinha's family termed the incident a cold-blooded murder and launched the legal battle seeking justice.

Later, the case's investigation was handed to Rab.

Meanwhile, Sinha's associates Shipra Debnath and Shahedul Islam Sifat were cleared of drug charges in the narcotics cases filed against them by the police following Sinha's killing.

"A narcotics case was filed against Shipra and Sifat in Ramu and Teknaf police stations respectively, while another case was filed against Sifat at Teknaf for obstructing government activity. The investigators submitted reports to the court on Thursday clearing them both," said Lt Col Billah.

Pradeep is in Chattogram jail, where he has been since September 14. The court of Metropolitan Session Judge Ashfaqur Rahman sent him behind bars in a case filed against him and his wife by Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for amassing about Tk 3.95 crore illegally.

The rest of the accused are in Cox's Bazar District Jail.

## Covid-19 deaths

FROM PAGE 1

The current positivity rate is 10.52 percent while the total positivity rate is 16.54 percent.

A total of 12,065 samples were tested in laboratories across the country during the 24-hour period.

With 3,185 more Covid-19 patients recovering during the same period, the total number of recoveries now stands at 417,503. The recovery rate is 85.35 percent.

Of the 34 deceased, 23 were men and 11 women. One of them was aged between 31 and 40, nine were between 51 and 60 and 24 were aged above 60, said the DGHS release.

## Protests continue

FROM PAGE 1

After sedition cases were filed against Hefajat chief Junayed Babunagari and Secretary General Nur Hossain Kasemi, the organisation said it didn't ask anyone to vandalise sculptures of Bangabandhu.

Hefajat also urged the government to resolve the problem through discussion.

In the capital yesterday, the government officials' programme was held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikus said, "We will not allow any disrespect to the Father of the Nation. We take this vow today."

He added, "We are the servants of the people. The Father of the Nation remains in our constitution. Our responsibility is to uphold the constitution."

BASA President Helal Uddin Ahmed said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was recognised in the constitution as the Father of the Nation. "Any kind of attack and any insult against Bangabandhu will not be tolerated."

Benazir Ahmed, inspector general of Bangladesh Police, said attack on the constitution and the state would be dealt with an iron hand.

Several thousand government officials attended the programme.

In Chattogram, around 100 judges of different courts formed a human chain holding black banners in Dampara area. They later marched through the area.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) also formed human chains in the metropolitan cities.

[Our correspondents in Chattagram, Patuakhali, Barishal, and Tangail contributed in this report]

# Persevering through the pandemic

FROM PAGE 1

Daily Star introduced the awards to recognise the achievements and positive contributions of business houses and individuals who have not only grown but also contributed to the economic development of the country.

Soon, the awards rocketed to become the most prestigious honour in Bangladesh's business community.

Of the awardees, Abdul Muktaadir pulled off an incredible success in the country's pharmaceuticals industry when he went on to make Incepta Pharmaceuticals the second largest drug maker in Bangladesh in just eight years.

His success stemmed from the high investment in research and development and advanced technology and pursuit of producing quality products for local and export markets.

Today, Incepta exports medicines to 67 countries. The company's annual turnover is Tk 2,755 crore. It employs about 10,000 people, way higher from less than 100 when he started.

Rupali Chowdhury took Berger Paints Bangladesh to new heights after taking the helm of the company in 2008.

Since then, the company has grown manifolds, as the champion entrepreneur led from the front and made Berger the number one company in Bangladesh's paint industry.

Snowtex started its business as a supplier of accessories and trims to local garments factories in 1998. Today, the group employs more than 16,000 people with \$250 million annual turnover.

It has exported apparel products to around 50 countries, and its top buyers are Berne Apparel, Decathlon, Columbia, VF and Bestsellers.

Snowtex Outerwear, a company under the group, has been certified as a green factory by the United States Green Building Council.

DBBL's name is synonymous with innovation as it has turned

into a lender in the banking sector of Bangladesh, introducing newer products and services.

It was the first lender in Bangladesh to have set up a mobile financial service, Rocket, rolled out the debit card and agent banking, and built the largest network of automated teller machines.

Net profit of the bank stood at Tk 434 crore in 2019, up from Tk 420 crore a year ago. The bank scooped the award in the same category in 2007.

The award ceremony was moved to the digital platform because of the pandemic. It was live-streamed on Facebook.

In his speech, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi said entrepreneurs were taking the economy forward.

"Today, when the global economy has plunged into a recession because of the pandemic shock, Bangladesh stands tall among most of the economies and is going to post the highest.

"This has been possible because of your resilience, dedication, and our hard-working population," he said.

The government is committed to facilitating businesses and attracting investment in order to become a developed nation, he said.

"We have taken many steps to improve our ranking in the Ease of Doing Business Index and boost industrialisation," he said.

Chaudhary, the first billionaire from Nepal, credited the business community of Bangladesh for the economic performance even during the pandemic when staying afloat is being considered as the biggest dividend.

He praised the government of Bangladesh for keeping the higher growth trajectory, reduction in poverty, and higher per capita income and literacy.

Chaudhary said he always felt that there was no monopoly of big economies and enterprises in a free economy.

"It is all about your imagination,

innovation, and courage. It is all about not easily accepting defeats and rather, continuing the journey despite the most adverse circumstances."

Also a lawmaker, Chaudhary said businesses in South Asia and emerging economies continue to struggle to keep the operations going as business decisions are made based on political considerations.

"If you can do business in South Asia, you can do business anywhere in the world," he said, while speaking about the severity of bureaucratic and political challenges in doing business in South Asia.

Chaudhary, chairman of CG Corp Global, a Nepalese conglomerate with a portfolio that comprises more than 169 companies, said because of the pandemic, the way of doing businesses is changing, and businesses would have to accept the reality and move on.

"It will also open a new set of opportunities."

Md Miarul Haque, managing director of DHL Worldwide Express (BD) Pvt Ltd, emphasised tapping the global e-commerce market.

The size of the domestic e-commerce market in Bangladesh is around \$1.5 billion. However, the global cross-border e-commerce market is around a trillion dollars, he said.

This could mean a significant source of potential export earnings, diversification for the country's industries, connecting thousands of SMEs and micro-enterprises to customers around the world, and producers reaching out to more than 7 billion people rather than just 170 million people of Bangladesh, he said.

Miarul said producers get only around 20 percent of maximum retail price (MRP). But if they can reach out directly to consumers through e-commerce, the same \$30 billion of exports can potentially grow to \$150 billion.

"We just need some heroes like you

to dream this again," he said in his speech.

Miarul said he dreamt of a regulatory infrastructure where delivery of shipments to recipients would only be a matter of hours after arrival in Dhaka, instead of days.

"These delays may lead to billions of dollars of missed opportunities. I dream of that day when we will truly see paperless clearance so that we can avoid printing millions of pages as hardcopy clearance documents."

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said each of business icons and awardees of the Bangladesh Business Awards are stories of immense creativity, courage and consistent perseverance.

"By telling their stories, we would like to tell the people of the country about what they can do, inspire them, help them get out of their limited visions, and connect them with people who have broken out of their shells and done new things."

Business leaders play a much bigger role than they are appreciated, he said.

So, the purpose of the awards is to bring out in the public domain the people, entrepreneurs and enterprises, who by providing employment and chalking out new ways of doing businesses, are creating wealth for the country, Mahfuz Anam said.

He said Bangladesh was showing the world on how to overcome difficulties and limitations. "We must now start a new faith in our country, people, entrepreneurs, and our ability to face challenges."

The noted journalist paid tribute to the farmers who have made agriculture a wonder, entrepreneurs and new businesses, as well as to the government for business-friendly policies.

Business leaders are striving forward despite all obstacles, and nothing exemplifies their capacity than what they have done during the pandemic, he said.

When the world stopped, entrepreneurs, factories and workers



"Each of our business icons and each of our awardees this evening are stories of immense creativity, courage, consistency and perseverance."

**MAHFUZ ANAM**  
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER OF THE DAILY STAR



"I dream of that day when we will truly see paperless clearance so that we can avoid printing millions of pages as hardcopy clearance documents."

**MD MIARUL HAQUE**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF DHL WORLDWIDE EXPRESS (BD) PVT LTD





After months of closure and two months of lukewarm attendance, Bashundhara City's Star Cineplex saw some bustle yesterday. Officials assure that social distancing and other health protocols are being strictly followed.

# Two new releases breathe life into the silver screen

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIR, A&E Desk

After weeks of lull in terms of new releases, movie theatres across the city were set abuzz by two new releases, that too on the same day.

This Friday marked the release of noted television director Chayanika Chowdhury's debut film, "Bishwoshundori" and Ekushey Padak winner Tanvir Mokammel's seventh feature film, "Rupsha Nodir Baanke" (Quiet Flows the River Rupsha).

In any other year, two new films releasing on the same day, that too on a weekend, would draw large crowds. But in 2020, these movies are not only a test of filmmaking alone, but also their ability to get the industry back on the track.

After remaining closed in the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, several cinema halls have reopened since October 16. However, around two months in, the turnout is still low. But this is expected to change upon the release of these new films.

"Cinema halls are following safety rules and selling only 40 percent tickets of their capacity. I am hoping people will come and see the films on the big screen, following proper safety protocols," Chayanika Chowdhury told The Daily Star. "The audience's involvement and interest will inspire other directors to release their films."

Inside the halls, moviegoers are required to wear protective masks at all times and are seated according to social distance guidelines.

"People are hardly going out these

days. I am not sure how many will venture out to come and watch our films. However, we have waited a long time since February," director Tanvir Mokammel had shared in a previous interview with The Daily Star, regarding his expectations about releasing "Rupsha Nodir Baanke" during the pandemic.

When asked, audience members at STAR Cineplex in Bashundhara City shared that they came out to watch Siam Ahmed and Pori Moni starrer "Bishwoshundori".

Multiple shows of "Bishwoshundori" were sold out at STAR Cineplex -- a solid performance, considering the pandemic.

"The turnout for Bishwoshundori has been great so far," shared Star Cineplex's Senior Manager, Media & Marketing, Mesbah Uddin Ahmed.

"However, we are not expecting a high turnout for Rupsha Nodir Baanke, as it is not billed as a commercial film," he told this newspaper.

Similar sentiments were echoed by insiders at Jamuna Future Park's Blockbuster Cinemas.

"The response to Bishwoshundori has been widely positive, with people turning out in satisfactory numbers. However, the same cannot be said about Rupsha Nodir Baanke," shared Shanto, a staff member at Blockbuster Cinemas. "We are expecting more people in the coming days for both the new releases."

With a story, screenplay and dialogues from Rumman Rashid Khan, "Bishwoshundori" is produced by Sun Music and Motion Pictures Limited and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## DIGITAL BANGLADESH DAY Focus on innovation, not imitation

President Hamid urges all

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid yesterday emphasised the importance of innovation instead of imitation to reach benefits of "Digital Bangladesh" to people.

"Technology is the tool of development. Information technology is the most significant invention of the present time... in order to effectively deliver the benefits of Digital Bangladesh to people, we have to catch up with the new and changed technology," he said.

The president said this while addressing a virtual event, marking the 4th "Digital Bangladesh Day" on Saturday.

He inaugurated the Digital Bangladesh Day activities at the auditorium of Bangladesh Computer Council in the capital through a video message.

"It's necessary to make best use of all the opportunities created by information technology as well as prevent its misuse. Our youths are skilled enough in terms of intelligence and ability to adapt to new technology," the president said.

If they are given proper training, they will take the country to the desired goal of development, he added.

Calling upon all, including the private sector, to come forward, Hamid said, "The private sector in our country is now strong and capable enough. Therefore, I hope the government as well as the private sector will continue to make every effort to harness the development potential of the IT sector."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Mobile hand-wash stations to roam streets of the capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to contain coronavirus in the country, a mobile handwashing campaign was launched in Dhaka yesterday, with an aim to reach low-income group in different parts of the city.

Initially, the campaign -- Handwashing on Wheels -- included 10 units of rickshaw-van decorated and equipped with multiple sinks, liquid soap, and water-tanks.

Besides, the units are equipped with digital tabs which will display awareness messages through songs to encourage people wash their hands as a precautionary measure.

About 20 more such units are expected to be added to the campaign soon.

The initiative has been taken by Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Dhaka Wasa),

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## DRAINAGE SYSTEM OF DHAKA

# Wasa to hand over charge to city corps by January: minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will hand over Dhaka city's drainage system from Wasa to the city corporations by January next year, Local Government and Rural Development Minister Tajul Islam said yesterday.

"We will try to make it happen within the rest days [of December]... Even it is shifted to January, it may not linger to the end of January," he told reporters after inaugurating a joint hand-wash campaign of Wasa and WaterAid at the city's Karwan Bazar.

The minister's remarks came after the government decided in principle to hand over the drainage system from Wasa to the city corporations, to solve the city's longstanding waterlogging problem.

Responding to a query, the minister told journalists they have formed a committee for the handing over of the drainage system, and have asked it to submit a report within a month.

"I hope, the committee will soon submit its report," he said, adding once the report is submitted, the ministry after completion of some official procedures will hand over the drainage system upon getting the prime minister's approval.

Tajul Islam said he has been following-up on the committee's activities, adding that the handover will be completed within days of submission of the committee report.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Some 10 mobile hand-washing stations stand in a queue, adorned in festive balloons, in front of Wasa Bhavan in the capital. Dhaka Wasa, international development organisation WaterAid and the Swedish Embassy in Dhaka jointly launched the campaign. Another 20 vehicles are expected to join the fleet soon, to enforce hygiene habits among people in a bid to stay safe from the Covid-19 pandemic.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Changemaking starts early in 'Maisun's World'

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Cig

No one is too young to make a difference. This statement gets passed around a lot, but seldom do we come across someone who live their life as a genuine example of it.

There aren't a lot of names besides the globally famous few readily come to mind when thinking of a child leader. Even more rare is a local name who can take that mantle.

But at just 10 years old, Chattogram's Umme Maisun has started to stand out as a youth sensation. With her engaging social media content, she has already established herself as a young English instructor of the country.

It's not an easy task. Beyond just vocabulary and grammar, the language of English requires that someone also be good at accent, spontaneity, fluency and a whole lot more. Somehow, even at a such a young age, Maisun is proving to be capable in all of them.

In addition to this, one needs to have an eye for interesting content to



The 10-year old social media star is impacting lives of her peers.

thrive on social media, and Maisun steps up to the plate for that too.

A third-grader at a Bangla medium school of the port city, she went viral across the country after appearing for a Robi 10 Minute School video

tutorial. The video, published on June 10, features her talking about how to greet people in English. It garnered around 1.6 million views.

Another video on how to introduce

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## Obaidul Quader has forgotten the truth: Rizvi

UNB, Dhaka

Accusing Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader of regularly spreading a 'false' campaign against their party, BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday said the ruling party leader has forgotten to speak the truth.

"Surrounded by police and Rab, Obaidul Quader holds a press conference every day to present absurd and imaginary stories and slanders against BNP," he said while speaking at a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office.

Rizvi also said Quader has been trying to malign the Zia family with his regular "campaign of lies" against them. "He (Quader) has forgotten the truth, from telling lies. When people see him on television, they change the TV channel."

Rizvi, the senior secretary general of BNP, questioned as to why the government conducts propaganda against BNP when it has been ruling the country for over a decade by "controlling all the state machinery and institutions."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## BNP should be tried for crimes against humanity

Says Obaidul Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP should be tried for crimes against humanity, as the party has been committing such crimes continuously since its inception.

"There is no heinous crime that BNP did not commit, including promulgation of indemnity act to stop the trial of killers of Bangabandhu and jail killing, grenade attacks and killing people by carrying out arson attacks," he said while addressing the biennial council of AL's Adamdighi upazila unit in Bogura, joining through videoconference from his official residence on parliament premises in Dhaka.

Terming BNP the "creator of cliques of goons" in the country, Quader said BNP's history is the history of conspiracy, killing of people and militancy. He said there is no democracy inside BNP, but they always talk about democracy.

Turning to his own party, the AL general secretary said there could be competition of leadership in a big party, but this competition must be through maintaining organisational discipline and regulation. He urged party leaders and workers to refrain from anything that tarnishes the image of the party.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is very strict about discipline, he said, adding that if anyone violates organisational discipline, the party will not spare them. Dedicated workers of AL who stayed with the party in its crisis must be evaluated in the committees of the party; while extortionists, corrupt people and wrongdoers will not be given any space, he said.

# 61pc work of Bangabandhu Tunnel completed

Boring of second tube starts

BSS, Dhaka

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday inaugurated the boring of the second tube of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel under the Karnaphuli River in the port city.

He joined the inaugural ceremony from his official residence on parliament premises in Dhaka.

Quader, also Awami League general secretary, said the tunnel is being built at a cost of Tk 10,400 crore while 61 percent works of the project has been completed.

He said the 9.1 kilometre-long tunnel is the first of its kind in South Asia.

The minister said the tunnel is being built to turn Chattogram into "One City, Two Towns" like Shanghai city in China.

The tunnel will develop a modern communication system among Dhaka-Chattogram and Cox's Bazar and it will connect the Asian highway, he said.

Land Minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam, Bridges Division Secretary Md Belayet Hossain, Project Director Harun-or-Rashid, other officials of the project and Bangladesh Navy members joined the event through virtual platform from Chattogram.



Pick a flower, pick a string, strike the string through the flower's heart. Repeat. This process might seem easy enough from a distance, but the sheer number of times this child has to do it everyday merits plaudits. All for a meagre sum of money, and your pleasure! The photo was taken from the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

# No business over Covid-19 vaccine

GM Quader urges govt to ensure it

UNB, Dhaka

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader yesterday urged the government to inform people about the steps it has taken to ensure coronavirus vaccine for them.

Inaugurating the general meeting of Jatiya Chhatra Samaj at his Banani office, he also called upon the government to take necessary steps so that no quarter can do business over the corona vaccine.

"The government has booked three crore doses of vaccine to prevent the coronavirus pandemic. It's not clear whether three or one and a half crore people will be given the doses as each person needs two doses," GM Quader said.

He said, "The country's people want to know what steps have been taken to ensure the vaccine for the remaining 14 to 15 crore people. The vaccines should be given free of cost to save lives as 90 percent of people in the country can't afford to buy it."

Stating that the coronavirus vaccine will have to be stored at a certain temperature, the JP chief said the government should also clearly inform people about the steps it has taken to preserve and transport the vaccine.

He said the ministries concerned used to talk about their all-out preparations during every disaster, but the reality does not match with their words.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



MURDER OF PABNA AL LEADER

Houses torched, shops looted as protests flare up

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The followers of local Awami League leader Bokul Sheikh, who was hacked to death in Pabna on Friday, torched four houses, ransacked several shops and staged demonstrations in the district town yesterday, protesting the murder.

A number of supporters, villagers and family members of Bokul brought out a procession and staged demonstrations by blocking roads in the district town in the afternoon, demanding punishment for the killers.

They also held a rally in front of the local AL office and threatened to go for tougher action if the killers are not arrested within the next 24 hours.

Earlier in the day, some agitating followers of Bokul reportedly ransacked several shops and set fire to four houses in Ananto Bazar area, protesting the killing. Police and firefighters later brought the fire under control.

On Friday night, criminals hacked and shot Bokul Sheikh (45), a ward unit joint secretary of AL and a member of Dogasi union parishad, following a clash with a rival group led by one Mokhesur Rahman over establishing supremacy in the area.

Nasim Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Pabna Sadar Police Station, said demonstrators yesterday also set fire to a house of Mokhesur. Additional police were deployed in Ananto Bazar area as a tense situation was prevailing there after the death of Bokul, the OC said.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Abdul Ahad Babu, office secretary of Pabna district AL, said Mokhesur's men had been collecting extortion money from the drivers of battery-run three-wheelers in the area for a long time.



Relatives of patients admitted to Barishal's Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital have laid their washed clothes on the field in front of the hospital to dry. This photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Child raped by 52-yr-old man in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

An eight-year-old was allegedly raped by a 52-year-old man at a village in Jhikargachha upazila of Jashore on Friday.

The girl's father filed a rape case against Nur Mohammad, with Jhikargachha Police Station, said Abdur Razzak, officer-in-charge of the police station, yesterday.

Police are trying to arrest the accused who went into hiding, he said.

According to the case statement, Nur took the second-grader to a banana plantation from near her house in the afternoon and raped her.

He ran away when people rushed to the spot hearing her scream.

Man killed in landslide while 'cutting hill'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A man was killed in a landslide while he was allegedly cutting a hill in Sadar upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Mohammad Rahmatullah (25) of Tetaiya village in Khurushkul union, said police.

Rahmatullah died on the spot after a big chunk of earth from the hill fell on him, said Jasim Uddin, chairman of Khurushkul Union Parishad.

He alleged that an influential quarter is involved in this illegal activity and urged the authorities concerned to take action in this regard.

On information, police recovered the body from the spot and sent it to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Anwar Hossain, inspector of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station.

A case was filed in this connection, he added.

Focus on

FROM PAGE 3

Highlighting the importance of observing the day amid the pandemic, the president said, "We are facing many challenges... The government is making relentless efforts to keep the country's economy afloat as well as tackle Covid-19 that has changed the world."

People now can stay connected thanks to information technology during this difficult time, he said.

Referring to government programmes taken for the development of ICT, Hamid said, "2021 marks the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and golden jubilee of our independence... We have to make relentless efforts to build the 'Sonar Bangladesh' as dreamt by Bangabandhu," he added.

Changemaking

FROM PAGE 3

oneself in English, published the following day, ended up fetching a whopping 5.5 million views. Since then, Robi 10 Minute School has posted eight video tutorials on kids' English by Maisun.

June turned out to be a particularly good month for her. On June 15, Maisun took part in a World Youth Skill Day event titled "We are echoing Greta Thunberg -- No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference" as a guest speaker. Beside her, the programme featured speakers from USA, Australia, Kenya, and Georgia.

All of this recognition has led to her racking up 170K followers on Facebook and 55.1k subscribers on her YouTube channel 'Maisun's World'. Her parents help her curate and create content for her personal social media accounts.

When asked how it all began, Maisun told The Daily Star it was when her cousins from USA came home for vacation a few years back. "They didn't know any Bangla, so I was struggling to communicate with them," she said, "This kind of forced me to learn their language as fast as possible."

"I practised speaking English for hours in front of the mirror, along with reading English books and watching cartoons and movies. These exercises helped me catch up with the language," she added.

She said she is fond of reading children's novels by Muhammed Zafar Iqbal as well as Harry Potter, Princess Diaries and children's books by Geronimo Stilton. She's also a regular newspaper reader, specifically The Daily Star, she told this correspondent.

It may have been a short journey, but it has been a journey nonetheless, and Maisun has come out of it with wisdom aplenty. "To overcome fear is the first step of learning any language," she boldly said to this correspondent.

Besides English, Maisun said she's also fascinated by mathematics and dreams of becoming a computer engineer in the future.

Two new

FROM PAGE 3

distributed by Jaaz Multimedia. It is running at 25 theatres across the country, including STAR Cineplex, Blockbuster Cinema, Shyamoli Cinema, Ananda Cinema Hall, Chitramahal Cinema and Monihar, among others. After months of inactivity, Shyamoli Cinema reopened their gates with this film.

Produced by Kino-eye Films, the government granted film, "Rupsha Nodir Baanke" is running at STAR Cineplex and Blockbuster Cinemas in the capital. It is also being screened at Shahbagh's Public Library Auditorium (3pm, 5:30pm and 8pm), till December 16. The film features Zahid Hossain Shovon, Naziba Basher, Khairul Alam Sabuj, Chitralekha Guha and Ramendu Majumdar in prominent roles.

The premiere of "Rupsha Nodir Baanke" was held at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on December 10. The film will have its world premiere at the 51st Goa International Film Festival, scheduled for January 16-24, 2021.

Several well-known directors and actors conveyed their best wishes to both the films online.

BBDN to launch career portal for differently-abled people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN), recently awarded as one of the winners of the prestigious Zero Project Award, is launching a career portal for people with disabilities in partnership with Leonard Cheshire, CSID and Bdjobs. The project will be undertaken through the support of UK Government FCDO under the Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) programme.

The Zero Project, headquartered in Vienna, Austria, announced BBDN as one of the winners in the category of Innovative Practices in Employment from the Business Sector for the year 2021. The awardees were announced on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, 2020.

A launch event for the career portal will be held on December 17 with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, according to a press release.

In addition, BBDN is working with the Inclusion Works programme, also supported by UK FCDO, led by Sightsavers

and ADD. As skills development of people with disabilities is vital for strengthening the supply side, BBDN is building capacity of model technical and vocational education and training institutions and teachers training colleges, through the support of International Labour Organization's Skills-21 project, funded by the EU.

The aim of the Zero Project is to research and share innovative practises and policies worldwide, by engaging with a worldwide cross-sectoral network of innovators, decision-makers and opinion leaders on the issue of disability inclusion. More than 5,000 experts, with and without disabilities, in over 150 countries have been actively contributing to the Zero Project in the past years. Its mission is working for a world with zero barriers.

BBDN is a non-profit Trust established by the Bangladesh Employers' Federation. BBDN is a group of representatives from business, industry, employers' organisations and selected non-governmental and disabled peoples' organisations.



As part of the countrywide demonstrations, Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry staged a rally at Shapla Chattar in the capital's Motijheel yesterday in protest against damage of Bangabandhu's sculpture.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Mobile

FROM PAGE 3

WaterAid and Sweden Embassy. Wasa will supply water for each unit.

Floating people, street vendors, pedestrians, rickshaw-pullers, and drivers of public transportation are the key targets for this campaign, said organisers.

The units will be moving in the city's populated areas including Gulshan, Jatrabari, Mohakhali, Gabtoli, New Market, Karwan Bazar, Gulistan, Farmgate, Uttara, and Malibagh.

Inaugurating the campaign at Wasa Bhaban in the capital's Karwan Bazar as chief guest, Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Minister Tajul Islam said it will help create awareness among people about the importance of handwashing.

He said the government has taken several steps to curb the spread of coronavirus while private sector, including donor agencies, are also working to combat the virus.

"The government is fighting the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic with efficiency and due caution," the minister added.

Wasa Managing Director Taqsem A Khan said to help people during the dire time

of Covid-19 pandemic, Wasa has come up with different initiatives, including facilitating easy access to handwashing across the capital.

He hoped the initiative will make handwashing convenient for the people during the pandemic.

Hasin Jahan, country director of WaterAid, said handwashing is suggested as the first line of defence and a basic step to avoid the spread of Covid-19.

The campaign is an attempt to reach handwashing facilities to people of all tiers of the society, she said.

It will ensure easy access to handwashing facilities for the people on the move in Dhaka, she added.

She also said primarily they have started the campaign in Dhaka and it will be taken outside the city if the initial campaign brings success.

Muhammad Ibrahim, additional secretary of Local Government Division, also addressed the ceremony.

At least 1,329 new infections were recorded while 34 people died from Covid-19 in the country in 24 hours ending 8am yesterday, according to a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

Wasa to

FROM PAGE 3

The idea of handing over ] drainage management to city corporations came to light in July when the two mayors -- Dhaka South's Shekih Fazle Noor Taposh and Dhaka North's Atiqul Islam -- expressed their interest to take over the responsibility.

Later, the decision was taken at a meeting headed by the LGRD minister, in presence of the two Dhaka city corporation mayors as well as Dhaka Wasa's managing director.

Responding to another query regarding the government's effort to free rivers and canals surrounding Dhaka city from illegal encroachers, the LGRD minister said whoever gets involved in such unlawful activities will face action, irrespective of their identity of influences.

No business

FROM PAGE 3

"So, it's now important to prepare a list of those who will receive the vaccine on a priority basis by ensuring the appropriate measures for the transportation, storage and management of the vaccine," GM Quader said.

He also urged the government to remain vigilant so that no quarter can import fake Covid-19 vaccines and make money by cheating people.

GM Quader, also the deputy leader of the opposition in parliament, said though his brother HM Ershad was a successful president of the country, he was branded as an autocratic ruler through a conspiracy and forced him to hand over power in 1990.

After the handover, the country has become a champion in corruption five times during the rule of BNP and Awami League, he said. "But the country never became a champion in corruption during the rule of Pallibandhu Hussain Muhammad Ershad."

He alleged that BNP introduced the culture of extrajudicial killings by forming joint forces and Rab and that is still going on. "But during the rule of Jatiya Party, there's no incident of extrajudicial killing."

GM Quader said it is the Jatiya Party which only can ensure good governance and the rule of law in the country.

Obaidul

FROM PAGE 3

He alleged that the government has been trying to suppress people by creating an awful situation through its repressive acts, including enforced disappearances, kidnapping, killing, rape and terror acts.

The BNP leader said although their party chief Khaleda Zia is now staying at her Gulshan house, she is not free at all. "Though the government has said her sentences have been suspended, various restrictions have been imposed on her."

He said the government has kept Khaleda under the house arrest as it fears her popularity. "We demand an immediate complete release of her."

Meanwhile, BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy slammed Obaidul Quader for regularly criticising BNP, saying the Awami League General secretary has been uttering dictated words against BNP like a caged bird.

Speaking at a doa mahfil, he said Awami League's political condition is worse than BNP's, but the party now cannot realise it due to the support of the state machinery.

"They're now repressing us using the administration, but they'll be unable to protect themselves if they come under the attack."

He said the current government itself is now at the ICU after being infected with a disease more dangerous than coronavirus.

The BNP leader said the country is also in a very bad shape now due to the current government's 'misrule'. "There was a time when many sick people in our country hardly visited a doctor until they were unable to move. They went to a doctor where there's no treatment left for their illness. I think the country is now at that stage."

He urged all political parties and people of all walks of life to get united putting aside previous enmities, to protect the country from 'misrule'.

Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal arranged the programme seeking speedy recovery of party chairperson Khaleda Zia, its Covid-infected standing committee members Mirza Abbas, Nazrul Islam Khan and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku.



One of the common sights of December is hawkers selling national flags and headbands all across the country. With the Victory Day just three days away, they have become everpresent in Barishal City. This photo was taken yesterday from Kashipur area.

PHOTO: TITU DAS



# Dead people collecting grant money!

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

At least four dead workers have apparently collected grant money awarded to 400 hundred tea workers at Sreebari Tea Garden in Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj.

Upon approval of upazila social services officer and upazila nirbahi officer (UNO), the one-time Tk 5,000-grant is being given at the directive of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to impoverished tea workers at different tea gardens in the country every year.

According to tea worker leader Rupu Karmakar, out of total 1,200 workers at Sreebari Tea Garden, 400 were supposed to receive the grant this year.

The garden's worker Kalicharan Rikiason died on November 13 in 2019. But his name was in the list of grant recipients for this year under serial number 205 and the money was collected on his behalf in July the same year.

His wife Mousumi Rikiason said, "The list was made after my husband died. Although my husband's name is still in the list, I've never received the money."

The money was also collected for Hirannanda Das, who died on December 12 in 2019, but the name was included in the grant list made for this year.

Shantush Tanti, a member of the local union parishad, said that names of two others -- Bindu Kharia and Thakurmoni Kal, who died in the last two to three years -- also made it to this year's list.

"Neither the tea garden Panchayat president nor the social services department in the upazila informed me that they were preparing a list for the grant," he alleged.

Claiming that the committee members collected bribe include names of workers in the list, he said such irregularity is a violation of the "Cha Sramikder Jibanman Unnayan Karmasuchi Bastobayan Nitimala-2013".

A number of unscrupulous worker leaders including the Panchayat president have been cheating innocent workers by embezzling their money in the name of dead, widow or mentally unbalanced people, alleged a local named Mishu Acharjee.

Unless the criminals are brought to book, a clash might erupt over the irregularities and the president of the



A section of impoverished tea workers at Sreebari Tea Garden in Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj.

PHOTO: STAR

Panchayat will be responsible for any such untoward incident, he also said.

Jagannath Rikmon, a worker at Sreebari Tea Garden, said, "I gave them money as well as photocopy of my identity card with the assurance of including my name in the list of the grant. I saw my name the list, but I didn't get the money yet."

"I also handed them money and the photocopy of my identity card so they would enlist me. But I can't find my name in the list. When I asked the Panchayat head about it, he asked me to wait longer," said another tea worker Suman Nunia.

Tea worker leader Rupu Karmakar said

Panchayat President Ranjit Rikmun with the connivance of Sajan Karmakar, Ram Babu Tati and Vijay Gowla are involved in various irregularities such as accepting bribe in exchange for inclusion of names of workers who are not eligible to receive the grant.

Although the workers filed written complaints against the corrupt individuals with the UNO, social services officer and officer-in-charge of police station in Chunarughat, no action were taken against them, h added.

Asked about the accusations, Sajan Karmakar told this correspondent that he

collected more or less Tk 500 from the workers on behalf of the Panchayat chief after assuring that names of the workers who paid the money to him would be included in the grant list for this year.

Ranjit Rikmun, the Panchayat president, however, denied the allegations and said that he did not have the sole authority in the process of selecting grant recipients.

Chunarughat Upazila Social Services Officer Barindra Chandra Roy said they stopped disbursing the grant after receiving written complaints from workers of Sreebari Tea Garden.

## Manikganj freed today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Manikganj was freed from the Pakistani occupation forces on this day in 1971.

Every year, people of the district observe the day as 'Manikganj Free Day'.

On December 13 in 1971, the valiant freedom fighters declared the district (the then sub-division) free from the Pakistan Army and hoisted the national flag atop of the Primary Training Institute (PTI) in the town.

Sing early March in 1971, the freedom-loving people of the district, under the leadership of Captain Abdul Halim Chowdhury, started preparing themselves so that they could resist the Pakistani occupation forces and fight back.

As a part of their preparation, freedom fighters looted firearms from Manikganj Treasury on March 27, a day after the declaration of the country's independence on March 26.

On October 28, freedom fighters led by Engineer Tobarak Hossain Ludu, Lokman Hossain and Zahidur Rahman killed 82 Pakistani soldiers and held 50 others wounded after a fierce battle in Singair upazila.

Besides, another group led by Bir Protik Ibrahim launched a successful operation and blew up Siddhirganj Power House.

On November 11, Pakistani forces attacked Teroshree village in Ghior upazila and killed 43 innocent villagers.

On December 13, freedom fighters finally declared the then sub-division free from the occupation forces.

## Idols vandalised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Unidentified criminals vandalised three idols of Hindu Goddess Kali at a temple in Sujanagar upazila of the district early Friday.

Temple committee members found the three idols damaged at Ahmedpur Baroar Kali Mondir on Friday morning and informed the police, Officer in Charge (OC) of Aminpur Police Station Mozammel Haque said.

The criminals also looted all the ornaments from the idols, the police official said.

Dilip Chandra Sutrodhar, president of the temple managing committee, filed a case on Friday night, the OC said.

## Woman killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A woman was killed by one of her neighbours allegedly over a trivial matter in Bauful upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Rani Begum, 55, was wife of Abul Kashem of Keshabpur village in the upazila.

Meanwhile, police detained Puspa Begum, 45, wife of Abdul Halim of the village, for her alleged involvement in the murder.

Police said Rani was sowing some gourd sapling beside the road in front of her house around 8:00am when their neighbours Halim and his wife Puspa protested it, triggering an altercation between them.



Farmers in Pakhimara area of Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila face uncertainty over Boro and seasonal vegetable cultivation as no dam is built on the canal to prevent saltwater intrusion towards fields.

PHOTO: STAR

## Boro, winter vegetable farming uncertain

*Growers are worried as no dam is built on Pakhimara canal this year for prevention of saltwater intrusion towards fields*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Boro paddy and winter vegetable cultivation has become uncertain as no dam is built on the canal in Pakhimara area under Kalapara upazila this year for prevention of saline water intrusion towards fields, much to the worry of farmers.

The upazila parishad gives a grant of Tk 50,000 to the farmers every year to build a temporary dam, but this year they are not getting the grant due to fund crisis.

As a result, about 3,000 farmers of ten villages including Pakhimara, Kumirmara, Majidpur and Alempur are facing uncertainty over cultivation of Boro paddy and winter vegetables.

Local farmers said there is sluice gate at the mouth of Pakhimara canal. The canal is directly connected to the Andhamanik river. The sluice gate lies damaged for long due to lack of repair. As a result, saline water enters the fields through the damaged gate.

Every year the farmers of the villages take initiative to prevent intrusion of saline water by making earthen dam in front of the sluice gate. They also get a grant of Tk 50,000 from the upazila parishad for construction of the dam.

The growers are very worried now as they are not getting grant from the parishad this year due to fund crisis.

Sultan Gazi, a farmer from Alempur

village, said they receive financial assistance from the upazila parishad every year to build the dam on the canal. But this year they are not getting the assistance.

As a result, 3,000 farmers are facing uncertainty over boro and seasonal vegetable cultivation, he said.

This year, heavy rains have damaged early winter vegetable plants, he added.

Zakir Gazi, a farmer from Kumirmara village, said if the dam is built, 3,000 famers of the ten villages will be able to produce agricultural products worth about Tk 5 crore.

Once the saline water enters the canal from the river, all the farmers will have to count huge losses, said Zakir.

Abul Hossain, a farmer from Islampur village, said due to saltwater intrusion, farmers of Kumirmara, Majidpur, Sonatala, Pakhimara, Naobhanga, Gamiratala, Alempur, Neyamatpur, Islampur and Gutabachha villages will also be affected.

He added that this year most of the farmers are taking preparation to cultivate Boro as the price of the paddy is good. Many are preparing seedbeds. But if the dam is not built, everything will be ruined.

Chairman of Kalapara Upazila Parishad Rakibul Ahsan said this year the upazila parishad cannot help the farmers financially to build the dam due to fund crisis.

## Bagerhat betel nut farmers all smiles

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Fair prices have brought smile to Bagerhat betel nut growers although the yield of the nut is not good this year due to cyclone Amphan. Bagerhat district is famous for producing quality betel nuts, said agriculture officials.

On a visit to the betel nut market in Kachua upazila on Thursday, this correspondent found that per kuri (231 pieces) betel nut was being sold at Tk 500 to Tk 700 depending on the size.

The market was abuzz with farmers and traders. Hundreds of workers remained busy filling the sacks with different sizes of betel nuts.

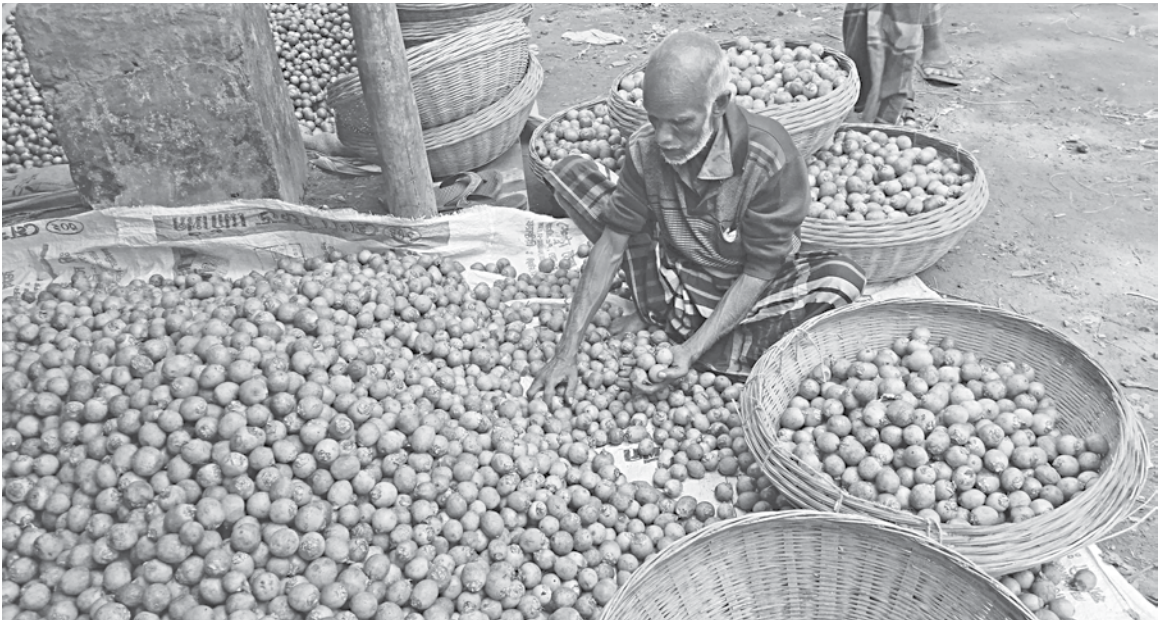
Betel nuts are sold here for more than crores of taka weekly, said traders, adding that over 50 wholesale traders buy betel nuts on the haat day.

The traders send the nuts to the wholesalers of around 20 districts including Dhaka, Chattogram, Rangpur and Dinajpur. In Kachua upazila, about 4,114 tonnes of betel nuts are produced on 1,210 hectares of land annually.

The nuts are also sold in Badhal, Taleswar, Tangrakhal, and Gajaliya haat of the upazila.

Apart from Kachua, more betel nuts are produced in Morrelganj and Sadar upazilas of Bagerhat. Betel nuts are also produced in Fakirhat, Chitalmari and other upazilas of the district. About 26,000 tonnes of betel nuts are produced on 4,725 hectares of land in the district every season.

Sishir Das, a betel nut seller of



A worker at a market in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila remains busy as huge quantities of betel nuts are ready for sale.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Sreerampur village in Kachua upazila, said they used to get bumper production of the nut.

"But this year our betel nut production has been decreased due to cyclone Amphan. However, this time the price has increased," he said.

Ashim Chakraborty of Sangdia village in Kachua upazila said, the yield of betel nut is good in their area. Currently, the production of betel nut has decreased due to waterlogging and saline water intrusion towards the canals.

Workers Pranab, Motaleb and Jafor said the haat sits twice a week. Each

of them gets Tk 5 for sorting nuts per kuri.

Narayan Bawali, president of Kachua Bazar Betel Nut Businessmen's Association, said they buy these betel nuts from different haats and then send them to different districts of the country.

Chairman of Kachua Union Parishad Shikder Hadiuzzaman said quality betel nuts are produced in Kachua upazila. Every family in this area has a betel nut tree.

Kachua upazila agriculture officer Lovely Khatun said 18,000 growers in the upazila are involved in betel nut farming. This year the

production has decreased due to storm and intrusion of saltwater.

But if saline water intrusion from the Taleswar Sluice Gate at the border of Kachua upazila can be prevented, the production of betel nut will be increased, she said.

Sanjay Das, deputy director (acting) of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Bagerhat, said in recent times, the production of betel nut has decreased due to various reasons.

To increase the production, the farmers can use organic fertiliser in their betel nut orchards, he said.



Defying the restriction, stone-laden trucks are seen plying freely over the Teesta Barrage, posing serious threat to the largest irrigation project of the country. The photo was taken from Dowani area in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha upazila a few days ago.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY



# Countries must declare 'climate emergency'

*Says UN chief as world leaders to present 'ambitious' goals at global climate summit*

AGENCIES

World leaders should declare states of "climate emergency" in their countries to spur action to avoid catastrophic global warming, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in opening remarks to a climate summit yesterday.

More than 70 world leaders are due to address the one-day virtual gathering aimed at building momentum for much steeper cuts in planet-warming emissions on the fifth anniversary of the 2015 Paris climate accord.

"Can anybody still deny that we are facing a dramatic emergency?" Guterres said via video. "That is why today, I call on all leaders worldwide to declare a State of Climate Emergency in their countries until carbon neutrality is reached."

Guterres said that economic recovery packages launched in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic represented an opportunity to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon future - but warned this was not happening fast enough.

"So far, the members of the G20 are spending 50% more in their stimulus and rescue packages on sectors linked to fossil

fuel production and consumption, than on low-carbon energy," Guterres said.

"This is unacceptable. The trillions of dollars needed for Covid recovery is money that we are borrowing from future generations," he said. "We cannot use these resources to lock in policies that burden future generations with a mountain of debt on a broken planet."

China's President Xi Jinping and France's Emmanuel Macron are among the heads of state taking part, with speaking slots handed to leaders of countries that submitted the most ambitious plans.

But major economies including Australia, Brazil and South Africa are absent.

The 2015 Paris climate accord saw signatories commit to take action to limit temperature rises to "well below" 2.0 Celsius above pre-industrial levels and try to limit them to 1.5C.

More than 110 countries have committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

But the UN warned this week that under current commitments, the Earth is still on course for a "catastrophic temperature rise" of more than 3.0C this century.



People row their boats in the waters of Dal Lake with the backdrop of snow-covered mountains in Srinagar, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## GLOBAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

### Developing world must have a far stronger voice: Guterres

AFP, Oslo

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Friday urged a more coherent response to global crises, saying a "fragmented and chaotic" coronavirus response gave renewed urgency to his belief the Security Council needs reform.

"Unfortunately, governments have not mounted a joint response to this global threat... the response has been fragmented and chaotic, with countries, regions and even cities competing against each other for essential supplies and frontline workers," said Guterres.

"We cannot let the same thing happen for access to new Covid-19 vaccines, which must be a global public good."

The UN head said one means of achieving a more effective multilateral response was reforming the composition of and voting rights within the Security Council.

Addressing the Nobel Peace Prize Forum 2020: International Cooperation after Covid-19, Guterres said such a move would address "the inequalities at the foundations of the present global power relations" and benefit emerging nations.

"The nations that came out on top more than seven decades ago have refused to contemplate the necessary reforms. The composition and voting rights in the United Nations Security Council and the boards of the Bretton Woods (financial) system are a case in point," said Guterres.

"Many African countries did not even exist as independent states 75 years ago. They deserve their rightful place at the global table. The developing world more broadly must have a far stronger voice in global decision-making," Guterres concluded.

## Talks near make-or-break moment

*UK puts navy on standby to protect fishing as 'no-deal' Brexit looming*

AFP, London

Britain yesterday readied armed Royal Navy ships to patrol its fishing waters if tempers flare after a "no-deal" Brexit as a make-or-break deadline approached for talks with the European Union.

Four 80-metre (260-feet) vessels have been placed on standby to guard British waters from EU trawlers in case the two sides decide to abandon efforts to secure a free-trade agreement today.

The development is part of increased contingency planning on both sides of the Channel, and evokes memories of the "Cod Wars" with Iceland over fishing rights in the North Atlantic in the 1960s and 70s.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said it is "very, very likely" the talks will fail, and Britain will revert to World Trade Organization (WTO) terms with its largest single trading partner.

European leaders have also been told the chances of a deal are slim with

both sides at loggerheads over rules to govern fair competition and fishing rights in British territorial waters.

Both sides have promised a decision today as to whether there is still time to close the gap in expectations before Britain leaves the EU single market at the end of the year.



Deal or no deal, Britain will leave the EU single market and customs union on the evening of December 31, more than four years after a landmark referendum on membership of the bloc.

Hardline Brexit-supporting Conservative MPs have sought assurances from Johnson that the navy should be deployed to protect British waters.

Lawmaker Daniel Kawczynski said

it would help "prevent illegal French fishing" when EU access ends.

Former Tory party chairman Chris Patten voiced concerns about a "runaway train of English exceptionalism" after headlines backing the military threat in the Daily Mail -- "We'll send in gunboats" -- and Daily Express -- "Gunships to guard our fish".

"Heaven knows where it is going to take us in the end," he said, calling Johnson, whose Brexit stance has boosted support for Scottish independence and distanced Northern Irish allies, "an English nationalist".

The Ministry of Defence confirmed it has conducted "extensive planning and preparation" for a range of post-Brexit scenarios from January 1, and has 14,000 personnel on standby to help with the transition.

WTO terms would mean tariffs and quotas, driving up prices for businesses and consumers, and the re-introduction of border checks for the first time in decades.



Demonstrators celebrate with green headscarves - the symbol of abortion rights activists - outside the Argentine Congress in Buenos Aires on Friday, after legislators passed a bill to legalize abortion.

PHOTO: AFP

## Indian farmers to intensify protests defying PM's call

AGENCIES

Thousands of Indian farmers will take out a tractor rally to block the Delhi-Jaipur highway today, demonstrators protesting the centre's new agricultural laws said yesterday, vowing to intensify their agitation despite a fresh appeal from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Protesters will also hold a nationwide demonstration at all district offices tomorrow and hold a hunger strike from 8 am to 5 pm, they said.

Modi yesterday tried to assure farmers that reforms in the agrarian sector were aimed at helping them as thousands of farmers continued protests against three new laws to overhaul procurement and sale of produce.

"Reforms will help draw investment in agriculture and benefit farmers," he said at the annual meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi.

"The aim of the all government reforms is to make farmers' prosperous," he said adding that private sector must help improve the country's agriculture sector.

But protesting farmers in northern states fear the new legislation will eventually dismantle India's regulated markets and stop the government from buying wheat and rice at guaranteed prices, leaving them at the mercy of private buyers.

At least 30 farmer unions are actively protesting against the new laws. Talks between leaders of the farmers' unions and government officials have failed to break the deadlock with the farmers demanding the complete rollback of the reforms. Farmer unions have said the new laws were introduced without consultation.

Last weekend, thousands of members of the Indian diaspora held rallies in London against the new laws while over 15 Indian opposition parties supported the protest.

## One civilian killed in Kabul rocket attack

AFP, Kabul

A series of rockets struck Kabul yesterday, killing one person and wounding two, officials said, the second such attack to rock the Afghan capital in less than a month.

Violence has surged across Afghanistan in recent months despite the Taliban and the government engaging in peace talks since September 12 in Qatar.

"This morning, 10 rockets were fired from the Labe Jar neighbourhood of Kabul," interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian told reporters.

He said three rockets landed near Kabul airport and seven in residential areas, leaving one civilian dead and two wounded.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

## EU flexes muscle against tech giants

AFP, Brussels

US tech giants such as Facebook and Google face unprecedented regulation in Europe, as the EU prepares to unveil landmark proposals that could change the face of life online.

The EU wants the Digital Services Act and its accompanying Digital Markets Act to set strict conditions for internet giants to do business in the bloc's 27 countries.

The biggest tech firms will be designated internet "gatekeepers", subject to specific regulation, in a proposal that will be unveiled by EU vice president Margrethe Vestager and commissioner Thierry Breton on Tuesday.

Google, Facebook, Apple and Amazon and maybe a few others will almost certainly be slapped with the designation, which could be compared to big banks that are deemed "too big to fail" and subject to special oversight.

"We've come to a point where the power of digital businesses -- especially the biggest gatekeepers -- threaten our freedoms, our opportunities, even our democracy," said Vestager.

"So for the world's biggest gatekeepers, things are going to have

to change. They are going to have to take more responsibility."

France and the Netherlands have already come out in favour of Europe having all the tools it needs to rein in the gatekeepers, including the power to break them up.

Big Tech, unsurprisingly, is asking for moderation and wants companies to be judged not simply by their size.



For the past decade the EU has taken the lead worldwide in trying to grapple with the insurmountable power of big tech, slapping billions in antitrust fines against Google, but critics believe the method has done little to change its behaviour.

In the meantime, US authorities have taken up the call and are themselves reassessing the role of big tech, with several major antitrust cases putting Google under the gun in addition to a legal bid to strip Facebook of its Instagram and Whatsapp products.

The details of the proposal have

been carefully guarded by the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, even though a few details have leaked.

What is certain is that gatekeepers will face built-for-purpose dos and don'ts that may include a ban on companies prioritising their own services on their platforms or chasing away rivals by exploiting data inaccessible to others.

The Digital Services Act is expected to give the commission sharper teeth in pursuing social media platforms when they allow illegal content online, with the power to inflict fines, possibly through a newly created EU authority, instead of the voluntary system that exists now.

Tech giants will be especially vigilant to maintain their exemption from liability when it comes to illegal content on their platforms, a status they say preserves free speech since it prevents over-enforcement and creates fertile ground for the innovation that triggered the internet revolution.

The proposal may not go as far as reversing that exemption, but it will clearly increase the platform's responsibility by setting out clear rules and incentives for ad transparency and online information.



Pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, founder of Apple Daily, walks to a prison van to head to court, after being charged under the national security law, in Hong Kong, China, yesterday. The 73-year-old Lai struggled to walk as he was led to court in handcuffs and metal chain by two masked police officers.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Car hits multiple protesters in New York, causing injuries

A motorist struck about half a dozen people taking part in a protest in New York City on Friday, causing injuries but no deaths, police and eyewitnesses said. A spokesman for the New York Police Department told AFP that the vehicle hit "multiple" people in Manhattan's Murray Hill area at 4:08 pm (21:08 GMT). The spokesman added that the driver, a woman, had stayed at the scene and was in custody. The spokesman said it was "too early to tell" whether it was intentional or a traffic accident, and it is not yet known whether the driver will face charges. The demonstrators were protesting against the detention of immigrants by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

### US moves forward with \$1b Moroccan arms deal

President Donald Trump's administration moved forward with \$1 billion in sales of drones and precision-guided weapons to Morocco on Friday, sending a notice to Congress about the potential deals, according to sources familiar with the notification. The deal includes four MQ-9B SeaGuardian drones made by privately-held General Atomics, and Hellfire, Paveway and JDAM precision-guided munitions made by Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Boeing, the sources said. News of the deal came as the White House announced an agreement brokered with US help for Morocco to normalize relations with Israel. Earlier this year the US offered stealthy F-35 jet fighters to the United Arab Emirates in a side deal to the US-brokered agreement between the United Arab Emirates and Israel to normalize relations.

### Iran executes dissident journo



Iran has executed a once-exiled journalist over his online work that helped inspire nationwide economic protests in 2017, authorities have said. Iranian state media said Ruhollah Zam was hanged early on Saturday morning. In June, a court sentenced Zam to death, saying he had been convicted of "corruption on Earth" -- a charge often used in cases involving espionage or attempts to overthrow Iran's government. Iranian officials have accused the United States as well as Tehran's regional rival Saudi Arabia and government opponents living in exile of stoking the unrest, which began in late 2017 as regional protests over economic hardship spread nationwide. Zam, who was captured in 2019 after years in exile, has been accused of being in direct contact with foreign agents.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Interview

# Sixty years of saving lives

STAR HEALTH REPORT

icddr,b, better known locally as the ‘Cholera Hospital’, has made many innovations including its landmark innovation of ORS that has saved an estimated 50 million lives globally since its inception in 1960.

This centre of excellence of the Global South is celebrating 60 years of its service to mankind throughout 2020. The Daily Star (DS) had an exclusive interview with icddr,b Executive Director (ED) Professor John D. Clemens recently where he was asked critical questions to understand the international organisation’s history, successes, challenges, major innovations, future directions and commitment to humanity in the days ahead.

DS: Would you please tell us about icddr,b from a historic perspective?

ED: The year 2020 marks a major milestone in the history of icddr,b. About 60 years ago on December 5, 1960 the then South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) established a small laboratory in Dhaka named Cholera Research Laboratory (CRL) to be operated under the National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA at the very onset of the seventh cholera pandemic. The laboratory was also known as CRL or Pak SEATO CRL or PSCRL. Later in 1978, it became International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b) through a Government Ordinance followed by a meeting at World Health Organisation (WHO) headquarters in Geneva in 1979.

DS: icddr,b does claim it has saved 50 million lives globally with ORS. What is the basis of the claim?

ED: During the late 1970s, the WHO estimated that there were 500,000,000 (five hundred million) episodes of diarrhoea in children under 5 years of age each year, resulting in roughly five million deaths from diseases like cholera annually.

In 2007, Fontaine, Garner, and Bhan estimated that more than 50 million children have been saved by oral rehydration therapy (ORT) between 1982 and 2007 – that is on average of 2 million lives a year.

Based on these estimates the number of children saved from 1982 until 2019 by ORT could be more than 70 million. Whatever the exact number of lives saved is, it would not be an overstatement to say that many adults would not be alive today if not for the discovery of ORS earlier called ORT.

DS: icddr,b has been holding the glory of anti-diarrhoeal treatment. What are icddr,b’s other major innovations except for ORS?

ED: In 1970, our scientists, working with US CDC, US NIH and WHO, demonstrated that widely used whole-cell injectable cholera vaccines, the only cholera vaccines available at the time conferred low, short-lasting protection. Subsequently 26th World Health Assembly in 1973 recommended against countries’ requirements for travellers from developing countries to present a certificate of vaccination against cholera, saving billions of dollars.



Professor John D. Clemens, Executive Director, icddr,b

And the WHO recommended against the use of these cholera vaccines in public health programmes for the control of cholera.

In 2015, icddr,b scientists, working with scientists at the University of Melbourne, invented ultra low-cost bubble-CPAP for treatment of severe pneumonia in children. This has a potential to save thousands of infants from premature death. Large scale trials are underway in Bangladesh and in Ethiopia. Recently, WHO has recommended the use of bubble-CPAP for treating Covid-19 positive children suffering from pneumonia.

These are only a few of the contributions made by icddr,b amongst other widespread contribution to science.

DS: icddr,b is a donor-funded international organisation. What is your plan to make it a self-sustaining organisation within the next 10 years?

ED: icddr,b’s annual budget is around USD 70 million, about 70% of this comes from research funding. Other revenue comes from core donor funding and from our clinical diagnostic services. Last year we provided free-of-charge treatment to more than 280,000 patients. We are grateful to Bangladeshi companies, and to the Bangladeshi public through our “hospital appeal campaign” for their continued support to our hospitals and will welcome their support in future too. We are also working to grow our endowment fund and welcome contributions from every walk of life. During the pandemic, many Bangladeshi corporations and individuals came forward to help us in saving lives at our hospitals.

Donors play a very important role in the development, growth, operations and sustenance of icddr,b. Steps are underway to raise our revenue through new initiatives of self-sustenance

that include increasing our endowment funds, as well as an exciting new Contract Research Organisation that will be able to conduct clinical trials of products under development by local and international pharmaceutical companies. We look to local philanthropists and also to the corporations to support our Hospitals and Endowment Funds with their CSR budgets.

DS: What are the major events you have planned to celebrate your organisation’s 60 years?

ED: Our 60 years’ celebration started with the Asian Conference on Diarrhoeal Disease and Nutrition (ASCODD) 2020 in late January. We have had a plan for several stakeholder engagement events throughout the year but due to the COVID-19 pandemic we have revised our celebration programmes and relied on online engagement.

2020 is not only special for icddr,b but also for the nation as Bangladesh celebrates the birth centenary of Bangladesh’s founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. A tree plantation campaign will be led by our Staff Welfare Association planting 100 saplings in celebration of Bangabandhu’s birth anniversary.

icddr,b has launched a research grant opportunity for female scientists in Bangladesh called Mujib100 Research Grant for Women (RGFW) on this occasion, which we believe will encourage Bangladeshi female researchers to build their career in science.

DS: Thank you.

ED: You are welcome.

## RECOMMENDATION



### Travel restrictions must be used in a targeted way to be effective at controlling local COVID-19 transmission

International travel restrictions may only be effective at controlling the spread of COVID-19 when applied in a targeted way, according to research published in The Lancet Public Health journal. The measures may have limited impact on the epidemic within individual countries except those with low levels of the virus or that have strong travel links with countries experiencing high rates of infection.

Every country in the world had imposed some form of travel restrictions – which have high economic and social costs – by late April 2020 as part of efforts to control the spread of the COVID-19. However, until now, no studies had produced global estimates of how the risk of importing cases relates to local transmission levels. Findings from this study could enable policymakers to determine where travel restrictions will have a major impact on slowing local transmission, and where they will have little effect.

Professor Mark Jit from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, who led the study, said: “We recognise that these measures carry a high economic and social cost, so it is important that governments use travel restrictions in a targeted way. Before introducing restrictions, they should take into account local infection figures, epidemic growth rates, and the volume of travellers arriving from countries heavily-affected by the virus.”

The findings indicate that international travel restrictions were most effective at limiting local transmission of the virus during earlier stages of the pandemic. This is because imported cases led to outbreaks in countries with very few – or no – existing cases.

The authors conclude that recommendations about international travel restrictions should not be applied uniformly. Countries must first consider local infection figures and epidemic growth rates, as well as the volume of travellers arriving from countries heavily-affected by COVID-19. For instance, in September 2020, the measures would be effective in New Zealand and China because the virus had been suppressed to such low levels in both countries that the expected number of imported cases is similar to the local rate, meaning arrivals could trigger a new local wave of infections.

## HEALTH bulletin



### More years of obesity means higher risk of disease

A greater obesity duration is associated with worse values for all cardiometabolic disease factors, according to a new study published recently in PLOS Medicine by Tom Norris of Loughborough University, UK, and colleagues.

People with obesity do not all share the same risk for the development of cardiometabolic disease risk factors. The duration a person has spent with obesity over their lifetime has been hypothesised to affect this variation.

More years of obesity was associated with worse values for all measured cardiometabolic risk factors. The association was particularly strong for glycated haemoglobin, or HbA1c: those with less than five years of obesity had a 5% higher HbA1c compared to people with no years of obesity, while those with 20 to 30 years of obesity had a 20% higher HbA1c compared to people with no obesity. Importantly, this increased risk persisted when adjustment was made for a robust measure of life course obesity severity.

The findings suggest that health policy recommendations aimed at preventing early obesity onset, and therefore reducing lifetime exposure, may help reduce risk of diabetes, independently of obesity severity.

## Get the lead out!

DR MAHFUZAR RAHMAN

Lead is a toxic metal in the globe. It is one of the most ubiquitously spread toxic metals due to thousands of years of use in many applications. It has been used in paints, gasoline, cosmetics, stained glass, ammunition, toys, various other materials, and recently found in spices especially in turmeric and chilli powder. It was banned for use in paints in developed countries many years ago but continues to be a problem in low-income countries with chipping paint that has not been properly remediated.

People are exposed to lead through: soil contaminated with lead or food cultivated in it; lead water pipes or those soldered with lead, which can leach into the water supply; some canned goods, if the

cans are soldered with lead; paint on some imported toys and lastly, battery lead. Lead can make its way into the body from anywhere, it can be from the air, soil, water and even from some homes. The leading cause of lead poisoning in children living in Bangladesh and similar countries is the subpar recycling of lead-acid batteries.

For many years, environmental lead has been known to be a health and developmental hazard for young children. Lead is more dangerous to children than adults. Because it can harm the developing brain, causing reduced intelligence, learning disabilities and behavioural problems, school attention deficit disorder, and learning disabilities. The major exposure to Bangladesh has been lead gasoline. All of Bangladesh’s fuel centres have been

converted to lead-free gasoline, people should not be having exposure to it. Although an ideal blood lead level (BLL) is zero, recent studies indicated the national mean BLL among Bangladeshi children below 19 years of age is estimated to be 7 µg/dL. This level is associated with a loss of major intelligence among children. Bangladesh is estimated to have the 4th highest rate of death attributable to lead exposures globally.

The toxic truth is children’s lead exposure can potentially impact children’s growth and intelligence potential. Therefore there is utmost need to mitigate lead exposure by enhancing awareness and appropriate disposal. One of the most important things we can do to decrease children’s exposure to lead in Bangladesh and similar countries is to ensure lead is no longer used in household and other paints to which children may be exposed (such as paints on playground equipment) and appropriate way of disposing lead-containing batteries. In developing countries, awareness of the public health impact of exposure to lead is growing but relatively few of these countries have introduced policies.

A variety of interventions may be recommended, including improved nutrition, correction of iron deficiency, family education, chemical chelation, and attempts to remove lead sources from the child’s environment. Therefore we need continued investment in the reduction of lead exposure across the globe.



Dr Mahfuzar Rahman is the Country Director of Pure Earth, Bangladesh. Email: mahfuzar@pureearth.org



### Health camp held in Kaliganj by Shishu Aangina

A health camp was held in Kaliganj, Gazipur organised by ‘Shishu Aangina’, a child and women development center recently, says a press release.

The health camp took place to mark the occasion of the 16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence which is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November - the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day.



**Dialysis Lifeline Uninterrupted...**  
We never stopped even during the pandemic

**Dialysis for Non-COVID patients**  
At Level 2 Dialysis centre

1. Triageing at Dialysis centre entrance (for both patient & attendant)
  - Questionnaire • Temperature check
2. Caregivers attending with all safety gears
3. Precaution: Patients need to inform Dialysis Centre in advance from home, if they are experiencing any fever, chill, sore throat, cough or any likely COVID symptoms for the caregivers to give them necessary advice

**Dialysis for suspected COVID cases**

1. Patient is advised for COVID test
2. Dialysis is scheduled at day end, at the farthest corner bed of the centre
3. Keeping safe distance from other dialysis beds.
4. The bedsheet, pillow, quilt and other linens are sent separately for disinfection at segregated laundry area
5. If patient turns out to be COVID positive then s/he is sent for dialysis at COVID wing; if not then regular dialysis continues

**Dialysis for COVID patients**

1. Separate dialysis area with dedicated machine at COVID wing
2. Available for both out-patient and in-patient COVID cases
3. Caregivers (different team from non-COVID ones) attending with safety gears
4. CRRT and HDF available for COVID patients as well

Plot 15 Road 71 Gulshan Dhaka 1212  
Emergency: 0191 400 1234

**Dialysis Appointment**  
**0191 400 1370**

**Appointment**  
**02 22 22 62 466 | 10666**



The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 13, 2020, AGRAHAYAN 28, 1427 BS

## The homeless are shivering on the footpaths

*The city corporations and citizens must act fast*

THE picture published in this paper yesterday of a mother and child sleeping on the street with no warm blankets or warm clothes to shield them from the winter cold says it all. People who do not have a roof over their heads have no option but to be at the mercy of the weather changes—be it rain or storm or the chilly winds of the winter. But why must we see such scenes that tell a story of extreme privation and neglect? As a cold wave is predicted to set in by next week all over the country, we urge the government to take measures to alleviate people’s suffering. In normal times both the government, non-government organisations and private citizens make efforts to distribute warm clothes and blankets. The pandemic seems to have delayed these efforts.

As temperatures are predicted to drop to 10 degrees and lower in many parts of Bangladesh, there is an urgent need to mobilise resources to buy and collect warm clothes and blankets and distribute them quickly to those in need. This applies to both the cities and villages where there are people who are so poor that they cannot afford to buy a warm blanket or clothes to protect them from the elements. Children and the elderly are the most vulnerable and can easily contract respiratory diseases. This includes Covid-19 infections that have already started to rise as expected in the colder season.

We appeal to the two city corporations to immediately start distributing blankets and warm clothes first to those who live on the streets. Here the wealthier sections of society must donate generously with cash or kind to reliable charitable organisations and groups who are engaged in distributing these items. Many can take their own initiative and do this on their own. As a society we cannot stay indifferent to the acute suffering of those who are less privileged especially during times of crisis. While we stay warm and well fed in our cosy homes let us play our part as conscious citizens to help those who are hungry and shivering on the streets of our cities.

## Aminbazar landfill grappling with solid waste management

*Address the manpower and equipment crisis urgently*

A report published in *The Daily Star* yesterday revealed that Aminbazar landfill on the outskirts of the city is short-staffed, ill-equipped and has been struggling to manage solid waste since long. According to Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) officials, the landfill is running with less than 20 percent of the required staff. Although a recycling plant, a leachate collection pond as well as a treatment plant were supposed to be in the landfill, according to its original design, those were either not built or utilised in all these years. There is also a shortage of heavy equipment to give the daily soil covering on the waste.

While the three crucial posts of waste management supervisors are vacant, there are also no mechanical or civil engineers or waste management professionals at the site. Only 19 people are managing over 3,000 tonnes of solid waste generated daily in the landfill from the DNCC areas. The leachate collection pond and treatment plant were non-functional till 2018, while the recycling plant still exists on paper only. Since there is no manpower for waste segregation and recycling, the landfill authorities allow in hundreds of waste pickers to collect recyclable materials from the dumped garbage. The equipment shortage is another issue that is making the work difficult for its staff—out of the six excavators, eight chain dozers, two-wheel dozers and one payload loader at the landfill, only the payload loader is functional at present. It is really surprising how all this equipment can become non-functional within just five years of the purchase.

In order to keep the landfill properly functional, recruitment of necessary manpower is crucial. The heavy machinery that is lying idle should also be repaired immediately. As both the Aminbazar and Matuail landfills’ capacity will exhaust within a very short time, the authorities should make a proper plan to manage the city’s waste in a sustainable way. Acquiring more land to expand the landfills does not seem like a good idea in this land-scarce city. While setting up power plants in the landfills seems like a good idea, it will not solve all the problems regarding waste management. The city authorities must overhaul the entire waste management system, from collection and segregation to recycling and treatment, to manage Dhaka’s waste management problem.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

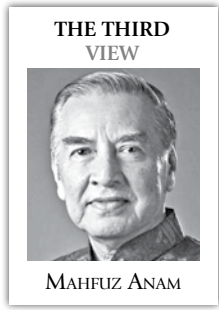
#### Addressing the challenges of vaccination

Countries are now openly engaged in competition to approve the Covid-19 vaccine. This may compromise the effectiveness of the vaccine. Tackling misinformation and disinformation and ensuring security related to vaccine development has not been addressed much. Safety precautions and maintaining hygiene while injecting vaccines also need to be discussed.

Public support for vaccines in general is already an issue. Trust in other lifesaving vaccines will be eroded further if a Covid-19 vaccine does not work well.

Yes, we are all increasingly longing for an end to the outbreak. But a safe vaccine, effective for all those at risk, is worth the wait.

Iftekhar Ahmed Sakib, Dhaka



THE THIRD VIEW  
MAHFUZ ANAM

termed as the victory of the people over the military did not receive any public attention. Is this inattention a statement of what democracy has now come to mean for us? A distant dream? Otherwise why such indifference?

I am of course referring to December 6, the day General Ershad fell from power in 1991 opening the door for our transition from dictatorship to democracy which has thankfully survived, but just, and terribly bruised. To repeat what I have recently written, it is Covid infected, with severely affected lungs and cannot breathe.

There are two very important reasons why the fall of General Ershad should never be forgotten or its significance underestimated. First, the grand unity of people and the political parties that caused his fall and, second, the system that was torn down along with him, a system that would have permanently brought the military into the governance process of Bangladesh.

Dislodging a military government through peaceful mass demonstration is one of the most significant achievements in our march towards restoration and strengthening of democracy. It proved that when people are united and when all opposition political parties come together they can dislodge a well-entrenched military backed government that ran the country since March, 1982. Usually military governments are replaced by another or changed through some revolutionary upsurge. But for the military to surrender to the majesty of public opinion expressed through mass agitation sans violence is without too many precedents. (To note on the side, it was because of his peaceful surrender to “people’s will” that General Ershad survived to continue in politics for nearly three decades and was to later become the “kingmaker” as the rivalry and bickering between our two major parties created the opening for him and his party to play that role).

The unity of the political forces—bringing together every colour and shade—created an indomitable “people’s force” that left no alternative to Ershad’s prime backer—the armed forces—to abandon him, triggering the final eruption of an earthquake that had been simmering beneath the surface over the past several years. The message to the military leadership of the present and the future, not only in Bangladesh but perhaps the world over, was not to cross the line and to remain duty bound to perform its constitutional task and not go beyond. Our armed forces heeded that lesson and they are so much the better for it now, a fully professional army earning us laurels through their peacekeeping work.

What was the system of governance that General Ershad’s coup and his administration represented? Simply put, the legitimisation of the military’s involvement in running the country and setting up of a permanent mechanism, through constitutional amendment, for the army’s participation in government. His proposal, he said was to solve the

“deep seated politico-military problem” and to ensure that “coups and killings do not take place a year, 10 years later or ever again.” What a wonderful idea, to prevent future coups General Ershad was suggesting a permanent coup! His formula was to make the political forces subservient to the military elite or at best put them on an equal footing so that the military and the civilian government could run the country together. This would have permanently politicised the military destroying them as a professional fighting force for which the taxpayers are ungrudgingly and relentlessly paying.

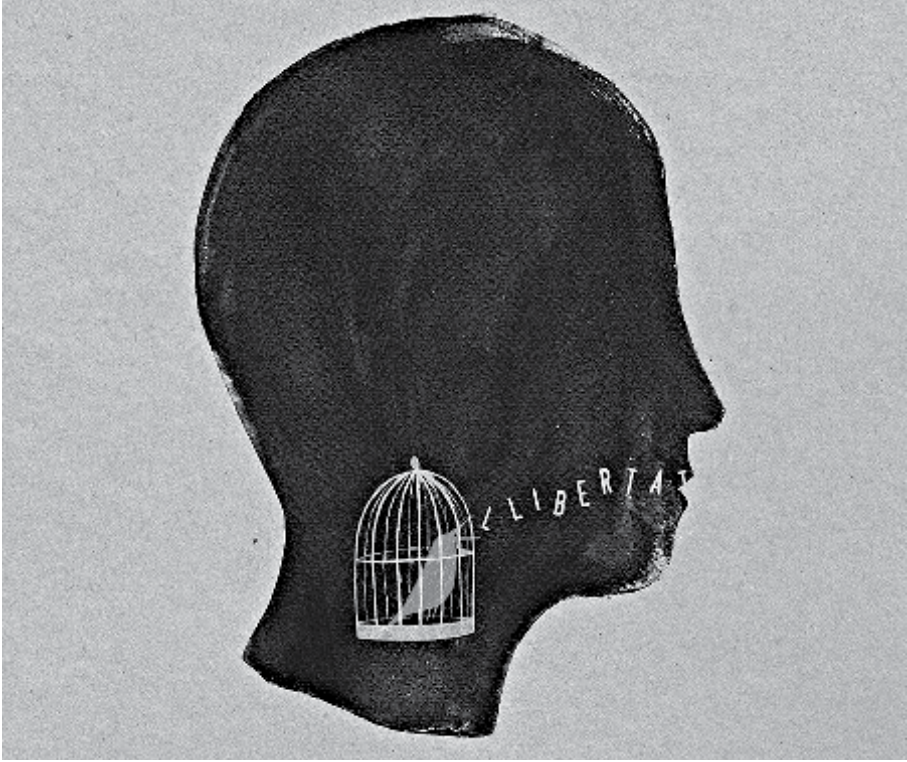
It was this idea of perverting democracy and the plan to permanently destroy the notion of “sovereignty of the people” that was defeated when General Ershad was toppled. And there lies the significance of his fall and the importance of commemorating that event.

When discussing the Ershad period people focus on his corruption and personal life. The real significance of his regime was that he wanted to create a permanent place for the military in running the country. It was rumoured

were former military officers. (see “The Shahabuddin Interregnum” by Muhammad A Hakim, 1993). All his early cabinets had an overwhelming majority of army officers.

But today’s question is not to ask what Ershad’s 9-year rule did to us, but to ask what did we do with such a glorious victory of the people, of the political parties and of DEMOCRACY that his fall symbolised? What did the democratically elected governments that followed Ershad’s fall do? Did we get rid of corruption, abuse of power, cronyism, destruction of institutions, personal chicanery and mal-governance for which his regime was relentlessly condemned and ultimately toppled?

One of the most virulent objections to Ershad’s rule was corruption. Business leaders and entrepreneurs who were in business then and continue today smile when asked to compare and say without hesitation that the former corrupts were mere kids compared to the seasoned corrupts of today. The amounts involved sound like “peanuts” when we publish stories of drivers and clerks of ministries



that he even sent delegations to Turkey and especially to Suharto’s Indonesia to learn first-hand about how to incorporate the armed forces structurally into the governance process.

When he ultimately gave up all his pretensions and removed President Sattar and took over power in March 1982, it was within four months of Sattar winning an election held in November the year before. None of the excuses that the military usually uses to take power—social unrest, economic crisis and political instability—existed at that time to remotely justify General Ershad’s move except perhaps his own ambition and those of many other senior army officers having gotten used to power, glory and wealth during General Zia’s regime, the man who really started the process of militarisation of the administration.

Both to appease his base—the army—and also to quell the unrest within, Ershad began a massive project of infiltrating the administration with army personnel in ministries like defence, establishment, home and foreign affairs. In 1987 about 1,500 army personnel were appointed in government services. At one point 53 out of 64 SPs in districts

owning thousands of crores. Doesn’t it tell the whole story? Imagine what we would have learnt if the “big fish” came under the purview of the law. The billions of dollars that are syphoned out of the country each year narrate a story of their own.

About moral degradation, the “Papias” and the casino owners say it all. The widespread use of drugs and the yaba epidemic, which could not have occurred and continued for so long and in such a widespread manner without support of the institutions concerned, add further to the narrative.

About “rights and freedoms” a military or quasi military government can never look better than an elected one but the existence of laws like the Digital Security Act (DSA) point to a different reality. Seldom has a law as repressive, as reprehensible and as “rights destroying” as the DSA existed under a democratic dispensation. Compared to past black laws, DSA’s all-encompassing formulation, the vagueness of the articles, enormity of power to punish makes it an ever present instrument of fear and hatred. Its widespread use enabled by digital technology that gives it a reach and

*People’s will, people’s opinions, people’s participation in decision making, people’s rights, people’s freedoms—everything to do with the people is what democracy is all about. Where is the “people” in today’s Bangladesh? Where is the connection between the people and the government?*

an instant presence never before enjoyed by any other law, makes it the most dreaded and despised enemy of private life and public rights. History may judge this regime harshly simply because of this one law, overshadowing some of its most brilliant successes that it can legitimately lay claim to.

And there are plenty of successes to write about. Development is this government’s brightest star deserving the highest of accolades there is. The transition from a “Basket case” to “basket full of prospects” is one of immense significance. It has given us a sense of performance based self-confidence which is crucially needed for any country to move forward. The fact that we have moved from LDC to middle income country as judged by the UN and from LDC to lower middle income country according to the World bank and are poised to move to the next echelon is an achievement of tremendous significance and for which this government and Sheikh Hasina personally deserves a lot of kudos. However, the sobering thought that our rich-poor gap is rising at an alarming rate and that itself can upset our other achievements through social unrest should not be too far from our minds.

However, it is in democracy building that our deficit is most disturbing. People’s will, people’s opinions, people’s participation in decision making, people’s rights, people’s freedoms—everything to do with the people is what democracy is all about. Where is the “people” in today’s Bangladesh? Where is the connection between the people and the government? How does the government know what people want, are thinking, what they are happy or unhappy about? Where is the communication? Will it only be through intelligence reports or party narratives? If those who speak, those who listen and those who applaud are from the same ilk then some serious self-examination is called for. Where is the independent voice and what importance is it given? However well-meaning a government is, it is bound to get disconnected unless independent and credible channels of communication are not only kept open and not termed as “enemies”, but are sought, supported, welcomed and seen as an essential part of a good governance process.

Let’s not give Ershad the pleasure of the last laugh. Please.

Mahfuz Anam is Editor and publisher, *The Daily Star*.

## What the story of Kaavan tells us



IN OTHER WORDS  
AMITAVA KAR

start a new life. It was the culmination of years of campaigning for his transfer by the animal rights group Free the Wild.

Kaavan was gifted to Pakistan by the government of Sri Lanka in 1985 when he was 1. For more than 30 years, he was kept in shackles in poor conditions in an Islamabad zoo. After the death of his



Kaavan has spent nearly a decade alone.

companion Saheli in 2012, he developed multiple physical and psychological issues.

In a landmark verdict earlier this year, Athar Minallah, the Chief Justice of Islamabad High Court observed that Kaavan had been treated harshly which caused him unimaginable pain and suffering. His anguish must come to an end by relocating him to a proper elephant sanctuary, in or outside Pakistan, the verdict held. Like humans, animals have natural rights which must be recognised, the judgment added, and

that it is a right of each animal, a living being, to live in an environment that has been contemplated by nature.

Iconic American singer Cher, the founder of Free the Wild, arrived a day earlier to see Kaavan off and thank the government. Animal welfare group Four Paws International had been deployed to move him. When the crew tried to coax the five and a half ton animal into the giant airplane, he got agitated, as he was unaccustomed to close human contact. Amir Khalil, the group’s celebrated Egyptian veterinarian, started singing

PHOTO: REUTERS

Frank Sinatra’s classic melody “My Way”, which apparently calmed the elephant. Before taking off, Cher serenaded Kaavan with “A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes.”

Why would people go to such great lengths to rescue an animal during a pandemic? So what if he had been suffering? So are humans.

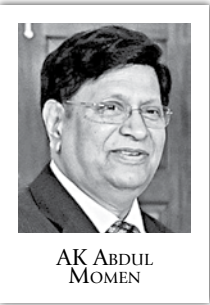
There is, indeed, much to celebrate in this story. It is a story of human tenderness out of the blue which is no less powerful than the stories of death, destruction, and savagery. Have we grown so inured to think the worst of experience constitutes our lives, that evidence of the best of experience is an outlier and thus unworthy of our attention?

It would be naïve to regard the dark caves of the world as an aberration. We know better than that. We have seen too much. Yet, we can recognise the thrilling beauty in this world too, when we see it, and cherish it, and spend time with it. It is not to say that everyone could act the same way. But everyone feels the possibility in themselves. That is the abiding wonder of this story. The news is just what is happening. We, too, can be happening. These are our lives. Should we not attempt to control them? Must we not assert and discover these moments of human sublimity by which we know life, too?

Amitava Kar is a mechanical engineer.



# Global stability, security and prosperity after Covid-19



ANY countries are battling the second wave of Covid-19. The pandemic has already caused unprecedented devastation, affecting our way of living, the economy, our lives and livelihoods. Covid-19 arrived when nationalism, protectionism and migration controls were rising in many parts of the world. During the pandemic, these forces have certainly amplified as countries scrambled to come up with an effective response to the crisis.

I would like to make a few points to highlight how Covid-19 has impacted us and how we may overcome the challenge posed by it.

First of all, we all agree that Covid-19 has caused a global crisis, unmatched in recent history. Nearly all countries and all people in the world—developed or developing, high or low—have been affected in some way or the other. Perhaps for the first time in human history, we have seen how the fates of billions of people of the world are so closely bound together. The pandemic has tested our public health system. It has tested our leadership. And it has tested our determination in our common fight against an invisible enemy.

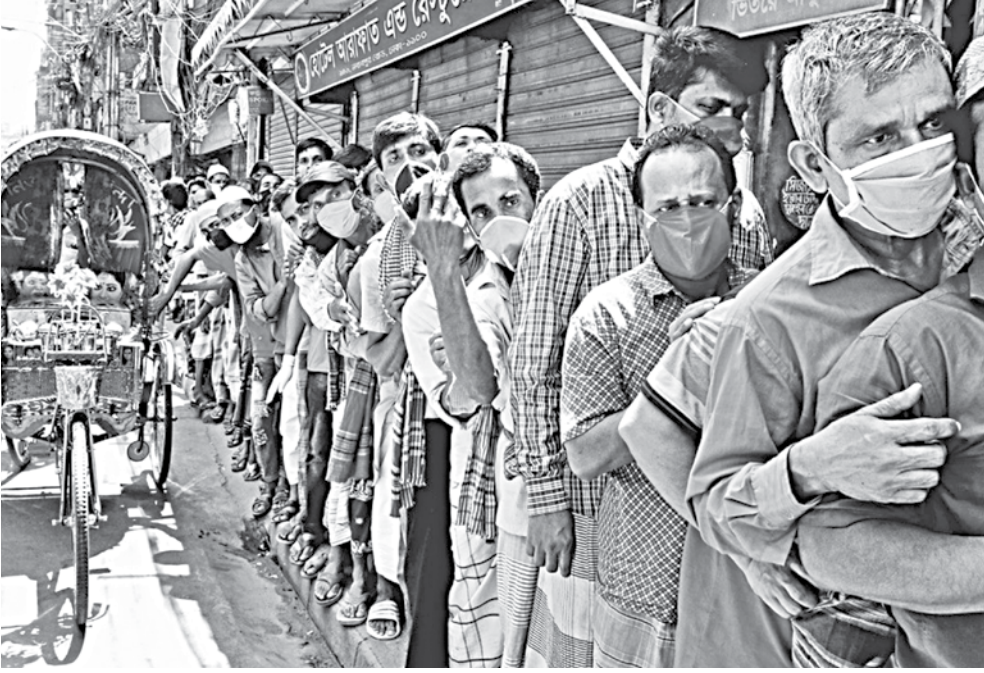
The socio-economic fallout of the pandemic have been colossal. Prolonged lockdown, school and border closures and movement restrictions have affected nearly all sectors, including the economy, education, healthcare, migration, transport, travel and tourism. The pandemic has threatened to push even the developed economies into economic recession. Those who were already living on the fringes run a real risk of relapsing into the poverty trap. Covid-19 has seriously undermined our ability to reduce poverty, which is the overarching objective of the sustainable development goals. We all know that mass poverty leads to instability, which, in turn, fuels conflicts. The

potentials of pandemic-induced conflicts and security threats, therefore, cannot be entirely overruled.

Like the rest of the world, Bangladesh has also been severely impacted. Indeed, the pandemic has dealt a particular blow to our migrant workers. Bangladesh, a major manpower exporting nation, saw a sharp drop in the number of Bangladeshis going abroad for overseas employment in 2020. For example, between January-August of 2019, around 460,000 Bangladeshi workers went abroad, but during the same period this year, only 176,000 workers could go, which is a decline of nearly 62 percent on a year-to-year basis. To make things worse, between April 1 and September 6, 2020, a total of 1,11,111 migrant workers have returned home, leaving us with the responsibility and challenge to re-skill, reemploy, and re-export these workers or reintegrate them into society.

Fortunately, both our export earnings and remittance have gradually pulled back. Many of the garment orders which were cancelled in the initial days of the pandemic have returned. Even amidst the pandemic, expatriate Bangladeshi workers, our hard-working brothers and sisters toiling abroad have sent home record remittances with the inflows reaching USD 19.8 billion so far this year, which is up 8.2 percent, comfortably beating the gloomy remittance forecasts of the World Bank and IMF. Bangladesh's economy also grew 5.24 percent in FY20, even during the pandemic, which is the highest in Asia. This shows the resilience of our entrepreneurs and workers to fight all the odds with tenacity and determination.

And this is my second point—the fighting spirit of the people of Bangladesh. Historically, the Bengali nation has fought every adversity and disaster with forbearance and fortitude. The father of the Bengali nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, taught us to stand firm against all odds and difficulties. Under his leadership, we defeated the oppressive Pakistani regime. And under the visionary leadership of Bangabandhu's accomplished daughter, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, we are determined to defeat the pandemic.



People form a queue on Nabapur Road in Old Dhaka to collect relief materials distributed by a local business house amidst the coronavirus lockdown in the country, on March 29, 2020.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

The way the government and people of Bangladesh have fought Covid-19 remains a shining example for others to emulate. When most countries in the world have struggled to strike a balance between the need to flatten the curve and keeping the economy open, Bangladesh has deftly handled the crisis through bold and decisive early actions and prudent strategy that are effective in keeping the virus under control while putting minimal strain on the economy. While the world has experienced a sombre reality with more than 1.3 million global deaths and hundreds more dying every day—and many more may still die due to food shortage—both the death toll and the number of infections remain much lower in Bangladesh, even though it is a developing country. The economic stimulus packages worth USD 14.14 billion, which is equivalent to 4.3 percent of our total GDP, announced

by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina early into the pandemic, minimised the impact of the pandemic and cushioned our business, employment and productivity from its negative fallout. Expansion of social safety nets and its effective and efficient distribution as well as the undertaking of extensive measures to contain the second wave of the pandemic have also helped us to cope with the crisis effectively.

The third point that I would like to make, is this. To surmount the crisis, the pandemic must be fought simultaneously at the global level with unprecedented international cooperation, with all countries on board. For that, we need determined national and global leadership. And we need solidarity—solidarity at the global level and on the national and local levels.

Most importantly, we need effective global institutions. The need for more robust

multilateralism with the United Nations at the forefront and a stronger World Health Organization has never been greater. With fears of a new recession and financial collapse, times like these call for resilient and strong leadership in healthcare, business, government and the wider society.

Now that several vaccines have been developed, this would help us defeat the pandemic, save lives and accelerate our economic recovery. But we need to ensure universal, equitable, timely and affordable access to vaccines for all.

The world must treat the Covid-19 vaccine as a “global public good”. We must recognise that Covid-19 can never be brought under control in one place unless it is brought under control everywhere. Developing countries must receive the transfer of vaccine technology and IP rights waver afforded under the TRIPS Agreement.

A “whole of society” and, indeed, a “whole of the international community” approach is needed to combat the Covid challenges. All of us, the UN, International Financial Institutions, civil society alongside the national governments, must walk together in collaboration and partnership and actively cooperate with each other to fortify us against our common enemy—Covid-19.

Fourthly, when we deal with critical issues, we must be honest and fact-based. We must provide correct briefings based on fact and reality. Although we know that US Secretary of State General Collin Powel, a very respected general, once made a blunder by giving the wrong briefing before the world body regarding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, that was not unique. The lessons have not been learned. But at this moment, we must be more honest, and we must not play politics with the pandemic.

Finally, let us not forget that it is our duty as human beings to help others. During this pandemic let us commit ourselves to helping humanity as best as we can. Let us create examples for our family members, neighbours and friends so that our community and nation can be proud of us.

.....

Dr AK Abdul Momen is Foreign Minister of Bangladesh.

## Is Ten Years Not Enough?

### The Politics of Implementing the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act

PRAGYNA MAHPARA

WHAT happens when the home becomes a prison and the companion a monster? In Bangladesh, a country with a high rate of domestic violence, it is a sad reality for countless women and children. The Covid-19 lockdown has made matters only worse. According to data from Ain o Salish Kendra, 483 women were reportedly tortured by their husbands during the period of January-October 2020, 43 percent higher than what was reported in the same period in 2019; a similar trend can be observed in the number of women murdered by their husbands. A telephone survey with 53,340 women conducted by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) found that by June a total of 11,025 women had faced domestic violence since the lockdown began. The question is, despite having adequate legislations, why is the country failing to protect its women and children from domestic violence, particularly during these trying times.

The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection), or the DVPP, has several progressive provisions, including protection orders for women, right to reside in the marital home, temporary custody of children, and recovery of personal assets and assets acquired during the marriage. The DVPP Act 2010 was a result of an outstanding collaboration between the women's movement and the government. The movement began in the late 80s when *Naripokkho* and a few other organisations started raising the issue of domestic violence as a violation of women's rights. However, when the Women and Children Repression Act 2000 was passed, it failed to address the issue of domestic violence and abuse.

Subsequently in 2002, various civil society organisations, women's rights groups, and legal activists researched domestic violence laws of neighbouring countries and initiated drafting a legislation. Under the “Caretaker Government” in 2006, these organisations came together to form the Citizen's Initiative against Domestic Violence (CIDV) coalition to advance the agenda of legal reform. In 2008, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) decided to draft the

of domestic violence as a private matter, and the severity of social repercussions for speaking up against such violence—too many cases remain unreported. This is a major reason for the persistence of domestic violence, despite the Act.

But there are major limitations in the implementation of the Act as well. MOWCA officers still lack adequate training and resources. The number of one-stop crisis centres is inadequate and monitoring

have surfaced during the pandemic. At the beginning of the lockdown, no provisions were made for domestic violence cases. Department of Women Affairs officers and partner organisations were not given directions on how to handle incidences and complaints of domestic violence during the lockdown. For the first three months of the lockdown (March-May), service providers and law enforcement officers were busy dealing with the Covid situation, and thus domestic violence cases were not prioritised. Law enforcement agencies were also busy distributing food and essentials among poverty-stricken people. Shelter homes were unable to admit survivors due to lack of testing kits. There were no instructions from MOWCA to local officers regarding the provision of support and service to survivors during the crisis, and the helpline (109) only provided advice or referrals, but no direct support. If survivors reported to the police stations for filing complaints, instead of registering complaints, they were referred to organisations such as Brac's Human Rights and Legal Aid Services. The *Nari Desk* (women's desk) at the police stations became inactive. Trials did not take place, as the courts were closed countrywide.

Gradually the issue of domestic violence started receiving attention from the mainstream and social media and organisations working on it, trying to create a sense of urgency. The shelter homes are now able to admit survivors if they come after being tested. The CIDV and the Rape Law Reform Coalitions proposed introducing virtual courts and an ordinance, allowing courts to hold trials digitally; this was approved by the prime minister. But many survivors do not have access to mobile phones or the internet. So, the success of

the initiative is doubtful, as access to justice has now become synonymous with access to technology. And the National Recovery Plan of the government does not address violence against women at all, which makes one wonder whether the government truly realises the severity of domestic violence during COVID.

In a predominantly patriarchal society with strong gender norms and stigma against women, like that in Bangladesh, enacting legislations against domestic violence is already a herculean endeavour. Add to that, the weaknesses in implementation and the absence of urgency and priority from policymakers. Then the question remains, is 10 years enough; or will it ever be enough?

Bangladesh has urged its development partners and the private sector to support national efforts for post-Covid recovery. Initiatives for combating climate change and health distress are given significant priority. However, VAW issues are not addressed under these. This dilutes the recognition of the severity of domestic violence cases during the Covid period. Prevention and redress of DV in this period should be integrated with the recovery plan.

Violence which occurs in the family space is not a personal or familial issue but is a violation of the right to bodily integrity; it should be treated the same way as the violence that happens in public or at the workplace. This understanding has to be developed among service providers, law enforcement authorities, communities and families so that those who are affected are supported to speak out, protest the abuse and seek remedies.

.....

Pragyna Mahpara, Research Associate, Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), Brac University

*A telephone survey with 53,340 women conducted by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) found that by June a total of 11,025 women had faced domestic violence since the lockdown began. The question is, despite having adequate legislations, why is the country failing to protect its women and children from domestic violence, particularly during these trying times.*

law through the Multi Sectoral Project on Violence against Women. This sped up the process, created donor pressure, and facilitated the involvement of women's rights actors, lawyers, the judiciary, and other civil society actors. Eventually, the Awami League government adopted the DVPP Act in 2010.

It has been 10 years since then and yet the Act does not appear to have a significant impact on domestic violence in Bangladesh. It is true that because of strong social norms and stigma around the issue—for example, consideration of “breaking the family” as a matter of intense shame, consideration

mechanisms are yet to be developed. At the Union Parishad (UP) level, there is no operational linkage between the UP committee on violence against women and enforcement officers. Despite efforts to make law enforcement officers more accessible and gender-sensitive, they are often reported to be hostile or, at best, indifferent, because of the same reasons as why most domestic violence cases are not reported. A similar attitude is prevalent among other service providers, such as the judiciary and the medical staff.

Further loopholes in implementation

**DESMOND TUTU**  
(Born 1931)  
South African archbishop.

*My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

1 Seize

5 Useful skill

10 Take the bus

11 Frightens

13 High cards

14 Arizona city famed for its red rocks

15 Navy rank

17 Sonar user

18 Consign

19 Angry state

20 Baseball's Mel

21 South African farmer

22 – acids

25 Flexes

26 “Phooey!”

27 Slight, in slang

28 DVR's forerunner

29 Moves with speed

33 Lyricist Gershwin

34 Sailor

35 Roman magistrate

37 Norway's capital

38 Car part

39 German denial

40 Transmits

41 Dreary shade

**DOWN**

1 Effortless charm

2 Puerto –

3 Skilled

4 “Hang in there!”

5 Help out

6 Fragrance

7 Despondent

8 Canyon creator

9 Like some profs

12 Cavalry swords

16 Car

21 Oscar category

22 Words to the wise

23 Vowel marks

24 Close enough to hit

25 Robin or wren

27 Washington airport

29 Hunting dog

30 Bright beam

31 Carl's wife in “Up”

32 Hardhearted

36 Confession topic

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO [dsopinion@gmail.com](mailto:dsopinion@gmail.com).

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

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

**BEEBLE BAILEY**

BY MORT WALKER

**BABY BLUES**

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



## Hand-written

FROM PAGE 12

**BASINS OF MAJOR RIVERS TO BE DEVELOPED**

The India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) has decided to go for the development of major river basins common to both the countries. The JRC is now considering the framework for preparation of such long-term plans. The commission has requested both the governments of Bangladesh and India to share with each other the data relating to flood control and water resources development projects and also of future programmes for taking coordinated action.

**JAPAN KEEN TO BUILD BRIDGE OVER JAMUNA**

The Ambassador of Japan in Bangladesh Takash Yamuda discloses today that his government is keen to help Bangladesh government in building of a bridge over the river Jamuna. The ambassador presents to Bangladesh Communication Minister M Mansoor Ali the survey report conducted by a six-member Japanese team of experts on the rehabilitation, modernisation and long-term development projects of Bangladesh Railway. The Japanese team suggests measures for safe transportation of passengers and cargoes in its report.

**MONI SINGH CALLS ON PM**

Moni Singh, leader of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Gono Bhaban today. They discuss various national and international issues.

*SOURCES: December 14, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.*

## Cold, fog cause

FROM PAGE 12

Chattogram airport after it was diverted due to the fog.

The flight carrying 200 passengers was scheduled to land in Chattogram at 8:30am, said Manager of Shah Amanat International Airport Squadron Leader Sarwar Alam.

After visibility improved, the flight landed in Chattogram around 11:00am, he said.

Besides, three flights of US-Bangla, Regent Airways, and Biman reached the airport around two hours late.

In the north, people of Lalmonirhat and Kurigram has been enduring bone-chilling cold and fog for the last few days with people in the chars taking the brunt.

"We don't have enough warm clothes. But we have to go to our fields early in the morning amid this cold," said Mobarak Ali, 52, a farmer of Sardob village in Kurigram Sadar upazila.

"We can't stay home. If we don't go to work, how will we earn livelihood," said Rahman, 55, a farmer of Char Kalmati in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Officials of local administrations claimed that they started giving blankets and other types of aids to the affected people.

Meanwhile, a weather bulletin of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) said, "Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky in the country, with chances of light rain at one or two places in Rangpur, Rajshahi and Mymensingh divisions."

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the country between midnight and noon, said the bulletin released at 6:00pm yesterday.

"Night and day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country," it added.

[Our correspondents from Chattogram and Lalmonirhat contributed to the story]

## Amar Ekushey

FROM PAGE 12

committee, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The committee had requested publishers planning to participate in the fair to submit a letter of interest by September 30. Five hundred publishers had shown intent. But only 120 institutions confirmed through the paid registration process by early December.

"It seemed not many organisations would be participating in the book fair given the circumstances. This was one of the reasons behind our decision in addition to the health risks involved," the secretary said.

Some publishers, however, have expressed concern. "We are not sure what a virtual book fair is, but it will definitely spell trouble. We have invested so much money, so many books have been published and printed. How will our publishing house survive the coming year?" Dibya Prakash publishers shared in a Facebook post yesterday.

Jalal said the logistical aspects and special features of the virtual fair will be finalised after the decision is officially communicated to the ministry. A press briefing will follow.

The announcement comes at a time when local publishers usually begin preparing for the biggest literary event in the country, which accounts for the largest bulk of book publication and sales each year.

Since 1972, when Chittaranjan Saha laid a mat under a mango tree to display 33 books published by Muktohdara Publishing, the month of February has gathered readers, writers, artists and publishers at the Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan in commemoration of the 1952 Language Movement.



Students hold placards as they shout slogans in support of farmers during a protest against the recent agricultural reforms in Amritsar, Punjab, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## ‘She’s abducted, converted, murdered’

FROM PAGE 12

They, however, did not hand him over her body saying the girl was married to one of her abductors who managed a birth certificate that says she was 18.

"My daughter was abducted, converted and later murdered and now they are not giving us her body even," lamented Lala Aung Chakma of Shilkhali Chakma para in Teknaf of Cox's Bazar.

"On January 5, a few unidentified men picked up my daughter from our house. We went to Teknaf Police

Station to file a case, but then OC Pradeep Kumar Das, now accused of killing Maj (ret'd) Sinha, didn't record our case. Following his suggestion, we filed a general diary but the police didn't take any action. Rather, they helped the abductors," said the father.

He mentioned the names of a few of the suspects but this paper could not reach them for comments.

"As the police did not take any action, I filed a case with Cox's Bazar Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal on January 17,"

said Lala Aung Chakma.

The case was transferred to PBI, sources said.

"I demand exemplary punishment for the killers who brutally murdered my daughter after abduction," the father said urging her body be returned.

Sheikh Monirul Gias, officer-in-charge of Cox's Bazar Police Station, said, "We didn't hand the victim's body to her father as she was married. We are waiting for a decision from the court."

Shaheen Md Abdur Rahman

Chawdhury, resident medical officer of the Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, said they conducted the autopsy on Thursday.

"It is the responsibility of the police to handover the body to her relatives. But police is not receiving the body" he said.

He did not say anything about the cause of the victim's death.

However, sources in the locality where the girl was kept claimed that she had been tortured and poisoned to death.

Teknaf police refused to comment.

## 5 Sylhet city councillors eat exotic, wild birds

FROM PAGE 12

A waiter and several councillors were heard saying that it was the cooked meat of white-breasted waterhen, locally known as Dahuk.

Although poaching, selling, and consuming meat of wild birds are prohibited and punishable offences under the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act 2012, sale of meat of wild and migratory birds continues unabated at several restaurants in the area, said local environmentalists.

However, all five councillors denied having wild birds at Puran Driver Hotel on Sylhet-Tamabil highway.

The councillors are: Mohammad Taufiq Baksh of ward-26, also a panel mayor of Sylhet City Corporation, Rokibul Islam Jholok of ward-11,

Eliasur Rahman of ward-8, Abdul Muhit Javed of ward-16, and Tareq Uddin Taz of ward-10.

The other person who had dinner with them is Parvez Mahmud Opu, a businessman from Sylhet. The Facebook Live video was posted by Rayhan Ahmed, a USA expatriate.

Speaking to The Daily Star over the phone, the six people yesterday said they went to Haripur area to join an arbitration to settle a matter. They said they had five different curries for dinner – cooked meat of goose, duck, mutton, fish, and chicken.

Councillor Tareq said they found cooked meat of wild birds being sold at the restaurant. Councillor Eliasur said he was not aware of laws regarding conservation of wildlife.

Asked about the footage, Rayhan hung up the phone. He, however, deleted the footage from his Facebook account around noon yesterday.

This newspaper has a copy of the footage and screenshots of Rayhan's Facebook account.

ASM Jahir Uddin Akon, director of Wildlife Crime Control Unit of the forest department, said they take actions for crimes against wildlife based on information. "We had no information about the meat of wild birds being sold at restaurants in Haripur area. We will look into the matter."

He said councillors, who are representatives of the people, must abide by laws. "No one is above the law. If they are found guilty of having

meat of wild birds, necessary actions will be taken against them."

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), said the video clip is a proof of why sale of wild birds at those restaurants is not being stopped.

The owners of this type of restaurants cannot be made aware of such illegal activity if people associated with laws go there, she added.

"This is not just showing disregard for laws, but also showing insensitivity. Based on this footage, the forest department must take legal actions against the restaurants. The councillors should apologise so that no-one becomes interested in going there," Rizwana said.

## 6 Mro villages will be gone

FROM PAGE 12

For the 5-star hotel, two dams have been proposed. One to create a reservoir for swimming and boating, while another will provide water for the operations, speakers claimed.

The speakers circulated a map of the project site at "Chandrapahar" to provide evidence about the far-reaching consequences of the project.

The committee showed that the swimming and boating site will be right adjacent to three indigenous Mro villages, and 4 sacred sites, while the reservoir for water supply is adjacent to one Mro village, a primary school and a Chengraong or cemetery.

In addition, these sites overlap with trekking trails and cable carways proposed under the project, presented the committee.

The reservoir for swimming and boating and the trekking trails will also overlap with the Kapru Para Village Common Forest used by 6 villages, showed the committee.

Raja Devasish Roy Wangza, head of the Chakma circle, said that if the project is implemented, the Mro people will be forced to leave their homes.

"The population of Mru has decreased over time, instead of increasing. There will be dams to be used by this hotel that will inundate lands," he said.

Gautam Dewan, President of CHT Land Rights and Protection Committee, pointed out that as it is, the Mro are an endangered

community.

"In the 1970's the Mro indigenous community could be found from Rangamati to Sangu Reserve Forest, but currently they only live in Alekhu-dong (Alikadam), Thanchi, Lama, Chimbuk and Naitong hills," he said.

The major resort existing in the area caused the eviction of 200 Mro and Marma families during the time of construction, he said.

The hotel will also have far-reaching consequences for the privacy of those who are dependent on the resources of the forest, speakers stated.

"The indigenous men and women use the natural water sources to bathe. We already observe tourists coming in from outside, and taking photos of them without their permission," alleged Raja Debasish.

"This project must be cancelled immediately. This work is completely inhumane and illegal. They have grabbed the land illegally," stated Dr Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Prof Emeritus at University of Dhaka.

Shaheen Anam, head of Manusher Jonno Foundation stated, "This project is against the CHT Peace Accord and I believe the state will not let this happen."

Anu Muhammad, professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University said, "This development stream is only for profit. This is not for people. The people in our tourism sector think that a 5 star hotel is needed for tourism. They think that

eco-tourism is not possible. The local people are being threatened to give their permission."

Eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik stated, "I urge the security forces to step back from such debated projects and get back to their primary job, which is to protect the country."

Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori said, "Our security forces have a specific job. Doing business with profit-making entities is against the nature of their job."

"I hope that we get the feeling that they made a mistake by taking this project," said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh.

"This is against the Peace Accord and CHT Regulation 1990. The Land Commission must be activated and used to dispose cases regarding disputed land in the area," said Shamsul Huda Executive Director Association for Land Reform and Development.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association stated, "This should be a biodiversity hotspot because this is an eco-sensitive area. This land should not be handed over to a hotel."

Late in November, when Farid Uddin Khan, chief coordinator of Sikder Group, was contacted about the allegation of land grabbing for the project, he claimed that the Group leased the land to construct the five-star hotel, giving Bandarban Zila

Parishad (District Council) an eight-percent share.

His claim was then refuted by Mong Shwicking Chak, a member of Bandarban Zila Parishad, who told The Daily Star that the district council did not have any agreement with Sikder Group to this end.

A statement circulated separately by Raja Devasish stated that the Bandarban Hill District Council never held any legal title to the land that Sikder Group-R&R Holdings Ltd claim they have leased.

The statement pointed out that at a press briefing on last November 22, the chairman of the Bandarban Hill District Council, Kyo Sha Hla disclosed that the Council had purchased the concerned land from some 'hill people' and had then applied to the Ministry of CHT Affairs to obtain the legal title of the land, but that their prayer had been rejected.

"If it did not have any legal land, it could not have legally transferred the title to the land," said the statement.

"Firstly, according to the CHT Regulation 1900, the Council does not fall into any of the categories that may get land titles," it stated.

Secondly, the legal provision states that no lessee shall be allowed to transfer the land in any way without the consent of the deputy commissioner and Mauza Headman, said the statement.

"The holding of land by 'non-residents of district' is allowed only in exceptional circumstances," it said.

## Armenian separatists hurt in skirmish with Azerbaijan

AFP, Yerevan

Separatist officials in the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh yesterday said that three fighters were wounded in a skirmish with Azerbaijani forces, undermining a recent peace deal brokered by Russia.

The defence ministry in the ethnically Armenian province said in a statement that Azerbaijani troops attacked Friday evening and that "three Armenian servicemen were injured during the ensuing gunfight".

It added that the fighters were in a stable condition and an investigation into the incident was under way.

Six weeks of fighting between separatists backed by Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region ended last month after the two sides agreed to a peace deal that saw the Armenians cede swathes of disputed territory.

More than 5,000 people including civilians were killed during the fighting in the Caucasus between the ex-Soviet rivals, which fought a war in the 1990s over the mountainous region.

Nearly 2,000 Russian peacekeepers have deployed to the region and Baku's close ally Turkey has said it will monitor the truce from an observation centre in Azerbaijan.

## US university Johns Hopkins confronts historic links to slavery

AFP, Washington

Johns Hopkins, the celebrated philanthropist who supported the abolition of slavery and whose wealth allowed him to found the prestigious US university that bears his name, owned slaves, the Baltimore-based institution confirmed Friday.

The revelation by the university, which boasts a long tradition of inclusion, comes as the United States continues reckoning with its own history of racism after widespread protests against discrimination earlier this year.

Calls to dismantle statues of leaders from the historic slave-owning South have multiplied, and the legacies of some of America's "founding fathers" such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, also slave owners, have been reassessed.

"We have for almost 100 years communicated a story about our origins which is not correct," Johns Hopkins University president Ron Daniels said Friday in a Zoom discussion.

"The revelation of this part of Mr Hopkins' life is devastating," he added.

Hopkins came from a wealthy Maryland family and made his fortune in commerce and banking.

Raised in the Quaker faith, a Protestant movement opposed to slavery, he supported President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War.

When he died in 1873, he bequeathed part of his fortune for the creation of an orphanage for Black children, a university and a hospital where all patients would be accepted regardless of gender or origin.

But according to census records discovered this summer and dating from 1840 and 1850, Hopkins owned slaves -- one in 1840, and then four a decade later.

## Pakistan accuses India of funding disinformation campaign in EU

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan accused arch-rival India of funding a long running disinformation campaign against it on Friday and said it would raise the matter in global forums.

In making its claim that India attempted to manipulate international bodies through fake news websites and organisations, Pakistan's foreign minister cited a report by European non-government organisation EU Disinfo Lab.

The report highlighted a network of hundreds of fake media outlets and organisations that it said have pushed a pro-India agenda in the European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN) bodies to discredit the country's rivals, in particular Pakistan.

EU DisinfoLab did not detail any direct links between the alleged network and the Indian government and Reuters has no independent evidence of them.

"Today, India is manipulating and misusing the international system for its own nefarious designs," Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said at a press conference, adding that the Indian government was funding the network.







The Steel Revolution Continues ....

Introducing

**BSRM Xtreme**

**B500 DWR**

the tough steel

**PROUD CONSTRUCTION PARTNER OF PADMA BRIDGE**

# ‘No wisdom, no courage!’

Trump fumes as US SC swiftly rejects Texas lawsuit to upend election results

REUTERS, Washington

The US Supreme Court on Friday rejected a long-shot lawsuit by Texas and backed by President Donald Trump seeking to throw out voting results in four states, dealing him a likely fatal blow in his quest to undo his election loss to President-elect Joe Biden.

The decision allows the US Electoral College to press ahead with a meeting on Monday, where it is expected to formally cast its votes and make Biden's victory official.

Biden, a Democrat, has amassed 306 votes to Trump's 232 in the state-by-state Electoral College, which allots votes to all 50 states and the District of Columbia based on population.

The four states in question - Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin - contributed a combined 62 votes to Biden's total. To win the White House, 270 votes are needed.

In a brief order, the justices said Texas did not have legal standing to bring the case, abruptly ending what Trump

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) itself held tests for jobseekers for the post of medical technologists (laboratory) at Siddheswari College and Viqarunnisa Noon School and College in the capital yesterday. Around 4,000 gathered for the test, leading to the violation of the directorate's own set of health guidelines. The photo was taken at Siddheswari College.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH  
BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

## Hand-written copy of the Constitution shown to PM

December 13, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

**BANGABANDHU OVERWHELMED WITH JOY**

Boundless joy overwhelms Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as he sees the manuscript of the 153-article constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh bearing the monogram of the national flower 'shapla' in Dhaka today. A team of six artists led by renowned artist Zainul Abedin took three months to complete the writing, designing and drawing representing our national life and culture in the constitution -- both in Bangla and English.

Bangabandhu appreciates the work done by the artists that reflect common rural, riverine scene of Bangladesh on the historic document which is 16 inches by 12 inches in size.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Amar Ekushey Boi Mela to go virtual

SARAH ANJUM BARI

The Amar Ekushey Boi Mela will be held virtually in February.

"Plans to host the Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela 2021 at its usual physical location have been suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have decided to have the fair virtually this year," Jalal Ahmed, member secretary of the book fair

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Cold, fog cause distress

No improvement forecast

STAR REPORT

Low temperature coupled with fog has been disrupting people's daily lives and disrupting communications over the last few days.

Met office said moderate to thick fog may continue across the country until noon today.

Yesterday, flight operations were disrupted at Chattogram's Shah Amanat International Airport in the morning due to poor visibility.

A Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight from Dubai landed at Sylhet's MAG Osmani International Airport instead of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## 5 Sylhet city councillors eat exotic, wild birds

Outrage as video goes viral

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Six people, including five councillors of Sylhet City Corporation, were seen in a Facebook Live video having the meat of wild birds at a diner in Jaintiapur upazila's Haripur Bazar area on Friday night.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

## 5-STAR HOTEL IN BANDARBAN 6 Mro villages will be gone

Say speakers at a conference warning 116 more settlements will be affected if plans go ahead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as six Mro villages would be evicted and 116 Mro settlements would be adversely affected if the plan of Marriot Hotel and Resort is implemented, said speakers at a virtual conference yesterday.

The conference was organised by Chittagong Hill Tracts Citizens' Committee, a group of eminent civil society actors protesting against the proposed establishment of R&R Holdings Ltd in Bandarban.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

## ‘She’s abducted, converted and murdered’

Says father of Chakma teen found dead 11 months later

STAR REPORT

Lakingme Chakma was a student of class-VI and according to her birth certificate she was 14 years and 10 months old on January 5 when she was abducted from her home.

After 11 months and six days, police called in her father on Thursday to identify his daughter's body in Cox's Bazar hospital

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

To commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bangladesh's independence and the 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation

# BGMEA LAUNCHES 7 PLEDGES

The goal of these 7 pledges is to help and support the garment employees who are the lifeblood of this nation, and to create a more socio-economically advanced and sustainable future for the country.

সুতোয় বোনা মোনার দেশ, পঞ্চাশে বাংলাদেশ

Pledge for Sustainability

Pledge for Workers' Education

Pledge for Culture and Heritage

Pledge for Productivity and Innovation

Pledge for Workers' Children's Education

Pledge for Workers' Health

Pledge for Mental Health

www.bgmea.com.bd