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UN projections show high hope

Bangladesh's scores in all three criteria well above the required: Unctad

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

Bangladesh is on track to graduate to a developing country from a least developed one as a UN body estimates that the country's scores in all three criteria would be much higher from the graduation threshold next year.

In its assessment, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) painted an encouraging picture on the progress, saying the country would stand at 142 percent of one of the thresholds in 2021, when a UN panel would review Bangladesh's progress for a second time.

UNCTAD made a presentation of its projections to the government during a virtual meeting on Thursday where government high officials and representatives of trade bodies like BGMEA and FBCCI were present.

The UNCTAD projections on the three eligibility criteria are almost similar to the latest status report that the government last month sent to the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP).

The criteria are: Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, Human Assets Index (HAI) and Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI). According to the status report, Bangladesh is well ahead of the required thresholds in the three criteria.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Some leaders of Awami League and its affiliate bodies take a huge national flag to the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial in Rayer Bazar and shower flower petals to pay their respect and mark the Martyred Intellectuals Day yesterday. A number of children joined them.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Nation vows to safeguard secularism

Pays solemn tribute to martyred intellectuals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh yesterday paid a solemn tribute to martyred intellectuals of 1971 at a time when religious fundamentalist forces were gaining their strength.

On this day, the best sons of the soil made supreme sacrifice just two days before the country got liberated.

Paying rich tributes to the martyred intellectuals, people who flocked at Martyred Intellectuals Memorial in the city's Rayerbazar said secularism is now at stake due to the way extremist forces are rising in recent times.

"Martyred intellectuals' dream for establishing a secular society is a far cry. Instead, extremist and fundamentalist forces keep dominating in many cases in the society," Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury told The Daily Star over the telephone.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Hasina-Modi Summit Post-Covid-19 cooperation to be on agenda

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi will hold "comprehensive discussions" on the entire spectrum of the bilateral relationship during their virtual summit on Thursday.

They will discuss ways to further strengthen cooperation in the post-Covid-19 era, Indian

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Violence Against Women It's even worse during pandemic

Show data released by Brac

ZYMA ISLAM

As the year of the pandemic winds down, it becomes even more clear that Covid-19 led to an increase in gender-based violence.

Brac has released data on complaints about such violence its legal aid services and village violence prevention committees received throughout the year. The data shows an upwards trend during recent months.

The number of complaints received at the 408 legal aid clinics between June and October increased, on an average, by 16 percent, compared to last year.

September was the only exception with a decrease in the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

4 men storm house, rape housewife

Tie up family, loot valuables; 1 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Laxmipur

A man and his three cohorts stormed into a house and raped a housewife and beat her up in Laxmipur's Ramgati early yesterday, police said.

During the incident, they tied up and confined the other family members to another room and looted valuables from the house, they said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

New rail line to link northern tip

48km line up to Banglabandha landport to boost regional connectivity

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Bangladesh Railway (BR) is working to bring Banglabandha Land Port, under the railway network, aiming to boost regional connectivity.

The Banglabandha is a major inland port in Panchagarh -- the northern-most district in the country.

The alignment of the 48-kilometre broad gauge rail line was finalised yesterday, BR officials said. As per primary design, the rail line will have five stations.

The approval came at a meeting at the Rail Bhaban with Railway Minister Nurul Islam Sujon in the chair.

"We will build the rail line till the Banglabandha Land Port for now. We will talk with our Indian counterpart before taking the final decision

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Reports of malpractices Recruitment at RU halted

VC's daughter, son-in-law may lose their jobs

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ARAFAH RAHAMAN

The government has asked Rajshahi University VC Prof M Abdus Sobhan to explain in seven working days why the appointments of his daughter and son-in-law to the university as teachers will not be cancelled.

The education ministry in a separate order has asked the vice-chancellor to take necessary steps to remove Prof Abdul Bari from the post of university registrar for not properly assisting a University Grants

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

BDS না তো দাঁতের ডাক্তার না

শুধুমাত্র সনদপ্রাপ্ত ডেন্টিস্টের কাছেই যান

BMDC- 309
Prof. Dr. S.M. Iqbal Hussain
Dhaka Dental Care
Eastern Plaza, Hatirpool, Dhaka

BMDC- 291
Prof. Dr. Syed Morshed Moulia
Teeth Savers Dental Chamber
Green Road, Dhaka

BMDC- 382
Dr. A. K. M. Shariful Islam
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University
Shahbagh, Dhaka- 1000

BMDC- 651
Dr. Mosharraf Hossain Khandker
Dental Center
H- 12, R- 14 (New)
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

BMDC- 879
Prof. Dr. Shahana Dastagir Sunny
Sunny's Dental Care
12/5, Iqbal Road,
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

BMDC- 759
Dr. Md. Joynal Abdin
Yours Dental Care
Zebun- Arcade, 3rd floor
H- 4, R- 16 (New), 27 (Old)
Opposite of Rapa Plaza,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

BMDC- 776
Dr. Md. Nurul Islam Sarker
Pacific Dental Center
Hospital Road, Dinajpur

BMDC- 1244
Dr. Md. Helal Uzzaman
Tabriz Dental
Monu Villa,
4/1 Sobhanbag, Dhanmondi,
Dhaka-1207

BMDC- 788
Dr. Mirza Md. Arifur Rahman
Shajahanpur Dental
698, North Shajahanpur,
Dhaka-1217

BMDC- 722
Prof. Dr. Md. Shabbir Ahmed Osmani
Osmani Dental Aid
SEL Green Center
30 Green Road, Dhaka

BMDC- 584
Dr. Mozammel Hossain Ratan
Banani Dental Clinic
H- 74, R- 06, Block- C,
Banani, Dhaka- 1213

BMDC- 1897
Dr. Helal Uddin
Faceview Dental And
Orthodontics
Tanaka Tower (1st Floor)
42/1/GA, Segunbagicha
Dhaka- 1000

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*বাংলাদেশ অফ ডেন্টাল সার্জারি সার্টিফিকেট প্রাপ্ত

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



1,799
New cases in 24hrs



4,92,332
Total cases



7,089
Deaths



4,23,845
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,621,660
Deaths



72,801,619
Total cases

CONTEMPT OF COURT

5 officials apologise to apex court

Woman who topped the test finally gets to be primary school teacher after 12 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five government officials yesterday apologised to the Supreme Court's Appellate Division for failing to comply with its order to appoint a woman as a primary school teacher in 15 days.

The woman, Beauty Begum, scored the highest in primary school teachers recruitment test in Gaibandha in 2008, but did not get the job.

After she launched a legal battle, the Appellate Division on August 3, 2017 directed the officials to recruit her to the post in 15 days.

Her lawyer Altaf Hossain said the inaction to hire his client in the given time was tantamount to the contempt of court.

The five officials include then director general of the Directorate of Primary Education Dr Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, who is now the defence secretary.

Yesterday, they appeared in person before a three-member bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Justice Muhammad Imman Ali, and apologised unconditionally through submitting two separate petitions before the bench.

The apology petitions mentioned that the government has now appointed Beauty Begum in line with the order.

Her lawyer Altaf Hossain told this correspondent that the government issued an appointment letter on Thursday and Beauty would join work

immediately.

After accepting the apology, the apex court pardoned the officials and disposed of a contempt of court petition filed against them, Altaf added.

The other officials are primary education directorate's Deputy Director Md Ramzan Ali, Gaibandha Primary Education Officer Aminul Islam, Gaibandha Sadar Education Officer Md Abdus Salam, and Assistant Thana Education Officer Masumul Islam, he said.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin represented the state while lawyer Shafique Mahmud Pusphe appeared for the officials during the virtual hearing.

The apex court bench on December 7 summoned the five officials.

The top court passed the order while hearing a contempt of court rule issued earlier against the officials. The apex court issued the rule on March 2 this year following the contempt of court petition filed by Beauty, who stood first in the test for the post of primary school teacher.

Lawyer Altaf Hossain said the government officials recruited Nazma Sultana, who had the second highest score in the exam.

The lower courts concerned, the High Court, and Appellate Division at different times had ordered the officials to recruit Beauty Begum to the post.



Police charge truncheons on activists of BNP when they gathered at Paltan intersection in the capital yesterday and started chanting anti-government slogans creating traffic jams.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

UN projections show high hope

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh was included in the LDC list in 1975. In 2015, it crossed the threshold of the World Bank-defined lower middle-income country and became eligible for graduation in 2018.

A country must cross the threshold on two of the three criteria in two consecutive triennial reviews to be considered for the graduation.

The CDP will scrutinise Bangladesh's progress towards the graduation for the second time at its triennial review in February next year. The country's official graduation from the LDC category will take place after a three-year transition period.

If the country maintains its position in all the three categories for the next three years, it will be recognised as a developing country in the UN General Assembly in 2024.

PER CAPITA INCOME

According to the UN's graduation threshold, the GNI per capita of a country has to be \$1,230 or above. Bangladesh's GNI per capita is now \$1,640, according to the government's status report.

The GNI per capita is the value of a country's final income in a year, divided by its population. It reflects the average income of a country's citizens.

The UNCTAD estimates that in this criterion, the distance of Bangladesh from the graduation threshold was more than 50 percent between the years 2000 and 2009.

Riding on robust macroeconomic fundamentals and strong growth of exports and remittances, the country reported a consistently improving performance against the per capita income criterion, it said.

A continuous rise in the GNI per capita guaranteed that Bangladesh exceeded the graduation threshold for the very first time in 2018, said the UNCTAD assessment.

"In the year 2021, Bangladesh will be at 142 percent of the graduation threshold," said the assessment.

"This suggests that Bangladesh is likely to fulfil graduation criteria in terms of per income at the next triennial review in 2021."

In 2018, the country scored 104 percent of the graduation threshold.

HUMAN ASSETS INDEX (HAI)

In terms of the HAI, a country must have a score of 66 or above. Bangladesh has performed better than it did in 2018 as its score has risen to 75.3 from 72.8,

according to the government's status report.

The HAI is an indicator of nutrition, health, adult literacy and secondary school enrolment rate.

Mentioning that a steady progress has been observed in Bangladesh in this criterion, the UNCTAD estimates that the country will stand at 114 percent of the graduation threshold in 2021.

It said the country's score was 45.3 in 2003 and then it exceeded the graduation threshold in 2018 with a score at 111 percent of the threshold.

The key indicators underpinning the evolution of the HAI include child (under five) mortality rate, maternal mortality ratio, prevalence of stunting, gross secondary school enrolment ratio, adult literacy ratio and gender parity index for gross school enrolment ratio.

In terms of child mortality, the country has achieved remarkable success as the under-five mortality rate fell to 31 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019 from 222 in 1971, 138 in 1991, 82 in 2001 and 46 in 2011, said the assessment.

"Over these decades, extensive changes have occurred in health policy related to maternal health and new-born care- with an emphasis on the integration of delivery of services and interventions targeted at underserved populations-, which could partially explain reduced child mortality." It further said mortality declines can be also explained with improved coverage of effective interventions to prevent or treat the most important causes of child mortality.

The maternal mortality has decreased significantly over the years, though it remains higher than in developed countries. Between 1990 and 2017, the maternal mortality rate in Bangladesh decreased from 574 to 173 (per 100,000 live births), a remarkable 70 percent decrease in three decades, it said.

The UNCTAD said the gross secondary school enrolment rate has increased, albeit in a volatile manner, over the years.

However, it is still relatively low (72.6 percent in 2019), particularly when compared to other South Asian LDCs.

ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY INDEX (EVI)

In the EVI criterion, a country's score has to be below 32. Bangladesh's score is 27.3 against 25 two years ago, said the status report of the government.

The EVI is a composition of indicators

like instability of agricultural production and exports of goods and services and share of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in gross domestic product. The lower a country scores in this index the better it performs.

The UNCTAD assessment said Bangladesh's performance under the graduation threshold relevant to this criterion demonstrated sustained improvements between 2012 and 2015 triennial reviews, with the EVI score hitting a plateau thereafter.

The EVI score of Bangladesh in 2018 was 25.2, which was 127 percent relative to the graduation threshold. The provisional value relevant to this criterion for 2021 triennial review is estimated to meet graduation threshold at 117 percent, it said.

The assessment said the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector displayed sustained growth in labour productivity, even though its contribution to value -- as well as its employment share -- has declined.

Although exports played an important role in its growth trajectory for Bangladesh, the heightened dependence on the readymade garments sector remains a source of concern in the long term, it cautioned.

BANGLADESH WILL RESPOND

Finance ministry officials said the government disagrees with some of the observations of UNCTAD and will send its opinion to them shortly.

After receiving Bangladesh's opinions, UNCTAD will present the assessment during a meeting in January next year where a group of CDP experts will discuss the country's position.

Upon getting the experts' views, the CDP will hold the triennial review on February 7, 8, and 9 and recommend Bangladesh's name for the graduation if the country passes the assessment.

If Bangladesh gets out of the LDC bloc in 2024, it will be given a three-year transition period before it loses duty-free and quota-free market access to the European Union under the Everything but Arms initiative for LDCs, according to the CDP.

The officials said the representatives of BGMSEA and FBCCI requested to keep the duty-free export facilities and other benefits for Bangladesh until 2030, considering the economic fallout of the pandemic.

Two die after falling sick in shipbreaking yards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two employees, including a security guard, of two shipbreaking firms in Chattogram's Sitakunda upazila died yesterday morning after falling sick at their workplaces.

The deceased -- Kranti Tripura, 25, of Janata Steel Yard, and Jolendra Chakma, 24, of Mother Steel -- were from Khagrachhari district.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Janata Steel Yard Manager Md Sohel said Kranti was a security guard at their firm. He was not feeling well after having dinner on Sunday night.

As his condition deteriorated, he was rushed to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where he passed away around 4:00am, added Sohel.

Abul Kashem, owner of Mother Steel, said Jolendra fell ill yesterday morning. He died "after being taken to CMCH".

ASI Md Hamid of CMCH Police Box said a patient was sent to the hospital from Sitakunda shipbreaking yard in the morning.

Abdullah Al Sakib Mubarrat, deputy inspector general (Chattogram directorate) of Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment, said he visited the two firms, talked to witnesses and found that the deaths were not caused by any accident.

ASI Mohammad Kaiser of Sitakunda Police Station said they had no information about the deaths of two employees at the shipbreaking yards until yesterday evening.

Five sentenced to death get acquitted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday acquitted all five people, who were sentenced to death by a lower court in Netrokona, in a case filed for the abduction and gang rape of a teenage girl in 2002, as the allegations brought against them were not proved beyond reasonable doubt.

The HC bench of Justice SM Emdadul Hoque and Justice Bishmadev Chakraborty delivered the verdict after hearing the appeals of the convicted accused and the death reference (lower court documents) of the case.

Post-Covid-19

India and Bangladesh have continued to maintain regular exchanges at the highest level, MEA said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid an official visit to India in October 2019.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a video message on the historic occasion of Mujib Borsho in March 2020.

Both the leaders have remained in regular touch during the Covid-19 pandemic, MEA said.

On Sunday, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said Bangladesh will raise all the big issues, including water and border ones during the virtual Summit.

"We'll raise our major issues, which we usually raise," he told reporters at his office adding that a number of "quick-impact" projects will be inaugurated, too.

Chilahati-Haldibari rail link, a pre-1965 connectivity line, would be inaugurated along with some other projects during the virtual Summit.

The Foreign Minister, however, said the month of Victory will come up prominently in the meeting because it is also a victory for India as they helped Bangladesh achieve the victory. "We must acknowledge the contributions of the then Indian Prime Minister."

Dr Momen said the relations between Bangladesh and India are historic and of blood-relations, and India is a time-tested friend of Bangladesh. "So, India has reasons to be proud of our victory."

He recalled the then governments of India and the United Kingdom for bringing Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman back to home alive. "We must acknowledge it."

The Foreign Minister said Bangladesh and India are witnessing a golden chapter in their relations. "Two countries have set an example by resolving issues like LBA and maritime boundaries through dialogue and discussion."

He said they believe that the two countries can resolve all the issues through discussion. "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has shown leadership maturity in resolving problems."

Responding to a question, Dr Momen said a Swadhinata Sarak will be opened marking the 50 years of Bangladesh's independence on March 26 next year.

He said the road remains functional on the Indian side while it will be connected through Mujibnagar, Meherpur district. "It'll help boost people-to-people contact between the two countries."

Bangladesh has invited Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Bangladesh on March 26 in person to jointly celebrate the Independence Day of Bangladesh. The Indian side accepted the invitation in principle.

Bangladesh and India will chart out plans to take the "rock-solid and historic" Dhaka-Delhi relations to the next level expanding areas of cooperation between the two countries with a number of engagements in the coming months, officials said.

In March this year, the two Prime Ministers joined a virtual meeting of Saarc countries on cooperation to deal with the Covid-19 situation in the region.

Recruitment at RU halted

FROM PAGE 1

about some negative news regarding the malpractices in the recruitment process."

The university's Institute of Biological Sciences cancelled the process for appointment of two teachers this month as 13 candidates did not receive admit cards for the viva voce exam.

An official of the University Grants Commission (UGC) said the government might have issued the order in response to a UGC probe that found evidence of corruption and irregularities by the RU vice-chancellor and pro-VC in the recruitment of teachers.

The UGC in the report recommended taking actions against VC Prof M Abdus Sobhan, Pro-VC Prof Chowdhury M Zakaria and others concerned over the matter. It also suggested scrapping the appointment of 34 teachers, who were recruited following "relaxation of university rules".

Contected, Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury refused to comment on the issue.

The VC and the pro-VC did not answer phone calls and SMSs.

RU Registrar Prof MA Bari said he would not comment on the matter without seeing related documents.

A senior teacher of Institute of Biological Sciences said a total of 24 candidates had applied for two teaching positions. The viva voce exam was held on December 8.

Later, at least 13 jobseekers alleged that they did not receive admit cards. The institute's Board of Governance on December 10 decided to cancel the appointment process.

Speaking at a press conference on the campus on November 26, a group of teachers under the banner of "Teachers' Society Against Corruption" demanded postponement of all kinds of recruitment at the university until the government made a decision in line with the UGC's probe findings.

They alleged that a recent RU syndicate meeting relaxed recruitment conditions for appointing four lecturers to the tourism and hospitality management department and two lectures to applied physics department.

The teachers said the process of appointing 13 officials to the university medical centre, 28 employees and support staffers to different offices was also underway.

Prof Sultan ul Islam of geology and mining, also the convener of Teachers' Society Against Corruption, yesterday said the authorities continued the recruitment process like they did in the past without caring about the UGC investigation.

About the education ministry's December 10 notice, he said the VC knew about it. "But he ignored it to complete the recruitment process illegally," he told The Daily Star.

According to the UGC probe report, the vice-chancellor and some others concerned relaxed the university rules to appoint the VC's daughter and son-in-law as teachers of the public university.

The UGC submitted copies of the probe report to the education ministry, Anti-Corruption Commission and the Prime Minister's Office on October 20.

During the investigation, the probe committee found evidence of 25 kinds of irregularities and corruption committed by top members of the university administration.

The probe found that the VC provided false information to the chancellor on voluntary retirement; he practiced nepotism in recruiting teachers; the VC and the others appointed heads of different departments violating university rules; and officials were involved in irregular financial transactions.

The report said the VC and some others relaxed the university's recruitment policy on purpose and appointed the VC's daughter and son-in-law as teachers. Besides, some 34 low-qualified candidates were recruited as teachers.

Nation vows to safeguard

FROM PAGE 1

He said the fundamentalist forces could be able to reach their present position due to patronising and compromising attitude of the successive governments.

The noted political analyst said the present Awami League government's compromising attitude towards Hefajat-e Islam, which opposes the construction of sculpture of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is also responsible for the rising of the fundamentalist forces.

Abul Quasem Fazlul Haq, another political analyst and a former Dhaka University professor, said, "We should not put all blame on our enemy. We should also do our self-criticism and go for our soul-searching for not fulfilling the dream of the country's martyred intellectuals and the rise of fundamentalist elements over the years."

"Our political parties and its leaders lack this sincerity of doing self-criticism. They speak on this issue from the point of view of the interest of their parties and individuals," he added.

He said in absence of democracy, people are rushing towards religion and a section of religious leaders are taking this opportunity to gain their political interest through misleading people.

Fazlul Haq said, "Our political leaders don't have nationalistic thinking in their minds. That's why they rush to different embassies with different issues."

To mark the Martyred Intellectuals Day, elaborate programmes were held nationwide to commemorate the December 14 tragedy.

The nation observed the day to commemorate those intellectuals killed systematically by the Pakistan occupation forces and their local collaborators at the fag-end of the country's Liberation War in 1971.

Just two days ahead of the country's final victory for independence on this

day 49 years ago, the Pakistan occupation forces with the help of their local collaborators -- Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams -- killed the most prominent intellectuals of the country.

As many as 200 illustrious sons of the soil, including professors, journalists, doctors, artists, engineers and writers, were abducted from their respective residences blindfolded between December 10 and 14 in 1971.

They were taken blindfolded to torture cells at Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Nakhapara, Rajarbagh and other locations in different parts of the city.

Subsequently, they were put to death en masse at different killing grounds, most notably Rayerbazar and Mirpur, in a bid to cripple the newly emerging Bangladesh intellectually.

Among the martyred intellectuals of December 14 were Prof Munier Chowdhury, Dr Alim Chowdhury, Prof Muniruzzaman, Dr Fazle Rabbi, Sirajuddin Hossain, Shahidullah Kaiser, Prof GC Dev, JC Guhathakurta, Prof Santosh Bhattacharya, Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury, journalists Khandaker Abu Taleb, Nizamuddin Ahmed, SA Mannan (Ladu Bhai), ANM Golam Mustafa, Syed Nazmul Haq and Selina Parvin.

Since then, the day is being observed as the Martyred Intellectuals Day to pay homage to the great fallen heroes.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid rich tributes to the martyred intellectuals in the morning.

The day was observed on a limited scale due to fresh surge of the Covid-19 cases.

Paying tribute to the martyred intellectuals, Obaidul Quader, AL general secretary and also road transport and bridges minister, called upon the pro-liberation forces to build united resistance to root out the communal forces from the society.

It's even worse during pandemic

FROM PAGE 1

Among the complaints received, those of "non-compoundable criminal offences" were also higher this year compared to last year -- 2,412 in 2020 versus 1,739 in 2019. "Non-compoundable criminal offence" includes grave criminal acts like rape, attempt to rape, and domestic torture.

The data shows that rape complaints rose by 63 percent on average (excluding May and September which showed slight dips).

Meanwhile, "Polli Shomaj", the organisation's ward-level units, reported over 2,000 more incidences of violence against women and children across 54 districts, this year than they did last year.

"Polli Shomaj" groups are comprised of women members from all wards of a union council and they undertake activities such as stopping child marriages.

According to data provided by Brac, Polli Shomaj prevented 371 child marriages between January and September in 2019, while 97 incidents of child marriage were reported by community members. During the same time period in 2020, they prevented 646 incidents of child marriage, while community members reported 146 incidents of child marriage.

The crisis worsened from July, the data shows. "We saw a rise in underage marriages and domestic violence," said Md Abdul Hai, a programme organiser from Damarrhuda in Chuadanga, who is working for Brac's Community Empowerment Programme.

"People were home and unemployed. The families are going through poverty. Since the men are home, they are constantly interfering in the women's

domestic duties, leading to altercations. The girls are home and not working or studying, so they are being seen as a burden," described Hai.

"In the last year, I stopped five underage marriages in Damarrhuda. There were also four or five such marriages I could not stop. All the brides were 13 or 14," he added.

"Domestic violence has also increased. I had to intervene in a marriage, where a 17-year-old bride was being tortured for dowry of Tk 1 lakh. The husband beat her up and broke her arm. Then she was beaten up again by a mob led by a woman her husband was having an extra-marital affair with, and she needed to be hospitalised," narrated Hai.

Special attention must be paid to adolescent girls, especially those between 10 and 18 years, recommended a media brief circulated by Brac.

New rail line to link northern tip

FROM PAGE 1

regarding where the line will be connected [with the Indian railway] in the border," DN Majumder, additional director general of the BR, told The Daily Star.

"The aim of constructing the rail line is to boost regional connectivity," he added.

Currently, India, Bhutan and Nepal are connected with Bangladesh via Banglabandha port through roads.

Extension of the railway from Panchagarh to Banglabandha will create a scope for rail communication with India and therefore, with Nepal and Bhutan, the officials said.

In 2018, the BR took up a project titled "Study for Important Projects of West Zone" for carrying out its feasibility study and prepare alignments for three rail lines and a rail bridge in the railway's western zone.

"Consultants have submitted three alternative routes for the Panchagarh-Banglabandha section, and one of them were finalised at today's meeting," a BR official said.

Now, the BR will appoint a consultant to prepare a detailed design, tender documents and a Development Project Proposal (DPP), he said, adding that

they hope to complete these works within this fiscal year.

"Once approved, it would take two years to implement the project," the official said wishing not be named. Asked about cost of the proposed project, he said, "That can be learned after completion of the detailed design."

Although, the government formally opened the Bangladesh land port in May, 2004, Bangladesh-Nepal transit through Banglabandha was introduced in September, 1997.

Trade between Bangladesh-India through the Banglabandha-Phulbari (in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal) border began in January 2011.

The port is being used for goods transported among Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in November 2015 directed the Railway Ministry to build rail line between Panchagarh and Banglabandha.

She gave the directives after a report was placed before the cabinet saying that operation of heavy trucks and trailers from the port to other parts of the country was causing damage to roads, specially the Mahananda Bridge, according to the project document.

About 5,812 passengers have left

Postponed CCC polls on Jan 27

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Postponed Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) election will be held on January 27, the Election Commission said yesterday.

It also announced the schedule for third phase of election to 64 municipalities, fixing the date for January 30.

EC Senior Secretary Md Alamgir made the announcement. He said no new election schedule will be needed for CCC polls as it was postponed due to the pandemic.

The EC on March 21 postponed the polls, slated for March 29.

According to the EC office, six mayoral candidates including Awami League's Rezaul karim and BNP's Shahadat Hossian, 56 candidates in reserved seats for women and 161 councillor candidates in general wards were vying in the election.

Meanwhile, Alamgir said third phase elections to municipalities will be held on January 30. The last date for submitting nomination papers is December 30, the returning officers will scrutinise those on January 3, and the last date for withdrawal of candidacy is January 10.

Some 61 municipalities will go to vote on January 15, with 25 another municipalities going to polls on December 28.



It's getting colder, and what's winter without a fluffy floral blanket? Customers crowd Baitul Mukarram market yesterday to check out different designs of the quintessential *kombol* and haggle for a good price.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Pakistani war criminals must be tried: speakers

Nirmul Committee calls for holding trial of Pak army, orgs involved in '71 genocide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee yesterday demanded trial of the Pakistan army high command and other organisations involved in the genocide committed during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

Trial of top war criminals have been held at International Crimes Tribunal, but trial of masterminds behind the genocide -- Pakistan army -- and different organisations have not started yet, said Shahriar Kabir, president of the committee, according to a press release.

"Now, time has come to revive the second tribunal and hold the trial soon for the sake of justice and humanity," he added.

The pro-Liberation War platform yesterday held an online discussion on "Genocide of 1971: Trial of Pakistani High Command and Organisations", marking Martyred Intellectuals Day. Its central leader and former prosecutor of ICT Barrister Tureen Afroz read out a keynote paper on the topic.

The event's chief guest, veteran Awami League leader and a key organisers of the Liberation War Tofail Ahmed also said trial of Pakistani war criminals must be held and recognition of the genocide must be secured.

Family members of martyrs -- including lawmaker Aroma Dutta (granddaughter of Dhirendranath Dutta); Shilpi Chowdhury (granddaughter of Nutan Chandra Singha); Meghna Guhathakurta (daughter of Prof Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta); Asif Munier (son of Munier Chowdhury); Nuzhat Chowdhury (daughter of Alim Chowdhury); Shomi Kaiser (daughter of Shahidullah Kaiser); Tanveer Haider Chowdhury (son of Prof Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury); Fahim Reza Noor (son of journalist Sirajuddin Hossain); Shawan Mahmud (daughter of Altaf Mahmud) and Madhurbati Dey (granddaughter of Madhusudan Dey) also spoke.

Papia, husband remanded in graft case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Jubo Mohila League's suspended leader Shamima Nur Papia and her husband Mofizur Rahman Sumon on a three-day remand each in a case filed for amassing about Tk 6.24 crore illegally.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after ACC Deputy Director Shahin Ara Momta produced them before the court. In the remand prayer, Momta said the couple amassed money illegally and needed to be remanded to find sources of the wealth.

On August 4, ACC filed the case against the couple.

On October 12, the two were jailed for 20 years in another case filed for possessing illegal firearms.

Shut down illegal brick kilns in Ctg in seven days: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned of the government to shut down illegal brick kilns in Chattogram in a week in order to save the environment.

The HC also asked the authorities to find out those involved in damaging farmland and hills, burning woods and polluting environment by running illegal brick kilns and to submit a list of their names and addresses to this court in 30 days.

The court also issued a rule asking the government to explain in four weeks why its inaction to shut down the illegal brick kilns should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Mohi Uddin Shamim came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB), seeking necessary directives.

Following newspaper reports on running of illegal brick kilns and serious air pollution, the HRPB submitted the petition to the HC on November 29 seeking its order on the authorities to shut down the illegal brick kilns at different upazilas including Lohagara in Chattogram.

While hearing the petition, petitioner's lawyer Manzill Murshid told the HC that hundreds of illegal brick kilns are running in different areas in Chattogram, but officials of the government are not taking necessary action against them.

Worker dies as fire guts tin-shed house in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth was burnt to death in a fire at a tin-shed house in Dhaka's Kadamtoli area early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Delwar Hossain (19), a worker at a steel mill factory.

The fire originated on the first floor of the tin-shed house around 3am.

Twenty-one rooms of the house were gutted before two units of fire fighters brought the blaze under control through a two-hour effort, said Lima Khanam, duty officer of the Fire Service and Civil Defence Control Room.

Later, firefighters recovered the charred body of Delwar from a room on the first floor. Police later sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Deceased's brother Jakir Hossain said Delwar, youngest among two siblings, used to live in the room with five others and was asleep when the fire started spreading.

His roommates escaped unhurt as they were occupied in night-shift duties.

Fashion brands see slow sale ahead of Victory Day

MANNAN MASHHUR ZARIF, LS Desk

Over the last two decades, Victory Day became a festivity of sorts for a lot of urban people. To cater to the growing demand, prominent fashion brands have been bringing out collections themed in red and green, and in the last few years, sales surrounding the day have consistently been high, industry insiders said.

"In terms of sales, Victory Day is one of the biggest events," said Soumik Das, CEO of popular brand Rang Bangladesh.

The same can't be said for 2020, though. While even the most fashionable labels have kept their offerings to a minimum, smaller boutiques have skipped the occasion altogether.

Walking down Bailey Road on the penultimate Friday before Victory Day, this correspondent found stores on the otherwise popular shopping area relatively empty.

Even though special offer flyers were hung across the street and mannequins stood on pavements sporting red and green, all efforts failed to bring in customers.

"The demand for clothes has come down to under 50 percent (of pre-Covid levels). Demand for Victory Day attires is even lower,"

said a staffer of a well-known brand, requesting anonymity.

But lower demand is not the only reason behind fewer new collections in the market. "There's a shortage of labour, which is playing a significant role in downsizing our Bijoy Dibosh collection," Rang's Soumik Das said.

Companies are trying to adapt to this by employing alternative strategies. Bishwo Rang is reintroducing well-liked designs from the past rather than splurging on new designs, Bashar -- manager at a Bishwo Rang outlet at Bailey Road -- told The Daily Star.

As physical stores perform poorly, some are resorting to e-commerce to sell their items.

"Sales have been poor in our stores, but the response is better online," Soumik Das said.

Khalid Mahmood Khan, one of the founders of Kay Kraft, said in previous years, a bulk of Victory Day merchandise were bought by institutions organising programmes to mark the day. Bulk sales have been non-existent this year.

Earlier this month, the government announced of limited scale celebrations of Victory Day, and urged people to strictly maintain health guidelines while marking the occasion.



A group of people, from youngsters to the elderly, were seen trying to leap over a coupler between two train wagons to cross over. After the train got derailed yesterday at Chattogram city's Salt Gola Crossing area, the long queue of containers remained stationary on MA Aziz Road for half an hour, creating tailbacks stretching up to three kilometres.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

Another 'war-time' bomb found at airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another 250 kg bomb was found buried at the construction site of the capital's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's third terminal yesterday.

According to Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), Bangladesh Air Force recovered the bomb from the airport. The bomb disposal unit of Air Force's Bangabandhu Base rushed to the spot and defused the bomb, ISPR said.

It was taken away to be dismantled in a safe place, ISPR said in a press release.

Bomb experts believe it was dropped sometime during the Liberation War in 1971, it said.

The bomb was recovered at 8:30am, Officer-in-Charge of Airport Police Station BM Forman Ali confirmed to The Daily Star.

In fear, they flee ancestral homes

Minorities in Barishal village 'harassed, threatened'

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

People of the minority community in Jambudwip village of Barishal's Banaripara upazila are passing days amid insecurity as they claim that they are being continuously harassed by an influential group.

Recently, they alleged, some law enforcers have joined hands with the group to intimidate them.

The situation worsened so much that male members of the community have fled the area to avoid police harassment and arrest since a case was filed against them on November 27.

Villagers alleged that the "false" case was lodged only to harass them.

Locals said around 1,500 people belonging to Hindu community have been living in the village for centuries.

The "intimidation and harassment" started over a land-related dispute between a group of minority people and one Farjana Mehajabin Mili Ahmed, wife of retired district Judge Md Fakhruddin.

A case was filed over the issue in 2003

and its trial was ongoing.

Mili with the help of some local goons had been harassing the minorities for a long time, alleged locals.

But it intensified after a court in Barishal delivered a verdict in the case on October 22, which went in favour of the minorities.

On November 27, Mili filed a case with Banaripara Police Station alleging that minority community people attacked on one of her residences in the village, vandalised and looted valuables on November 5.

Around 30 to 35 Hindus were made accused in the case.

"Since filing of the case, police have frequently been visiting the area and intimidating the men. Now, almost all the men have left the area and went into hiding to avoid arrest," said Hemangini Mistry, a resident of the village.

"We are panicked. They (Mili's associates) may attack any time. On Sunday morning, some men came to the village and took away our logs," said Saraswati Mistry (75). "Now is the time to harvest. But the men are not

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Expired meds worth Tk 30cr destroyed in 11 months: DGDA

STATES CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) yesterday submitted a compliance report to the High Court, stating that the government has removed and destroyed expired medicine worth Tk 30.14 crore across the country from January to November this year.

Besides, Tk 7.26 crore has been fined and collected from the dishonest traders for storing, supplying and selling expired medicine through conducting mobile courts between January and October this year, DGDA said in the report.

A total of 1,437 cases were filed with mobile courts in connection with the incidents, the report added.

Deputy Attorney General Abdullah Al Mahmud Bashar placed the compliance report on behalf of DGDA to the HC bench of Justice Md Khasruzzaman and Justice Md Mahmud Hassan Talukder during hearing a pending writ petition.

After examining the compliance report, the HC bench ordered DGDA to continue drives against storing, supplying and selling of expired medicine and to destroy those, and to submit another compliance report to the court in next three months.

ROHINGYA RELOCATION

Clear example of govt's diplomatic failure: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday expressed reservations about relocation of Rohingyas to Bhashan Char.

"The process of relocating some Rohingya refugees to Bhashan Char, ignoring objections of the United Nations and other international organisations, is a clear example of the boundless diplomatic and political failures of the present government, which has no public mandate," Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the party said at a press conference at BNP Chairperson's Gulshan office.

He alleged that the government has taken the Bhashan Char project to indulge in corruption and to cover up its failures to repatriate Rohingyas to their motherland in Myanmar.

The BNP leader said construction of such permanent housing in Bhashan Char may create new obstacles to resolving the main problem. He feared that the permanent infrastructure that has been built and is being built in Bhashan Char for refugees may lead to the perception among Myanmar authorities that Bangladesh is accepting the Rohingyas permanently.

He said it is now necessary to mount multidimensional pressure on Myanmar with the help of the UN and other international organisations to overcome the Rohingya crisis instead of wasting time in the name of relocating refugees.

On another note, Fakhru announced that BNP will stage protest on December 21 across the country, against border killings.

"Black flags will be hoisted at all offices of the party across the country, including its Nayapaltan central office, on December 21 while BNP leaders and activists will wear black badges or black outfits on the day," he said.



Badda's Shafiqul Islam (55) has been suffering from fever for the last one week. He had come to Mugda General Hospital around 7am yesterday to get himself tested. But tickets wouldn't be given out until 9:40am, and the waiting started getting to Shafiqul. Around 8:30am, he fell quite unwell and had to lie down on this rickshaw van, next to the gate of the hospital. He was later discovered and taken to the emergency room by journalists and Ansar personnel. With the recent rise in Covid-19 cases, incidents like this may rise too unless proper measures are taken to make testing more patient-friendly.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

8 to die for murder, rape of 9-yr-old

FROM PAGE 12

Bijoy, 21, Md Robiul Islam alias Rubel, 20, Md Hasibul Islam alias Liton, 29, Md Aksan Mia alias Hasan, 21, Md Sujon, 22, Moinul Islam Monu, and Robiul Islam Rubel.

Another convict, Shahdat Hossain, has been absconding since the incident, said the PP. After the verdict was pronounced, the convicts were sent to jail, he added.

According to the case statement, second-grader madrasa student Fatema Akhter Mim was killed after gang rape on January 21, 2018, in “Ayesha Mamtaj Mahal” of an area, which falls under the jurisdiction of Akbar Shah Police Station.

A day later, the victim’s mother Bibi Rabeya Begum filed a case with the police station. After investigation, police pressed charges against the eight on September 9, 2018. The court framed charges against them on May 26, 2019..

Nineteen witnesses testified in the case, said PP Naser.

The verdict over the Tangail incident was delivered by Saud Hasan, judge of the second additional district and sessions judge’s court, said Court Inspector Tanvir Ahmed.

The court also fined the convicts Tk 1 lakh each, he said.

Among nine convicts in the case, eight were present in the courtroom when the judgment was delivered, while the other was tried in absentia.

The three people who were handed death penalty are Milton, 22, and Bahadur Miah, 22, of Char Chouhat village in Dhaka’s Dhamrai upazila, and Roni Miah, 25, of Sujaniloja village in Tangail’s Mirzapur upazila.

The three who were jailed till death are Shahinur alias Saha, 30, of Char Chouhat village, and Jahirul Islam, 20, of Shoshodhorpotti village in Dhamrai upazila, and Abdul Malek, 35, of Amrail Telipara village in Mirzapur upazila.

The other three convicts given life-term imprisonment are Arif, 28, and Shamim Miah, 25, of Char Chouhat village, and Jakir Hossain, 28, of Amrail Telipara village, said the court inspector.

Convict Arif is on the run, said the court inspector, adding that two other accused in the case were acquitted.

Quoting the case statement, the court’s additional PP Khorshed Alam said Shakil, 11, son of Delwar Hossain, and Imran, 11, son of Abu Bakkar, of Char Chouhat village in Dhamrai upazila, went missing when they were on their way to watch the annual sports competition of Haria High School in Mirzapur upazila on January 27, 2016.

The next day, some people called their families over phone and demanded Tk 2 lakh in ransom for the release of each of the two boys.

On January 26 the same year, the two victims were found dead with their throats slit at a lemon orchard in Haria village.

The next day, Shakil’s mother Joshna Begum filed the murder case with Mirzapur Police Station. After investigation, police pressed charges against 11 accused on June 8.

[Our correspondents in Chattogram and Tangail contributed to this report]

Electoral college

FROM PAGE 12

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and Atlanta, Georgia, electors - typically party loyalists - will gather to formally cast those votes.

While there are sometimes a handful of “rogue” electors who vote for someone other than the winner of their state’s popular vote, the vast majority rubber-stamp their state’s results, and officials did not expect anything different yesterday.

Asoke Das Gupta no more

CITY DESK

Asoke Das Gupta, freedom fighter and vice chairperson of ONE Bank Limited, breathed his last on Sunday.

He was 78, and had been suffering from old-age complications, said a press release.

Asoke was chief executive of IMTrex, managing director of Uniroyal Trade Ltd, and chairperson of Uniroyal Securities Ltd and Ocnova Eye Hospital.

ONE Bank prays for the salvation of his departed soul and offers their condolences to the bereaved family.



49th death anniv of Dr Fazle Rabbee

CITY DESK

Today marks the 49th anniversary of Shaheed Dr Fazle Rabbee, a professor of medicine and cardiology at Dhaka Medical College.

On this day in 1971, the Pakistan Army and their collaborator Al-Badar forces picked him up from his Siddheswari residence around 4pm in the afternoon. He was later brutally killed at midnight in Rayer Bazar, says a press release.

His body was recovered from the Rayer Bazar killing field on December 18, 1971.

To mark the day, floral wreaths will be placed at his grave today. A food distribution programme will also be held in the morning.

Hubble observes

FROM PAGE 12

using the Magellan Telescopes at the Las Campanas Observatory in Chile, researchers were unable to determine its orbit. This led them to question if it was orbiting the two stars or if it was a rogue planet traveling away from the system, unattached to any star.

The Hubble Space Telescope, however, provided accurate measurements of the planet’s movements over a 14-year period.

This is the first time scientists have been able to measure the movement of such a massive planet orbiting so distantly from its star. It’s also the only planet known to be so separated from its stars.

The exoplanet is so far away from its young host stars that the distant is equivalent to 730 times the distance from Earth to the sun.

And it explains why this exoplanet’s orbit has been so difficult to track -- it’s moving incredibly slowly because of its distance from the host stars, so their gravitational pull on the planet is much weaker.

37 more die

FROM PAGE 12

Two of them were aged between 41 and 50 years, eight between 51 and 60, and 27 were above 60 years, added the release.

Court stops

FROM PAGE 12

On November 22, Facebook filed a lawsuit against A1 Software Limited and one SK Shamsul Islam with the Dhaka District Judge’s Court seeking a ban on the operations of A1’s “facebook.com.bd” domain as well as \$50,000 in compensation.

Govt plans

FROM PAGE 12

Mymensingh, and Cox’s Bazar in the first phase.

Later, similar special drives will be conducted in other protected forest areas of the country, the ministry decided.

Deputy Commissioners of 12 districts, which accounts for most of the grabbed forest land, will conduct the drives while joint and deputy secretaries of the ministry will monitor and coordinate, the meeting decided.

The ministry also sought support of local public representatives for the drives.

Deputy Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Habibun Nahar and Ziaul Hasan, secretary of the ministry was present. Many top officials of departments of the ministry, including forest, were in the meeting.

‘Healing is coming’

FROM PAGE 12

partner BioNTech SE, won an emergency use authorization from federal regulators on Friday after it was found to be 95% effective in preventing illness in a large clinical trial.

The first 2.9 million doses began to be shipped to distribution centers around the country on Sunday, just 11 months after the United States documented its first case of Covid-19.

As of yesterday, the United States had registered more than 16 million Covid-19 cases and was fast closing in on the grim milestone of 300,000

deaths from the virus.

“It’s been an incredible morning. It’s historic,” said Dr. Leonardo Seoane, speaking over a livestream video yesterday after becoming one of the first Louisiana resident to receive the vaccine at Ochsner Medical Center in New Orleans, where he led some of the clinical trials for the Pfizer shot.

LOGISTICAL CHALLENGE

The first US shipments of coronavirus vaccine departed from Pfizer’s facility in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Sunday, packed into trucks with dry-ice to maintain the necessary minus 70

Celsius (-94 Fahrenheit) temperature. They were transported to UPS and FedEx planes waiting at air fields in Lansing and Grand Rapids, kicking off a national immunization endeavor of unprecedented complexity.

The jets delivered the shipments to UPS and FedEx cargo hubs in Louisville and Memphis, from where they were loaded onto planes and trucks to be distributed to the first 145 of 636 vaccine-staging areas across the country. Second and third waves of vaccine shipments were due to go out to the remaining sites on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Battered, they keep on trying

FROM PAGE 12

This year, floods have badly affected 11 out of 12 upazilas of Tangail.

A vast area in the region was inundated by floodwater in three phases from July to September, damaging crops, fruits and vegetables worth crores of taka. Most of the affected farmers had cultivated crops after taking loans from banks, NGOs, and moneylenders.

Farmer Jinnat Ali of Dhithpur village in Tangail Sadar upazila farmed sugarcane on his three and a half bighas of land, but flood damaged it completely.

“I had to spend Tk 70,000 on the sugarcane farming. I expected I could earn Tk 2 lakh from the farming. But the flood destroyed my hope.”

Jinnat said he did not get any support from the government and borrowed money from others to cultivate Aman paddy on the land

after the floodwater receded.

The flood this year lasted for 61 days from July 27 to September 30, the second longest spell since 1988, according to meteorological office data.

Some 1,07,193 farmers in Tangail incurred a loss of Tk 141 crore due to damage of their crops and vegetables in the floods this year, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in the district.

DAE officials said 18,126 hectares of cropland were inundated in the flood. Of these, crops on 13,292 hectares were fully damaged.

The agriculture department started giving incentives to the flood-affected farmers after floodwater began to recede in September.

Only 12,000 out of 1,07,193 affected farmers in the district have got the government support of seeds and fertiliser, according to DAE officials.

More than 95,000 farmers were out of the government support coverage in the first phase.

Asked about the matter, Ahsanul Bashar, deputy director of DAE in Tangail, told The Daily Star that the affected farmers in the district have already started turning around as the present farmer-friendly government has been providing them with necessary support.

The government support for rehabilitation as well as incentive to the affected farmers for different crops cultivation continues, he said.

“Under the programmes, over 1.7 lakh farmers, including the flood-affected ones, are getting the government support. Of them, around 34,000 farmers have already got the help for mustard cultivation, while each of the 55,000 farmers are getting 2kg of hybrid Boro paddy seeds,” he said.

In fear

FROM PAGE 3

home, they are hiding in fear... there’s no one to harvest paddy,” she told The Daily Star on Saturday.

Dr Palash Kanti Mistry, who hailed from the village and currently working at Dhaka Ophthalmology Institute, said some local goons, being instructed by Mili’s associates (Salam Fakir, Nurul Haque Kalu and Abdul Haque) recently visited the area and threatened the community people with dire consequences.

Amid such a situation, the community people held a press conference at Barishal Reporter’s Unity on December 10 and demanded support and intervention of law enforcers and administration to end their sufferings.

Contacted, Nurul Haque Kalu denied the allegations of harassing and intimidating Hindus.

Mili could not be contacted despite repeated attempts.

She and her husband live in the capital.

Contacted over phone on Sunday afternoon, her husband Md Fakhruddin, however, claimed that the community people attacked one of their houses in the village.

Asked about the land, he said it belonged to them and they have a caretaker looking after it. He said he will appeal to the High Court in this regard.

However, on a visit to the village on Friday, this correspondent could not find any such person. More interestingly, there was no such house which was attacked by the minorities as claimed by Mili in the case.

Fakhruddin claimed that the house was destroyed in the attack.

About intimidating the villagers

with local goons, Fakhruddin denied the allegations. He, however, said he has some “paid agents” in the area who look after “his interests”.

Contacted, Md Hilaluddin, officer-in-charge of Banaripara Police Station, said, “No one from the community filed any complaint over this matter. Once they file one, police will take necessary legal action.”

Hemangini Mistry, however, alleged that they went to the police station but police refused to record a complaint or general diary.

The OC denied the allegation. He said after Mili filed the case they went to the village and arrested two persons, who are out on bail now. “We are investigating the matter,” he said.

Contacted, Barishal Superintendent of Police Md Saiful Islam said he was not aware of the matter and would look into it.

NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
MATTER NO. 266 OF 2020

IN THE MATTER OF:
An application under section 12 read with section 13 of the Companies Act, 1994.

AND:
IN THE MATTER OF:
WELLPAC POLYMERS LIMITED represented by its Managing Director, Mr. SK. Farid Ahmed having its Registered Office at S.W (i)-4, 25, Gulshan-1, Dhaka.

-----Petitioner

=VERSUS=
The Registrar Joint Stock Companies and Firms TCB Bhaban, Dhaka.

---Respondent

Take notice that an application under section 12 read with section 13 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named Petitioner for add a new object clause of the Memorandum of Association of WELLPAC POLYMERS LIMITED.

Upon hearing of the said application the company bench of the Hon'ble High Court Division comprising his Mt. Justice K.M. Kamrul Kader was pleased to admit the matter vide lordship's order dated 01.12.2020.

If any related parties are interested to appear in the matter to oppose the same, they may enter appearance either in person or through their counsel.

Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary cost.

Mohammad Khorshed Alam, Advocate
Bangladesh Supreme Court
Room No.343 (old), 2nd Floor, Supreme Court Bar Association Building, Shahbagh, Dhaka.

Legal Notice

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 271 OF 2020

IN THE MATTER OF:
An application under Section 233 of the Companies Act, 1994.
AND IN THE MATTER OF

Mrs. Nasrun Nessa *Petitioner.*

VERSUS

Bashar Spinning Mills Ltd. and others *Respondents.*

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that an application under Section 233 of the Companies Act, 1994 for the protection of the pecuniary interest in the company was filed on behalf of the petitioner before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Upon preliminary hearing, the Hon'ble Company Bench, comprising of his Lordship Mr. Justice K.M. Kamrul Kader vide order dated 03.12.2020 was pleased to admit the said application and fixed the matter for hearing on 03.01.2021.

Any person or persons having interest in the said application may appear either personally or through duly authorized Advocate on or before the date so fixed. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment of required costs

Yours faithfully
(Mohammad Hasan Habib)
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Barrister, Lincoln's Inn
A.S & Associates
Mukti Bhaban, 3rd Floor, Suit No. D-5,
21/1 Purana Paltan, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

গভীর শ্রদ্ধায় স্মরণ করি
কাজী আজহার আলী'র ১১তম মৃত্যুবার্ষিকী

আজ ১৫ ডিসেম্বর ২০২০ রোজ মঙ্গলবার বাংলাদেশ ইউনিভার্সিটি প্রতিষ্ঠাতা ও প্রথম ভাইস চ্যান্সেলর এবং মোহাম্মদপুর প্রিপারেটরি স্কুল ও কলেজের প্রতিষ্ঠাতা চেয়ারম্যান মরহুম কাজী আজহার আলী'র ১১তম মৃত্যুবার্ষিকী।

২০০৯ সালের এই দিনে তিনি বাংলাদেশ মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতালে ইন্তেকাল করেন। তাঁর মৃত্যুবার্ষিকী উপলক্ষে আজ ১৫ ডিসেম্বর, রোজ মঙ্গলবার বাংলাদেশ ইউনিভার্সিটি এবং মরহুমের পরিবারের পক্ষ থেকে সীমিত পরিসরে কবর জিয়ারত, মিলাদ ও দোয়া মাহফিল এবং এতিমদের মাঝে খাবার বিতরণ কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে।

বাংলাদেশ ইউনিভার্সিটি পরিবারবর্গ

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Position Vacancy Announcement

Position: Project Management Specialist (Environment, Energy and Enterprise), FSN-10

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Bangladesh is seeking applications from qualified Bangladeshi nationals for the position of Project Management Specialist (Environment, Energy and Enterprise) in the Economic Growth Office (EG).

Location: USAID/Bangladesh, Deadline for application submission: January 12, 2021.

For a complete job description, required qualifications and detailed information on how to apply please visit USAID/Bangladesh website:
<http://www.usaid.gov/bangladesh/work-with-us/careers> and www.bdjobs.com

PAN PACIFIC SONARGAON DHAKA

The Oasis of Luxurious Hospitality and Tranquility

Invitation for Tender

Sealed tenders are invited from bona-fide contractors/manufacturers/dealers/distributors/ suppliers for supply the following items. The detail Specifications, terms and conditions are mentioned in the Tender Schedule.

| SL. No. | Name of the Items | Quantity | Schedule Price (Non-refundable) |
|---------|---|----------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Replenish of Transformers Oil (Re-tender) | 01 Lot | Tk.1500 |
| 2 | Switchgear Operational Batteries | 18 Nos | Tk.1000 |

Interested bidders may obtain Tender Schedule from the Purchasing Department on submission of a letter on their respective letterhead up to **December 24, 2020**. Tender will be received up to **02:30pm on December 27, 2020** and will be opened on the same day at **03:00pm** in presence of bidders, if any.

Tender must be supported by an Earnest Money amounting to 5% of quoted price in the form of Bank Draft or Pay Order from any Scheduled Bank of Bangladesh in favor of Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka.

Pan Pacific Sonargaon authority reserves the right to accept/ reject any tender in part or in full or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Purchase Manager, Tel (880) 2 9128008, Extn: 4164

UTTARA BANK LIMITED

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT(MEZZANINE FLOOR)

HEAD OFFICE, 47, SHAHID BIR UTTAM ASFAKUS SAMAD

SARAK (FORMER-90, MOTIJHEEL C/A), DHAKA-1000

TENDER NOTICE

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | Procuring Entity | Uttara Bank Limited, Engineering Department, Head Office, 47, Shahid Bir Uttam Asfakus Samad Sarak, Dhaka-1000. |
| 2. | Tender Name | Internal construction and other related works of Uttara Bank Limited, Uttara Branch, Dhaka at the proposed new premises. |
| 3. | Procurement Method | Open Tendering Method (OTM) |
| 4. | Eligibility of Tenderers | i) Minimum 05(five) years of work experiece in the allied construction works ii) Should have completed minimum 03(three) nos. of similar nature of works in the last 5 (Five) years but total worth of each work order not less than Tk. 25 (Twenty Five) lacs. iii) Should have valid ABC Licence for electrical works. iv) Shall have to engage well experienced Site Engineer/Architect/ Supervisor. v) Work completion certificate of the Employer to be submitted. vi) Should have valid Trade License, up to date Income Tax Certificate and VAT Registration Certificate. |
| 5. | Price of Tender Document | Non-refundable Tk.1000/ (One thousand) only in cash for the tender schedule |
| 6. | Selling & Dropping of Tender Documents | Uttara Bank Limited, Engineering Department, Mezzanine Floor, Head Office, 47, Shahid Bir Uttam Asfakussamad Sarak, Dhaka-1000. |
| 7. | Earnest Money | 2% of total quoted amount only in the form of Bank draft/Pay order favoring Uttara Bank Limited, Head Office, Dhaka-1000 for tender."No tender will be considered without Earnest Money." |
| 8. | Last date & time for selling Tender Document. | On or before 24.12.2020 during office hours. |
| 9. | Last date & time for Tender submission | On 27.12.2020 before 2.30 PM |
| 10. | Date and time for Tender opening | On 27.12.2020 at 3.00 PM |
| 11. | Special Instructions | i) Firms having requisite qualifications should apply on their Letter Head Pad to The Deputy General Manager, Engineering Department, UBL, Head Office, Dhaka during Office hours. ii) Uttara Bank Limited reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason whatsoever and is not bound to accept the lowest quotation. iii) Any fabricated/false documents, over writing & erasing/ fluid correction etc. in the tender will be treated as cancelled. |

Kazi Rayhan Kabir
Deputy General Manager

Next few days critical

EU's Barnier says 'narrow path' to post-Brexit trade deal visible after deadline ditched

REUTERS, Brussels

European Union Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier said yesterday that sealing a trade pact with Britain was still possible before the country's final break with the 27-nation bloc on Decembr 31 but the next few days of negotiations would be critical.

A senior EU diplomat who attended a closed-door briefing by Barnier on the state of play in Brussels said the tortuous trade talks could collapse but for now "the patient is still alive".

"There might now be a narrow path to an agreement visible - if negotiators can clear the remaining hurdles in the next few days," another EU diplomat said, adding that success depends on London accepting "inherent trade-offs" for a fair deal.

Despite missing multiple deadlines, Britain and the EU agreed on Sunday to "go the extra mile" to try to break

deadlocks on access to UK fishing waters for EU trawlers and corporate fair play rules in order to avert a turbulent split in trading ties at the end of the month.

"It is our responsibility to give the talks every chance of success," Barnier said in a tweet after his meeting with EU national envoys, adding "the next few days are important" if a trade deal is to be in place for January 1.

Going into the meeting, he told reporters that differences over free and fair competition and an access to markets and fishing waters still stood in the way of an agreement.

"And it's on these points that we haven't found the right balance with the British. So we keep working," he said.

The estranged allies are racing to seal a new partnership deal to carry on trading freely and govern ties from energy to transport beyond December 31, when Britain leaves the EU's single market and customs union after Brexit.



Police officers surround a suspect who was shooting outside the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York, US, on Sunday. The gunman was shot dead by police after he opened fire near crowds who had gathered to watch carol-singing outside the church. No one else was struck by gunfire thanks to quick action by three officers on the scene who confronted the suspect, New York City Police Commissioner Dermot Shea told reporters.

PHOTO: REUTERS

PROTEST OUTSIDE PAK MISSION IN US

Protesters demand apology for Bangladesh genocide

ANI, Washington

A US-based Bangladeshi organisation along with other South Asian minorities held a protest outside the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, demanding an apology for the 1971 'genocide' named Operation Searchlight.

Dozens of protestors raised flags, held placards, and chanted anti-Pakistan slogans.

During the protest outside the Pakistani embassy, Pranesh Halder, an organiser, told ANI in addition to the apology, the protestors also demand from Pakistan the Extradition of 195 Pakistani war criminals.

"We demand that Pakistan holds a trial for raping and killing thousands of women and children in 1971," Halder added.

On March 25, 1971, at midnight under the name Operation Searchlight, seen by many as the first step in the Bengali genocide, Pakistan Army killed about 100,000 Bengalis in a single night. They targeted academics and scholars, specifically murdering many university students and professors.

The protestors say that the goal of the operation was to crush the Bengali nationalist movement through fear - they attacked Pilkhana, Rajarbagh Police Lines, Jagannath Hall, a non-Muslim dormitory of Dhaka University, Iqbal Hall, Ramna Sri Ramna Kali Temple and other major institutions.

While interacting with ANI, Debatosh Majumdar, a Bangladeshi American narrated how a family member went missing almost seven decades ago in Bangladesh. After a relentless search, the Mujumdar family learned that their loved one had been killed, allegedly by the Pakistan Army.

Chinese dams under scrutiny

US-funded project using satellites will track water levels on Mekong river; Beijing critical of past research

REUTERS, Bangkok

A US-funded project using satellites to track and publish water levels at Chinese dams on the Mekong river was announced yesterday, adding to the superpowers' rivalry in Southeast Asia.

The 4,350-km (2,700-mile) waterway - known as the Lancang in China and flowing south through Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam - has become a focus of competition.

Beijing has dismissed US research saying Chinese dams have retained water to the detriment of downstream nations, where 60 million people depend on the river for fishing and farming.

The Mekong Dam Monitor, part-funded by the State Department, uses data from cloud-piercing satellites to track levels of dams in China and other countries.

The information will be open for everyone in near real-time from today.

A separate indicator of "surface



wetness" is to show which parts of the region are wetter or drier than usual: a guide to how much natural flows are being affected by the dams.

"The monitor provides evidence that China's 11 mainstream dams are sophisticatedly orchestrated and operated in a way to maximize the production of hydropower for sale to China's eastern provinces with zero consideration given to downstream impacts," said Brian Eyster of the Washington-based Stimson Center, a global think tank which operates the virtual water gauges.

China has been critical of past research, including a study by Eyes on Earth - part of the Mekong Dam Monitor project - which said water had been held back in 2019 as other countries suffered severe drought.

"The United States has been unable to provide good evidence throughout," the state-backed China Renewable Energy Engineering Institute said in a December 4 report.

"The positive benefits of upstream Lancang river hydropower on downstream Mekong neighbours are clear and obvious," it said, adding that water stored in reservoirs during the flood season helped prevent both downstream floods and droughts.

China and Mekong countries have in recent years overcome external "noise and interference" to push forward cooperation on water resources, said China foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin, when asked about the project at a daily news conference in Beijing yesterday.



Security personnel stand guard next to barricades as farmers protest against the recent agricultural reforms, at the Delhi-Haryana state border in Singhu, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Explosion hits oil tanker off Saudi port city

AFP, Riyadh

An explosion struck a tanker off the Saudi port city of Jeddah, maritime sources said yesterday, without elaborating on the cause.

Saudi authorities did not immediately confirm the blast, which the United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations (UKMTO) said occurred on Sunday off Jeddah, a key Red Sea port and distribution centre for oil giant Saudi Aramco.

The incident comes after an explosion last month rocked a Greek-operated oil tanker docked at Saudi Arabia's southern port of Shuqaiq, an attack that a Riyadh-led military coalition blamed on Yemen's Huthi rebels. Dryad Global, a London-based maritime intelligence firm, also reported Sunday's explosion, saying it struck a vessel while "carrying out operations within the main tanker anchorage at the Saudi Aramco Jeddah port". The affected vessel may be the Dominican-flagged tanker Desert Rose or the Saudi-flagged Al Amal Al Saudi, it added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

CureVac launches final trials for Covid vaccine

German biotech firm CureVac has enrolled the first participant for a Phase 2b/3 clinical trial of its Covid-19 vaccine candidate, it said yesterday. The trial, which is relevant for regulatory approval, will assess the safety and efficacy in adults and is expected to include more than 35,000 participants in Europe and Latin America, it added in a statement. The study aims to demonstrate the efficacy of its vaccine candidate in preventing first episodes of confirmed cases of Covid-19 of any severity as well as preventing moderate to severe confirmed cases of Covid-19 in participants who have never been infected with SARS-CoV-2, CureVac said.

British spy thriller author John le Carré dies aged 89




John le Carré, the British writer best known for his Cold War espionage novels "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" and "The Spy Who Came In From The Cold", has died aged 89, his agent and family said Sunday. The author, a former British intelligence officer whose real name was David Cornwell, wrote 25 novels and one memoir in a career spanning six decades, selling 60 million books worldwide.

Massive outage hits Google services worldwide

A massive outage knocked Google services including Gmail and video sharing platform YouTube offline across much of the globe yesterday. Within minutes, social media sites were awash with hashtags including #googledown and YouTubeDOWN as hundreds of millions of internet users tried vainly to connect to the US search engine. Google indicated the outage had affected all of its services for the "majority" of users. The outage began at approximately 1150 GMT and by 1230 GMT Google said that services had been restored for some users and said services should soon be restored for all users.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
Bangladesh Development Bank Ltd
Head Office, 8, Rajuk Avenue, Dhaka-1000
IT System Department

Reference: 11.3/267Dated: 14/12/2020

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited through the National e-GP Portal for the procurement of following goods & services:

| e-Tender ID | Name of goods & related services | Closing & opening date & time |
|-------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 518554 | Supply, installation, testing and maintenance of the HR & Payroll Management System with necessary training for Bangladesh Development Bank Limited. | December 30, 2020 Time: 12.00pm |
| 524490 | Supply, installation and testing of Biometric Attendance Device for Bangladesh Development Bank Limited. | December 30, 2020 Time: 12:30pm |

These are online tenders, where only e-Tenders will be accepted and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks' branches up to banking hours.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) (01762625528-31) (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

-Sd-
Md. Nazrul Islam
Deputy General Manager
Tel: 02-57160451

GD-1997

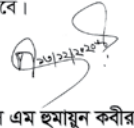
EU watchdog warns of pitfalls in use of AI

REUTERS, Brussels

The European Union's rights watchdog has warned of the risks of using artificial intelligence in predictive policing, medical diagnoses and targeted advertising as the bloc mulls rules next year to address the challenges posed by the technology.

While AI is widely used by law enforcement agencies, rights groups say it is also abused by authoritarian regimes for mass and discriminatory surveillance. Critics also worry about the violation of people's fundamental rights and data privacy rules.

The Vienna-based FRA urged policymakers to provide more guidance on how existing rules apply to AI.

| বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয় | | |
|---|---|---|
| প্রশাসন শাখা | | |
| পুনঃ উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি | | |
| ১. | প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম | : বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়। |
| ২. | অর্থের উৎস | : জিওবি। |
| ৩. | দরপত্র আহ্বানের বিজ্ঞপ্তি নম্বর ও তারিখ | : ১১.০০.০০০০.৬০৪.০৭.০২৫.২০/৬৮৫, তারিখঃ ১৩/১২/২০২০। |
| ৪. | দরপত্রের ধরণ | : ওপেন টেন্ডার। |
| ৫. | অনুষ্ঠান নির্মাণের সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ | : জাতীয় পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের জন্মশতবার্ষিকী মুজিববর্ষ উপলক্ষে সংসদ বাংলাদেশ টেলিভিশনে সম্প্রচারের নিমিত্ত অসমাপ্ত আত্মজীবনী এর ২৪ পর্বের অনুষ্ঠান এবং কারাগারের রোজ নামাচা এর ২৪ পর্বের অনুষ্ঠান নির্মাণের জন্য উপযুক্ত প্রোডাকশন হাউজ/সার্ভিস প্রোডাকশন/নটাক ও চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণ প্রতিষ্ঠান নিয়োগ। |
| ৬. | সরবরাহের সময় | : চুক্তি অনুযায়ী। |
| ৭. | দরপত্রদাতার যোগ্যতা | : দরপত্রের সাথে ২০২০-২০২১ অর্থবছরের ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, ২০২০-২০২১ কর বর্ষের আয়কর পরিশোধের প্রমাণক, ১১ ডিজিটের ভাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদপত্র/বিন, হাল তারিখের লিকুইড এ্যাসেটের প্রমাণক (সিডিউল মোতাবেক) ও অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র (সিডিউল মোতাবেক) ইত্যাদি দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে। এগুলো ছাড়াও দরপত্র সিডিউলে উল্লিখিত অন্যান্য দলিলাদি এক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য হবে। |
| ৮. | দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য | : প্রতিটি সিডিউলের মূল্য ১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা মাত্র (ফেরতযোগ্য নয়)। |
| ৯. | Tender security & tender validity period | : Tender security (ফেরতযোগ্য) প্যাকেজ নং-৫- অসমাপ্ত আত্মজীবনী ১,৫০,০০০/- (এক লক্ষ পঞ্চাশ হাজার) টাকা এবং প্যাকেজ নং-৬- কারাগারের রোজ নামাচা ১,২০,০০০/- (এক লক্ষ বিশ হাজার) টাকা। টেন্ডার ডাউলিডিটি পিরিয়ড দরপত্র দাখিলের দিন থেকে ১২০ (একশত বিশ) দিন। |
| ১০. | দরপত্র তফসিল বিক্রয়ের স্থান ও ঠিকানা | : সিনিয়র সহকারী সচিব (প্রশাসন শাখা) (উত্তর-পূর্ব ব্লক, লেভেল-১, ব্লক নং-১৩১, জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা-১২২৫। |
| ১১. | দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের তারিখ ও সময় | : ১৭ ডিসেম্বর, ২০২০ হতে ২৭ ডিসেম্বর, ২০২০ তারিখ সকাল ১০.০০টা হতে বেলা ৪.০০টা পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন। |
| ১২. | দরপত্র দাখিল এবং খোলার তারিখ ও সময় | : দাখিলঃ ২৮/১২/২০২০ তারিখ সকাল ৯.৩০টা হতে বেলা ১২.০০টা পর্যন্ত। খোলাঃ ২৮/১২/২০২০ তারিখ প্যাকেজ নং ৫- অসমাপ্ত আত্মজীবনী বেলা ১২.০৫ মিনিটে এবং প্যাকেজ নং-৬- কারাগারের রোজ নামাচা বেলাঃ ১২.৩৫ মিনিটে। |
| ১৩. | দরপত্র খোলার স্থান | : উপসচিব (প্রশাসন-১/অধিশাখা) এর কার্যালয় (ব্লক নম্বর ৭৪১, পূর্ব ব্লক, লেভেল-৭, জাতীয় সংসদ ভবন)। |
| ১৪. | বিশেষ নির্দেশনা | : কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন/সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন। |
| ১৫. | টেন্ডার আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম, পদবী, ঠিকানা ও ফোন নম্বর | : এ এস এম হুমায়ুন কবীর, সিনিয়র সহকারী সচিব, প্রশাসন শাখা, জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়, শেরে বাংলা নগর, ঢাকা-১২২৫। ফোনঃ ৫৫০২৯০০৭, ৯১৩১১০০-২১৮৮। |
| ✱ অগ্রাধী দরদাতাগণকে অবশ্যই তাদের প্রতিষ্ঠানের লেটারহেড প্যাডে সিডিউল ক্রয়ের জন্য ২ (দুই) কপি আবেদনপত্র সঙ্গে নিয়ে আসতে হবে। তন্মধ্যে ১টি আবেদন সংসদ ভবনে প্রবেশের জন্য অভ্যর্থনা কক্ষ এবং অপর আবেদনটি সিডিউল ক্রয়ের জন্য প্রশাসন শাখায় জমা দিতে হবে। | | |
| ২। দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়ের www.parliament.gov.bd ওয়েবসাইটে পাওয়া যাবে। | | |
| <div><div></div><div>এ এস এম হুমায়ুন কবীর সিনিয়র সহকারী সচিব ইউটারকমঃ ৯১৩১১০০-২১৮৮ ফোনঃ ৫৫০২৯০০৭</div></div> | | |
| জিডি-১৯৯০ | | |

LAW OPINION

Interpreting Discrimination in the Constitutional context of Bangladesh

KAWSER AHMED

IN Bangladesh, there is a prevalent common perception that unjust or unequal treatment results in discrimination. For example, the High Court Division in the *HRPB v. Jatiyo Sangsad* [67 DLR (2015) 191] held that section 32Ka of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004 was discriminatory because it created unjust classification (Para 26). The Court explained that the requirement of having prior sanction from the government to prosecute judges, magistrates or public servants for corruption under section 32Ka is inconsistent with article 27 of the Constitution, which provides that all laws should be non-discriminatory and reasonable (Para 30). Noticeably, the Court used the principles of non-discrimination and equality before law synonymously

28(1) of the Constitution provides that state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. If the aforesaid provisions are read together, it becomes crystal clear that an act of unjust or unequal treatment has not been envisaged as discrimination unless relatable to distinction made on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and

any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” It deserves mention that both article 7 of the UDHR and article 26 of the ICCPR tried to conflate the principles of non-discrimination and equality before law. These instruments envisage non-discrimination as a means to achieve equal protection

Discrimination, in the constitutional context of Bangladesh, occurs when prejudicial distinction is made strictly on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. Distinction made on any other grounds or criteria does not amount to discrimination.

place of birth. In other words, an act of discrimination among others should entail aspects of unjust or unequal treatment, but every unjust or unequal treatment *per se* is not discrimination. Moreover, benign classifications made on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth may not amount to discrimination if they do not result in any prejudicial consequence.

Most probably, the reason for treating non-discrimination and equality before law as synonymous concepts could be fairly attributed to the influence of international human rights instruments such as, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). For example, article 7 of the UDHR provides: “All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.” Similarly, article 26 of the ICCPR provides: “All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশের
সংবিধান

in its reasoning. This essay, however, relying on the textual interpretation of the relevant provisions of Bangladesh Constitution argues that discrimination, in the constitutional context of Bangladesh, occurs when prejudicial distinction is made strictly on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. Distinction made on any other grounds or criteria does not amount to discrimination.

Article 27 of the Bangladesh Constitution provides that all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law. Article

LAW WATCH

SUNSET CLAUSE: THE DEATH OF A LEGISLATION

SUPTI HOSSAIN & MD. MASFUKUR RAHMAN

SUNSET clause is a legal provision which provides for automatic disposition of any law or agency or government programme unless extended. It is considered as an important part of temporary legislation. It delineates the expiration of any law or provision on a fixed date when no extension or renewal of that law is executed. Sunset provision determines the destiny of legislative provisions and acts as a mirror for the evolution of society, economic and political conditions. Sunset clauses permit the coordination of the provisions for changing social and political circumstances and determining the expiration date of unnecessary acts.

There are some elements which need to be fulfilled to include sunset clause in any statute. At first, a determined reason should be considered for attaching this clause into the statute. Secondly, it is necessary to consider that the statute might not be perpetual. Finally, the effects of the sunset provision should be evaluated by legislators with a view to verifying the purposes for containing this clause.

However, in case of renewal or extension of the sunset clause, the burden of proof is shifted to the legislators claiming that sunset clause should be extended and this extension is compulsory. However, before that, an evaluation process is essential for analysing the effects of the sunset clause and its dispositions. The objects of this evaluation process are to justify whether the aim for which this clause was included has been achieved or whether the clause should be extended for a specified period or this extension is obligatory for legal purposes.

As sunset provision is a specific clause for automatic termination of statute or provision, this clause can be useful as a precautionary instrument to access new

statutes for appropriate generation and society. Since this provision is the indication of temporary legislation, this clause may be required in case of war, economic crisis, or other extraordinary emergency circumstances. In the United States, the USA Patriot Act enacted a number of sunset clauses in the emergency situation of the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001. Even in Germany and in Netherlands, sunset clauses were used to prevent excessive bureaucracy and regulatory burdens. Therefore, it can be seen by the practice that sunset clauses are the means to reduce regulatory problems and prevent uncertainty.

There are some shortcomings of sunset provision, particularly on investments and tax credits. For example, in United States, once this provision was included in the regulations on production tax credits to fuel investment in renewable energy and innovation. This provision was imposed on these tax credits for

three years but it appeared to be insufficient and at least three to seven years were required for that project of energy.

In Bangladesh, there is a law named *Druto Bichar Tribunal Ain 2002* which also contained sunset clause of seventeen years. However, the Government of Bangladesh decided to extend the period of sunset provision of *Druto Bichar Tribunal Ain 2002* in 2019. The interesting fact is that the law was already expired on 9th April of 2019, about 2 months ago before the amendment took place. It was argued that if such law amended after expiry, that would conflict with article 35 of the Constitution of Bangladesh in respect of trial and punishment. However, it at least opened a door to come out from obsolete laws in Bangladesh.

THE WRITERS ARE MEMBERS OF RESEARCH WING AT A.S & ASSOCIATES.



REVIEWING THE VIEWS

Moral Policing in Bangladesh: legal implications

ARPEETA SHAMS MIZAN

MORAL policing is when someone imposes their subjective standards and ideas of ethics and morality on other people and prevents them from exercising their civil liberty. For example, X thinks women should not be out after sunset. If X approaches a random female pedestrian on the street and starts questioning her why she is outside at an odd time, that is moral policing.

Moral policing is not lawful. Moral policing is done by people who are socially, culturally and politically powerful by abusing their power and privilege without any lawful authority. Moral policing is when a man uses his male privilege to tell a woman she should not be wearing trousers. It is when a local businessman disciplines a poor female worker because she dared ask for sick leave. It can even be a woman rebuking other women for leaving their babies at home for joining office after maternity leave. None of the grounds that sparked the outrage: wearing trousers, asking for leave or resuming work after pregnancy are backed by legal sanctions. But these moral police believe that it is a moral responsibility to surveil women to keep them at the right place.

Moral policing does not fall under freedom of speech. Free speech does not excuse hate speech or misogyny. Thus, any abuse directed at humiliating a person or group of persons is not protected by free speech as per national and international legal standards.

Why does it happen?

Moral policing is a manifestation of extra-legal mob justice. In most cases, it is the men who do moral policing whenever they feel that women are getting out of control, that women are not preserving the traditional ethos and culture. But because their concerns cannot be enforced through legal means (e.g. X cannot make a complaint to the police that a woman is smoking at a public place) they take the matter in their own hands.

In the Indo-Bangla-Pak sub-continent, moral policing is rampant. It is a widely



practised patriarchal norm to make women guilty. women are demanding their legal rights? shameless! women are demanding their due wages? Characterless! women are refusing early marriage? Prostitutes! These are rooted in conservative patriarchal norms which with public sanctions often go unchecked.

What makes the matter worse is that more often than not, even the law enforcement agency engage in moral policing, by abusing their authoritative positions. It is not uncommon in Bangladesh to see police raiding restaurants and parks in towns to arrest couples sitting together. It is a basic civil liberty for citizens to freely and peacefully intermingle in public places. But police arrest couples for simply sitting closely or holding hands under the pretext of obscenity because according to those particular police officers, unmarried couples holding hands constitute immoral activity. These police officers may turn a blind eye to the local loan defaulter or drug dealer, but young lovers never escape their attention.

Moral policing has other manifestations in Bangladesh, and it does not only happen in open spaces or roads. In 2017, a faculty member of Dhaka University Gender Studies department was temporarily dismissed on accusations of displaying obscene content in class; in fact, what the faculty member showed in class were reading materials on human sexuality. It was the Gender Studies department after all! This shows what a

LAW NEWS

PREVENTING CHILD MARRIAGE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Proper implementation of law is needed



LAW DESK

NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice, along with its partner organisations We Can and DASCOH Foundation jointly organised a Policy Dialogue with relevant public authorities on the progress and obstacles of the implementation of law on 08 December at CIRDP Auditorium, Dhaka under the project titled Strengthened Civil Society Protects and Promotes Women’s Rights supported by the European Union. Representatives from the relevant government ministries, local governments and academicians and regional and local CSO members joined the policy dialogue.

The meeting shared the findings and recommendations of a study entitled ‘Domestic Violence and Child Marriage: An Inter-locked Tragedy in Women and Girl’s Life in Bangladesh’ conducted by Rabeya Rawshan, Senior Consultant and Mohammad Golam Sarwar, Lecturer, Department of Law, University of Dhaka. The study consulted local and regional civil society organizations (CSOs) and documented their policy inputs in relation to implementation of Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act (DVA) 2010 and Child Marriages Restraint Act (CMRA) 2017 and existing gaps in the implementation process.

The study shows that the societal structure influenced by embedded traditions and culture creates impediments towards the implementation of CMRA. The malpractice by lawyers facilitates child marriages through affidavits that have been treated as an accepted norm though they have no legal effect. These irregularities not only bypass the actual implementation of law but also create an extra-legal culture which seriously hampers the social fabric. The in-depth analysis of the CMRA shows that considering the social context of Bangladesh where the awareness against child marriage is still under-developed, the special provision under CMRA may be used to justify child marriage.)

Researchers also presented the frustrating findings regarding the DVA. The study reveals that the Act is rarely exercised by the common people.

Dr. Abul Hossain, Project Director, Multi-Sectoral Programme of Violence Against Women of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Laila Jesmin Banu, Programme Manager of European Union (Bangladesh); Irfat Ara Iva, Programme Analyst of UN Women; Zobaida Nasreen, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Dhaka; Sabina Sultana, Senior Program Officer, Multi-Sectoral Programme of Violence Against Women of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Akramul Haque, CEO, DASCOH shared their valuable insights. The following recommendations were made:

The implementing stakeholders should be made accountable.

The provision of keeping separate register for domestic violence cases must be implemented.

The provision on effectuating the penalty within two years of child marriage should be brought within the jurisdiction of the mobile courts.

The government should direct the District Bar Associations to cancel the registration of notary advocates who are engaged with the commission of child marriage.

The Union and Upazila Women Affairs Officer must take proper steps for the establishment of Child Marriage Prevention Committees.

scary level moral policing has reached in Bangladesh. Even this year we have seen two instances where government officials by transgressing their authority, ordered women employees in their office to wear hijab and Islamic dress, because they felt by being the head of the office, they can dictate how their subordinates should behave.

Why is moral policing bad?

Moral policing constitutes violation of constitutionally guaranteed civil rights, privacy rights and facilitates violence against women. the most common justification for moral policing is “protecting women’s safety and security.

Moral policing has been on the rise in recent times in Bangladesh. Last week when random men walked up to an adult woman, demanding justification for her smoking, the bystanders justified it by protecting the social values. Nobody seems to notice the men freely smoking which affects children and common people through passive smoking.

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees freedom of movement, freedom of association and privacy. Moral policing violates all these rights, especially for women. Article 28 of the Constitution guaranteed equal access to women in all public places and institution.

Can we prosecute moral policing?

Unfortunately, there is no offence called moral policing under Bangladeshi law, however, we can prosecute people engaging in moral policing under other grounds. For example, if couples are harassed by the police, they can file a case under section 166 of Penal Code 1860 (PC) for Public servant disobeying law, with intent to cause injury to any person. We can also file cases on grounds of criminal intimidation (u/s 503 of PC) outraging the modesty of a woman (u/s 354 of PC), unlawful confinement (u/s 340 of PC), Assault or criminal force with intent to dishonour person, otherwise than on grave provocation (u/s 355 of PC), extortion (u/ss 383, 385, 386 of PC) and sexual assault against women under Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Domon Ain.

THE WRITER IS A SOCIOLEGAL RESEARCHER AND TEACHES LAW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA (NOW ON STUDY LEAVE).

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA TUESDAY DECEMBER 15, 2020, AGRAHAYAN 30, 1427 BS

Seminal HC judgement on ACC independence

The government must take the ruling seriously

IN a seminal judgement, the High Court ruled on December 13 that the government cannot withdraw any corruption cases filed and moved by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), nor can it recommend withdrawal of such cases from trial proceedings. We wholeheartedly welcome the judgement issued by the High Court following a revision petition filed by the ACC itself, and believe that, if realised, it will go a long way towards ensuring a functional, independent and efficient national graft body that can monitor and check corruption at all levels and in all sectors. However, we remain unclear as to whether the judgement will be applicable to cases that have been withdrawn recently and if they can be reopened again.

Although the ACC is an independent body as per the Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2004, it has unfortunately been subject to political and administrative control since its establishment. The government has reportedly recommended that the graft body withdraw over 7,000 criminal cases filed before the tenure of Awami League, and the recommendations for withdrawals have continued unabated during the current regime as well. The ACC has not been able to make up significant leeway when it launched crucial investigations into officials holding important positions within the government and/or ruling party, and have had to limit itself to pursuing petty graft allegations. It is no surprise then that the ACC has been rendered toothless, as a result of which public confidence in a critical institution is eroding.

Strengthening the ACC's institutional capacity and ensuring its independence is instrumental to promoting good governance and fighting corruption that has seeped insidiously into every public institution and the very fabric of society. Bangladesh continues to remain the 14th most corrupt country in the world, according to the Global Corruption Perception Index 2019 by Transparency International. If the government is sincere about its "zero tolerance" stance against corruption, it must take the High Court judgement seriously and ensure that it no longer protects individuals directly or indirectly related to ruling authority or interferes in the proceedings of the ACC in any way.

Major Sinha's murder has opened a Pandora's box

The police force must be cleansed of criminal elements

WE welcome the rigorous investigation by RAB and the home ministry that has revealed the details of the premeditated murder of Major (ret'd) Sinha Rashed Khan. It was spearheaded by Teknaf Police Station OC Pradeep Kumar Das who, aided by some of his colleagues, masterminded this heinous crime to hide his own involvement in a drug trade which was about to be exposed by Major Sinha. The investigation has revealed that OC Pradeep threatened to "destroy" Sinha if he did not leave the area, that Sinha was stopped at a police checkpoint on Cox's Bazar-Teknaf highway on July 31. According to witnesses, when he came out of the car with his hands over his head, they shot him. The home ministry probe has established that Sinha was alive when OC Pradeep came to the spot but they delayed taking him to the hospital. He thus bled to his death while the accused concocted a story about searching his car for narcotics when he "pointed" a gun at them and they shot him in self-defence. Subsequently, two of Sinha's associates were arrested on false narcotics charges and all their and Sinha's electronic devices were seized. Later, when RAB recovered the devices, they were found tampered with and the memory cards were destroyed.

While we find relief in finally knowing the truth and the fact that OC Pradeep and most of his cohorts have been arrested, we are also shocked at the extent of criminality of an OC and the impunity he has enjoyed over the years. Since Pradeep's taking charge of Teknaf police station in 2018, at least 87 people have been killed in 48 gunfights. A RAB source has said that Sinha had found out that OC Pradeep was involved in a cross-border drug trade that generated Tk 50 lakh daily. His murder has exposed the level of corruption among those occupying the highest positions of the police force in Teknaf and the complicity of lower-ranking officers that has led to not only the death of Major Sinha but many other individuals. It is well-known that the drug trade flourishes with the help of such corrupt law enforcers who have abandoned their mandate to protect the public in exchange for the huge amounts of money they can make. Thus the credibility of narcotics drives and arrests or deaths of so-called drug traders in "crossfire" is called into question. Unfortunately, these incidents have only added to the people's fear and mistrust of law enforcers.

Reports of police personnel being involved in filing false cases, extortion, evidence tampering, murder, and refusing to file genuine cases have been frequent. It is unfortunate that the good work that police do becomes overshadowed by these instances of criminality and moral degradation of some members of the law enforcement agencies. The police force must sincerely and thoroughly investigate allegations of crime against members of their organisation. In addition, there have to be independent investigations by the home ministry, as has been the case in Major Sinha's murder, to ensure that they are unbiased and uninfluenced.

It is crucial that the public regain their trust and confidence in police and all other law enforcement agencies. But for that to happen, corrupt and criminally minded public officials must be held accountable and, if found guilty of crimes, be punished by the law. The entrenched system of corruption in these organisations has to be wiped out for good.

SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

MOST countries of the world have moved in the past 50 years from the age-old practice of government secrecy towards making their work largely accessible by the public through Right to Information (RTI) or Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation. Despite this slow revolution, secrecy in government work remains a deeply entrenched tradition. Even in more mature democracies, governments remain ever ready to limit the operation of the law whenever possible. We saw this during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

This resistance is not difficult to understand. Governments do not like that their shortcomings or wrongdoings are discovered by citizens. RTI/FOI acts are instruments to make that possible. They arose from citizens' rights movements, to the growth of consumerism, to distrust of the bureaucracy, to the struggle for press freedom, etc. They gave rise to public pressure on governments to adopt the law.

In more recent decades, additional factors have influenced government decisions. Not least, international lenders often tie loans to the recipient governments' adoption of transparency and accountability legislation to fight corruption. In fact, supranational bodies like the Organisation for Economic Co-

operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, and the Council of Europe have promoted the law as an essential component of open and democratic government.

When such laws take shape, countries may be ill-prepared for them: the government may not have the capacity or willingness to apply the law, and citizens may not be equipped to make use of it. Such revolutionary laws require a fundamental change in the mind-set of public authorities to move away from their deep-seated secretive tradition, and in the

community at large. As a result, the law remains largely unutilised or underutilised in many countries including Bangladesh. Countries fare better where the adoption of the law was preceded by a peoples' reform movement, or where the civil society is deeply committed and works unitedly to reap the benefits. Effective implementation of the law is thus dependent upon a clear understanding by citizens of its objectives and goals and their preparedness to use it. This cannot happen without a serious commitment of civil society groups, such as non-governmental organisations and voluntary agencies/associations working for peoples' welfare in various sectors. They must remember that there are no areas of public life (in which public authorities are engaged) that cannot benefit from the application of the RTI Act. In fact, in Bangladesh, whatever progress has been achieved in implementing the RTI Act so far was possible due largely to the commitment and dedication of many NGOs. There is a need for more.

We call on development workers, professional groups such as doctors' and lawyers' associations, and all those working in other sectors of public life to realise their stake in the law. Not to speak of journalists and media houses, of course. Any area of activity where government and

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other public bodies are involved, either directly or indirectly, can benefit from their promotional and watchdog role.

We propose a road map for these organisations.

Educate your members, stakeholders, boards and beneficiaries.

Hold workshops, seminars, community dialogues—whatever platforms work for your group. Use these to achieve several goals as outlined below.

Help citizens understand the importance of RTI not only for their

personal needs, but also for the good of their neighbourhood, village, town, city and the country at large. Show how RTI can bring about good governance.

Draw attention to the unique and distinctive nature of the law. One: RTI is pre-eminently a peoples' law, enacted to empower people *vis-à-vis* the government and other public authorities. Unlike other laws that are enforced by governments, the RTI Act can only be enforced by



citizens. Two: the act provides creative opportunities for citizens to use it for improvement of public services. The more creative and imaginative they are, the more useful can be the outcome of their interventions. Three: the law provides a direct role for citizens to play in the governance of the country, an area which was traditionally the sole preserve of governments. Four: it is a law that governments are most wary of because of its capacity to unearth unpleasant truths about their activities. And five, perhaps most importantly: it is a law which can lead to improved citizen-government relationship and thereby contribute to better governance for the people.

Publicise stories about the use of RTI. Use interpersonal communication, scholarly publications, the media and social media to talk about the law. We have done that regularly in this column and intend to continue to do so.

Be inspired by others.

We can draw lessons from experience accumulated over the years in our own country. One: the most formidable hurdle for RTI users is their intrinsic disbelief that the government attitude towards official secrecy has changed at all. In fact, it may

have even worsened in recent years, as witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Two: what assurances are there that public authorities, confronted with unpleasant information requests, will not retaliate by various means at their disposal? Three: what if they do not respond to the requests, or the independent compliance mechanism of the Information Commission does not do its work? And four: is it worth spending time and money

to appear before the Commission for complaint hearings if there is no assurance that the provisions of the law would prevail?

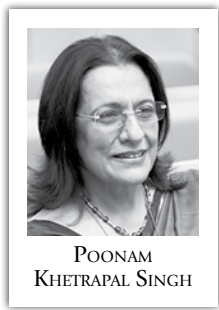
Remember that all such laws go through teething problems. Some of these have begun to fade as both citizens and public officials become accustomed to the law. The need is to accelerate the improvements, which can only happen by using the law more, not less.

As long as the law is not abused to settle private scores and used primarily to make the work of public offices more transparent and accountable, leading to systemic changes, there is reason to be optimistic. Helping citizens to learn to use the RTI Act through seeking information on more innocuous subjects in the beginning has led to improved understanding and better interaction between citizens and public offices.

Civil society groups can play an important role to accelerate the momentum by playing a watchdog role for a seamless operation of the law, and RTI practitioners are available to advise and help, including the present authors.

Shamsul Bari and Ruhi Naz are Chairman and RTI Coordinator respectively of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB). Email: rib@citech-bd.com

Ready immunisation systems to deliver safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines



POONAM KHETRAPAL SINGH

IMMUNISATION saves lives and promotes life-long health and well-being. It is among the most powerful public health and development interventions that exist. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 response, the WHO South-East Asia region has made urgent and sustained efforts to maintain immunisation as part of a broader commitment to ensure that all people can continue to access essential health services amid the pandemic.

Member-state progress has been strong and steady. Despite initial disruptions in March through May, most routine and supplementary immunisation activities in the region have been revived and maintained. Millions of children have continued to receive life-saving protection against a range of vaccine-preventable diseases, from diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus, to rotavirus and rubella. Not a single vaccine stock-out has occurred. Amid enhanced physical distancing and infection prevention and control protocols, programme managers, health workers and volunteers from across the region have shown

But of increasingly urgent need is the development and roll-out of comprehensive plans to identify and train an adequate number of health workers and volunteers to administer the vaccine. Crucially, communities must continue to be engaged.

tremendous resolve. They deserve our highest praise.

Throughout the Covid-19 response, recovery and beyond, WHO will continue to support member states and the region to remain polio-free, to sustain maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination, and to accelerate progress towards measles and rubella elimination by 2023. To achieve this and more, it is essential that countries identify remaining immunisation gaps and

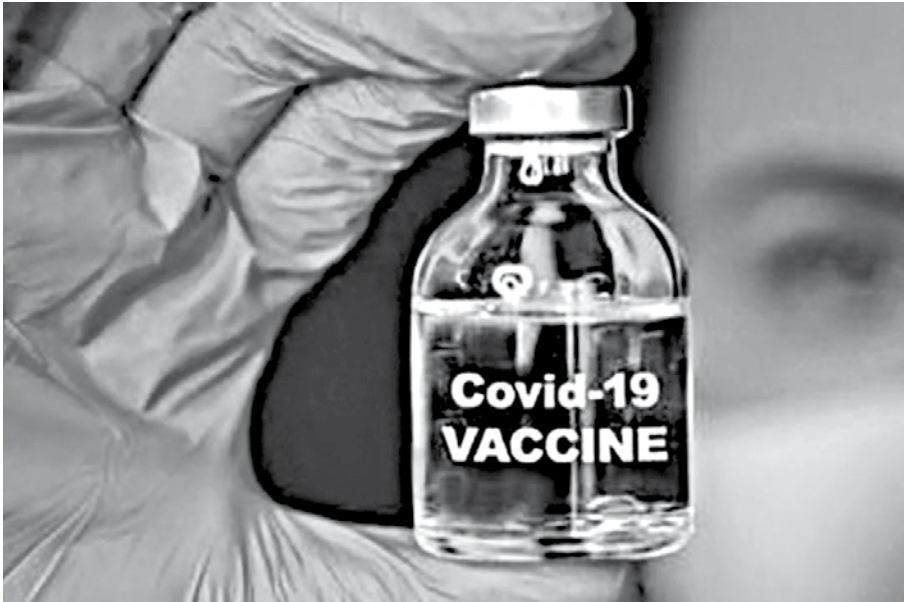


PHOTO: COLLECTED

rapidly implement catch-up campaigns. But as together we continue to strengthen all aspects of the response, we must not only reinforce and build the capacity of immunisation systems, but also ready them to meet our next challenge: to equitably and efficiently deploy vaccines against Covid-19.

Almost all countries in the region plan to procure a first tranche of vaccines from the WHO-supported COVAX Facility; the vaccine pillar of the Access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator. For the allocation framework to be effective, and for at least 2 billion doses to be delivered to all participating countries globally by the end of next year, immediate and sustained increases in international and global funding are required. Rapid advances in research and development on vaccines against Covid-19 have seen more than a handful of vaccines reach

phase 3 trials, and some have already gone for emergency use authorisation, or are likely to do so very soon. Anticipation is building.

As and when vaccines are found to be safe and effective, countries will need to activate detailed plans to efficiently deploy the initial tranches of Covid-19 vaccines to cover up to 20 percent of the most vulnerable of their population, and to carry out coordinated and equitable deployments thereafter. WHO will

continue to provide member states its full support to help finalise such plans, with a focus on several key areas.

First, defining priority groups for vaccination. The WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunisation has in recent months published critical guidance that considers priority groups for vaccination based on different epidemiologic settings and vaccine supply scenarios.

Informed by the guidance, countries must make evidence-based, context-specific decisions, accounting for the risk profile of different groups based on age, underlying health and comorbidities, and socio-demographic risks, among other factors. Across all settings, and whatever the supply scenario, it is imperative that frontline health personnel are provided first access.

Second, enhancing service delivery,

communication and vaccine demand. Across the region, countries must identify platforms to deliver vaccines to target populations, while also strengthening infection prevention and control protocols.

But of increasingly urgent need is the development and roll-out of comprehensive plans to identify and train an adequate number of health workers and volunteers to administer the vaccine. Crucially, communities must continue to be engaged, listened to and provided with high-quality, scientifically sound information, which will in turn drive vaccine demand.

Third, strengthening vaccine cold chain and logistics. Even to reach an initial 20 percent coverage, countries may have to increase cold chain capacity, which will require additional resources. Logistics working groups will need clear terms of reference and standard operating procedures not only to coordinate the deployment of vaccines, but also to source and deliver ancillary products. To address these and other challenges, WHO will continue to work with international and global partners to mobilise the financial, material and technical resources required.

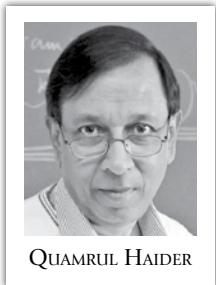
Complacency must not set in. Although vaccine manufacturing has already started, reaching sufficient availability will take time. In a crisis such as this, there are no silver bullets. Today, tomorrow, and for many more months to come, we must continue to implement the basic public health measures that we know work, and which have defined our "new normal". Wash your hands. Wear a mask. Maintain physical distance and avoid the three Cs—crowded places, close-contact settings, and confined and enclosed spaces.

Almost a year since Covid-19 emerged, we have cause for optimism. Countries in the region are to be commended for beginning immunisation planning as early as July, for carrying out vaccine readiness assessments, and for continuing to act in solidarity and with recognition that vaccines are a global public good. Now is the time to firm up and finalise such plans, for the equitable and efficient protection of vulnerable populations, and for the health and wellbeing of all.

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh is the WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia.

The Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn

A rare planetary alignment not seen in 800 years



QUAMRUL HAIDER

ON December 21, the first day of winter this year, the two gaseous giants in the solar system—Jupiter and Saturn—will put up a spectacular display in the evening sky. They will be so close that they will appear, from our perspective, to overlap completely, creating a rare “double planet” effect. However, while they may appear to the naked eye extremely close, within 0.1 degree of each other, in reality, they are separated by more than 400 million miles. To visualise this distance, a 0.1 degree separation is about the thickness of a dime held at arm’s length. This celestial synchronisation, also referred to as the “Christmas Star,” has not occurred in nearly 800 years. Last time they were so close together was on March 4, 1226.

The spectacle is a curious effect of their orbits around the Sun. Since Jupiter takes 11.9 years to circle the Sun and Saturn 29.5 years, the faster moving Jupiter catches up with the slower moving Saturn and overtakes it roughly every 20 years. Astronomers call the moment of overtaking “Great Conjunction.”

At conjunction, separation between two objects in the sky as viewed from Earth is a minimum. Moreover, at great

conjunction, Earth, Jupiter and Saturn align themselves along a straight line so as to make the two Jovian planets appear very close together. Great conjunctions are rare though because more often than not, Earth is not aligned along a straight line with Saturn and Jupiter when they are at conjunction. The duo will then appear to be separated by a few degrees.

Furthermore, the event can happen while the Sun is up blocking the conjunction from view. Indeed, during the last great conjunction on May 31, 2000, the planets never came anywhere as close together as they will this month. Besides, we could not see the overlap because the alignment occurred too close to the Sun and thus was lost in the glare of the twilight. The same was true the time before, in December of 1980.

This time around, after sunset on Monday, December 21, which is also the winter solstice, Jupiter and Saturn will appear to the unaided eye as a single bright object low in the southwestern sky. This dazzling display of two celestial objects kissing each other on the longest night of the year can be seen from everywhere in the world. It will become visible in Bangladesh soon after sunset but only for a short time. The conjoined planets will sink below the western horizon about an hour later. Also, the further north viewers are, the less time they will have to catch a glimpse of this astronomical event.



An artist's rendition of what the alignment of Earth, Saturn and Jupiter will look like on December 21, 2020.

COURTESY: AUTHOR

How can we spot the planets with naked eye? In the weeks leading up to the great conjunction, Saturn will be to the upper left of Jupiter, slowly dancing toward Jupiter. On clear nights, unlike stars which twinkle,

Jupiter and Saturn will hold consistent brightness, making it easier to spot them amidst the myriad of objects in the stellar zoo. Although Saturn will be slightly dimmer and smaller in size, yet it will be just as bright as the

brightest stars, with a recognisable golden glow. An amateur telescope or a high-power binocular will show the planets in more detail, including the Galilean moons of Jupiter—Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto.

We do not have to wait until December 21 to view this dazzling conjunction. They are already a pretty pair in the sky, and will remain so through the entirety of December. Nevertheless, after December 21, Jupiter will start moving eastward, separating from Saturn. Additionally, during early evening hours, the planetary pair will appear lower in the sky, albeit appearing near each other for about a month, giving sky watchers plenty of time to witness the amazing alignment throughout the holiday season.

If you miss the spectacle this year, you should not expect to see it in 2040 or 2060. The next great conjunction, with a separation of about 0.2 degree, will occur on March 15, 2080. After that, it will be 2417 and 2477.

Finally, dating back to Kepler's time in the 17th century, some astronomers hypothesised that the Star of Bethlehem that guided the Three Magi—also known as the “three wise men”—to Christ's birthplace was a conjunction like the one we will witness on December 21. It could be but involving different planets.

Quamrul Haider is a Professor of Physics at Fordham University, New York.

Why have India's new farm bills riled up the farmers?



ASAD RAUF

FOR nearly three weeks, India has been witnessing massive protests from farmer organisations across the country. The protests are in response to three farm bills that the Narendra Modi government enacted as laws without much consultation with the stakeholders. Even the upper house of Indian parliament, Rajya Sabha, was left short-changed when these three bills were passed via voice vote, ignoring opposition demands for wider consultation and deliberation. After months of discontent, and almost no attempt by the central government to allay fears, farmer organisations finally started marching to New Delhi to force the government to take their angst seriously. What has ensued since then is a stand-off. The government had underestimated the anxiety amongst farmers who called for a complete rollback of these laws. However, given Mr. Modi's image of a strongman, no-nonsense leader, a full rollback would be extremely detrimental to his image.

So what exactly are these laws that have riled up farmers so bad? The issue is complicated. Agriculture is a heavily regulated industry and, importantly, within the ambit of the state governments in India. Thus, agricultural laws were always state-specific, and countrywide reforms were always difficult and required consensus building.

Consensus building, however, was never really one of Mr. Modi's strong suits. Under the advice of a few experts, and under pressure to appear to rescue a crippled economy, Mr. Modi brought three laws that massively overhaul the existing rules regarding how farmers sell their produce. These new laws overhaul the existing agricultural markets of every state in India as the central law weakens the states' own laws on agriculture. The lack of any consultation with state governments, farmer organisations, and even parliamentarians (whose job it is to discuss and enact laws) makes farmers view these laws with suspicion. After all, whenever Mr. Modi has embarked on grand policy announcements, the outcome has generally been disastrous. Lack of consultation was central to those policy disasters (prominent among them being demonetisation).

The details of these laws are complicated but essentially there are two pain points for farmers. The first is allowing the entry of unregulated entities (e.g. major corporations) to directly contract with farmers, buy agri-products and stockpile them at their whims. The second, although not mentioned in these

laws, is the fear that the government will scale down its procurement of grains, and as a result, lakhs of farmers who sell their produce to the government will be left at the mercy of large corporations. Government procurement occurs at decently remunerative prices called Minimum Support Prices (MSPs). Farmers fear that the prices they will get as a result of these new laws will be exploitative and far below MSPs.

In the past, farmers could only sell their produce at designated markets called APMCs (the laws, however, were different in different states). APMCs, short for Agricultural Produce Market Committees, are regulated and state-controlled markets where traders need to register before they can purchase products from farmers. APMCs have regular auctions to facilitate price discovery and generally levy a fee on transactions that happen inside their wholesale markets or *mandis*. The new farm laws now allow buyers and traders to bypass *mandis* and buy directly from farmers. Anyone with an Indian PAN card can now buy from farmers directly. One might ask,

away from the APMC markets and will want to purchase directly from the farmer (the APMC markets will, therefore, collapse).

The question is what such a market outside the APMCs will look like. Proponents of these laws argue that this will create larger private markets which will lead to better price realisations for farmers. The concern is that such would be the case only if the entry barrier for new buyers was indeed a major issue. On the other hand, if allowing anyone to buy brings few new buyers and existing buyers simply move outside the regulated APMC framework, then the resulting markets will be opaque where farmers can easily be exploited. Since these will be private transactions with no reporting framework, the government will lose oversight of the price discovery mechanism, leaving farmers in a free-for-all market. Farmers fear that such a “free market” where they have little or no bargaining power would be undeniably exploitative.

Proponents also argue that the entry of corporates will bring bigger players to the market and this will

purchases of grains create incentives for farmers to stick to crops which are likely to be purchased by the government. Thus there is excess supply. There is a hint (although the government at the moment denies this) that it will scale down these purchases, thus forcing farmers to shift away from these water-guzzling crops. The trouble here is that the overhauling of the procurement systems passes the burden of switching costs entirely onto the farmers. Farmers need better incentives to diversify to other crops, not threats of closure of public procurement. Any equitable reform would first create incentives for farmers to switch before scaling down procurement. Such “reforms” where farmers bear the costs are grossly

unfair.

Any student of economics would argue that “free markets” with more competition are surely better for sellers. Thus those in favour of liberalisation have, by and large, cheered these laws. However, one needs to ponder how “free” these markets will really be. For example, whenever there is a whiff of onion prices going high, the Indian government swiftly bans exports, thereby denying the farmers the benefit of higher prices. Is that reflective of a free market? Secondly, the government appears beholden to corporates, and that too a select few. Corporates in India can now legally and discreetly channel massive amounts of funding to political parties via obscure Electoral

Bonds. The people of India have no recourse to knowing how much corporates are donating and under what quid-pro-quo arrangements. Thus, to trust a government to come on the side of farmers is difficult. In fact, some of the clauses in these new laws explicitly forbid farmers from dragging corporates to courts! Therefore, it is difficult to place trust in free market forces to ensure the welfare of farmers in such crony capitalist settings. “Free market” then becomes a guise for exploitation which ultimately begets social inequality. Farmers in India have sensed this better than many economists.

Dr Asad Rauf is an assistant professor of economics at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands.



File photo of demonstrators gesturing during a protest against the newly passed farm bills at Singhu border near New Delhi, India, on December 10, 2020.

PHOTO: REUTERS/ANUSHREE FADNAVIS

what is so troubling with this? After all, this is providing the farmers with a “choice”—they can always choose to sell at the APMC market if they wish. More choices should naturally lead to higher farmer incomes.

The trouble is, this theoretical argument ignores a lot of market frictions which could lead to undesirable outcomes for the farmers. For example, one feature that best characterises farmers in India is that most of them are small and marginal. More than 86 percent of farmers have a landholding of less than 1 hectare. Hence, most farmers have limited or no bargaining power. The new laws incentivise traders and buyers to do their trade outside APMC *mandis*, by not charging any taxes and fees which are usually levied on transactions inside the *mandis*. Therefore, any rational buyer/trader will move

raise the price at which a farmer can sell. But again, in a setting where there are millions of small farmers, would corporates see value in investing in private infrastructure, or would they employ the same middlemen to purchase on their behalf leaving the farmer with a raw deal? The experience in the state of Bihar, which abolished its own APMC markets in 2006, was that it neither brought private investments nor led to any substantial increase in farmer incomes.

The second major concern is that the government will scale down its public procurement. Many economists argue that the government of India over-purchases grains, primarily to support farmers, which ultimately rot in government go-downs. This is a waste of tax payers' money. These massive

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department

Office of the Upazila Engineer

Belaichari, Rangamati

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Memo. No: 46.02.8421.000.14.02.20-235

Date: 13/12/2020

Invitation for Tender (Works) (OTM)

e-Tender Notice N0-3/2020-2021.

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works, details are given below.

| SI No. | Package No | Name of work | Tender Last selling (date & time) | Tender Opening & Closing (date & time) | Tender ID no |
|--------|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|--------------|
| 1. | e-Tender/PEDP4/RAN/BIL/20202021/W2.00888 | Construction of Additional Class Room at West Mandirachara GPS Under PEDP4 | 04-Jan-2021 16:00 | 05-Jan-2021 16:00 | 524071 |
| 2. | e-Tender/PEDP4/RAN/BIL/20202021/W2.00891 | Construction of Additional Class Room at Bottali Mom Under PEDP4 | 04-Jan-2021 16:00 | 05-Jan-2021 16:00 | 524070 |
| 3. | e-Tender/PEDP4/RAN/BIL/20202021/W2.00890 | Construction of Additional Class Room at Tagolchara Mom Under PEDP4 | 04-Jan-2021 16:00 | 05-Jan-2021 16:00 | 524069 |
| 4. | e-Tender/PEDP4/RAN/BIL/20202021/W1.01293 | Construction of Additional Class Room at Dichalchari Mon GPS Under PEDP4 | 04-Jan-2021 16:00 | 05-Jan-2021 16:00 | 524068 |
| 5. | e-Tender/PEDP4/RMT/BIL/2019-20/W1.00346 | Construction of additional class room BELAICHARI MON GPS under PEDP4. | 04-Jan-2021 16:00 | 05-Jan-2021 16:00 | 524067 |
| 6. | e-Tender/PEDP4/RMT/BIL/2019-2020/W1.00342 | Construction of additional class room KENGRACHARI GPS under PEDP4 | 04-Jan-2021 16:00 | 05-Jan-2021 16:00 | 526534 |

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks branches up to 05-Jan-2021 13:00 further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Mutiuir Rahman)

13.12.2020

Upazila Engineer

Belaichari, Rangamati

Phone No : 0351-91003

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GD-1992



CLIMATE RISK INSURANCE AND PAY-OUT OF THE FLOOD INSURANCE PRODUCT

The Daily Star, the United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP), and Oxfam in Bangladesh jointly organised an online discussion titled “Climate Risk Insurance and Pay-out of the Flood Insurance Product” on November 24, 2020. Here we publish a summary of the discussion. Speakers’ serial has been maintained as per the flow of the discussion.



Mr. Mohammad Soeb Iftekhar,
Head, Economic Inclusion and Justice, Oxfam in Bangladesh

In our journey, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and UNWFP supported Oxfam in Bangladesh as a funding organisation. Green Delta Insurance Ltd (GDIC), as an insurer, explained the pivotal role of covering the risks of flood-affected vulnerable people. National Development Programme (NDP) has been our local partner and extended their hand to reach out to the targeted impact group. In designing the product, three organisations, which included Weather Risk Management Services (WRMS) from India, International Water Management Institute (IWMI) from Sri Lanka, and Save the Earth Climate Services Ltd (SECSL) from Bangladesh, supported us for data services and product development.



Mr. Rezaul Karim,
Head of Programme, World Food Programme (WFP) Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, we are implementing a five-year country strategic plan which will end in December 2020 and then be extended for another year. In this five-year country strategic plan, WFP has worked in areas where humanitarian help is necessary and in other areas with the help of different government agencies. By providing technical assistance we improved the systems for designing the safety net programmes. WFP also carries out some innovative works such as development of systems that can improve the delivery of social protection programmes.

Through the country strategic plan, WFP also intends to find ways to help the vulnerable communities in adopting healthy coping strategies so that they do not resort to negative coping mechanisms after experiencing any shock. Our initiatives include forecasting their financing through which we find ways of reaching out to beneficiaries particularly for flood-affected groups. This initiative began in 2019 and then again in 2020 we carried this out in a much larger scale. We also have initiatives called climate risk insurance and seasonal livelihood programming.



Ms. Farzanah Chowdhury,
Managing Director & CEO, GDIC

In a normal year, approximately 20 percent to 25 percent of the total land area is flooded in Bangladesh, with more extensive inundation not being uncommon. In 2020, the region experienced the biggest and the longest floods seen in the country in the last 20 years. In the last 40 years, Bangladesh experienced five major floods which caused economic losses totalling USD 8.4 billion.

Our focus when designing the insurance product that we jointly designed with WFP and Oxfam was to cover the extreme flood events and ensure quick pay-outs for the poor families to ameliorate the impact and provide support in the case of income opportunity loss. The product was designed based on satellite-based flood index. The validation of the product was done with water level data recorded on the ground in the Kurigram Sadar and Chilmari Upazila.

There are certain challenges that we have faced along the way. The pricing of the product is quite high in comparison to the earning of the farmers. There is also the factor of awareness among the consumers which can be increased through a multi-sectorial approach.

A viable, inclusive, and disruptive business model needs to be designed where all the stakeholders will be able to operate independently without direct financial aid from donor agencies. Government subsidies in premium and claims using the disruptive business model will bring in more partners in the field. A 15 percent Value Added Tax (VAT) rebate on index-based insurance products is required for reducing the price. Regulatory reformation is also highly necessary to enable “Periodic Premium Payment” by the beneficiaries to enhance the outreach of the entire agriculture insurance portfolio. Satellite remote sensing, real-time data provider weather stations, digitalisation of transaction methods, and utilisation of local authorities as a structural distribution channel are important initiatives that need to be undertaken besides building stronger collaboration between respective

departments, ministries of the government and relevant stakeholders to get the most out of the project. The availability of satellite data, digitalised solution for data extraction, and automated data circulation process by the government can facilitate index-based flood insurance across the whole country.



Dr. Giriraj Amarnath,
Research Team Leader (Water Risks & Disaster), IWMI

The role of government is very critical in supporting the gathering of data and information. The government can also help by sharing the data in a more inclusive way. The government can step in with more transparent ways of structuring the data and providing data for not just index-based insurance but broadly looking after the whole range of projects related to resilience development. The government should also ensure that the information can help improve the social response policies when it comes to disaster management.

The different relevant departments and ministries need to come up with a ‘think tank collaboration’ so that the academic institutes and the extension departments can work together. Collaboration is needed not just for the sake of designing an insurance product and its pricing but to also ensure that the farmers’ resilience is better built in the years to come, in light of climate change.



Dr. Anuj Kumbhat,
Co-founder & CEO, WRMS

WRMS works in developing crop insurance solutions and climate risk management solutions across the globe. We started weather

Since insurance organisations have some limitations at the grassroots level, micro-financing organisations can play an important role here. They can act as a distribution channel on behalf of the insurance companies. We still need some kind of clarification from the microcredit regulatory authority (MRA) and the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA) on whether micro-financing organisations can provide such support or not.



Professor Mahbuba Nasreen,
Professor & Director, Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies, University of Dhaka

The role of academia in research and evidence generation of climate risk insurance as a risk transfer solution is crucial. There are some areas, in the context of Bangladesh, where empirical evidence-based research is required. Academia can contribute significantly here for the development of new science and knowledge generation.

In academia, we have developed our curricula with a series of workshops related to disaster management and climate change issues. There are certain gaps present here. We do not have enough experts in these areas and hence we have to ensure capacity building for our students. In our curriculum, we have included topics related to risk insurance, understanding disaster risk, and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective partnership. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience is essential because it is not the sole responsibility of the government to make the country resilient.

We are trying to come up with insurance solutions that are currently unavailable such as insurance for industrial workers. We have observed that insurance for specific products for small farmers and rural shop owners is yet to be covered by the Bangladeshi insurance companies. In light of the current scenario, we need to start thinking about designing insurance products for the COVID-19 affected individuals.

we do not reach the relevant communities in time, such tools have no impact. Climate actions can be linked with insurance, but only if insurance is designed in a way to facilitate climate action.



Dr. Syeda Zinia Rashid,
Senior Programme Officer, Income and Economic Development (IED), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

As per the Climate Risk Index, Bangladesh is a disaster-prone country. A disaster insurance mechanism is required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for the overall growth of Bangladesh. The climate risk insurance mechanism in Bangladesh has the potential to present an effective and efficient alternative to the traditional disaster relief approaches. This mechanism can also effectively complement social protection and humanitarian response activities of the country.

We have incepted a few pilots under promoting risk mitigation measures for climate change adaptation. One of the key components is sector coordination. Sector coordination in terms of the actors allows for the proper exchange between development partners, insurance regulatory authorities, and the Ministry of Finance. This coordination is essential because we first need to demonstrate the best practices and lessons learned from different findings. We also want to create better Public-Private Partnership (PPP) opportunities to address this issue countrywide. We need to devise climate change insurance services to reach the bottom of the pyramid. Regulatory reformation is one of our visions. To achieve that, we need to create sustainable market-based products and services for the climate resilience or climate risk insurance mechanism.



Gokul Chand Das,
Advisor, Swisscontact

According to the Bangladesh Micro-Insurance Market Development Project (BMMDP), floods have been a significant risk exposure for the farmers of Bangladesh due to their frequent nature, even in terms of flash floods. In view of mitigating the risk and vulnerability of the farmers, BMMDP planned to conduct the flood research during the inception phase of the project but could not complete the research programme. The study will give us enormous data on what factors cause flooding and the losses that occur.

BMMDP operationalised the flood risk insurance programme in Bangladesh. We are also trying to implement weather index-based crop insurance services for the farmers. The crops and vegetables that would be covered under this flood insurance are maize, beans, potatoes, tomatoes, almond rice, and boro rice, for selected sub-districts under Gaibandha, Thakurgaon, Bogura, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Pabna, Naogaon, Nilphamari, and Jaipurhat. Our project is trying to help the insurance sector create a conducive regulatory environment for development and widespread adaptation and diffusion of flood insurance products through policy research and the development of necessary policy guidelines.



Syed Moinuddin Ahmed,
Addl. Managing Director & Company Secretary, GDIC

In the past decade, many sporadic initiatives were taken by both the public and private sectors to promulgate the ecosystem whereby a safety net could be ensured for the people at the bottom of the pyramid against climate change disasters. If this kind of system is to be made sustainable in Bangladesh, it has to be a public sector-driven initiative.

Crop insurance is new to Bangladesh’s insurance industry. There needs to be scaling before we can expect other insurance companies to get involved in crop insurance. The ideal situation for Bangladesh would be a PPP between relevant public sector stakeholders such as the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture, and private sector stakeholders such as insurers and technology partners.

The system has to be a distribution-driven model. Scaling up the initiative will require a combination of technology and distribution. An ecosystem dependent on technology and a massive distribution network is not affordable. Technology can be made affordable with local sourcing.

The distribution partners also need to be incentivised.

A policy framework or incentives are required for the insurance companies to encourage them to reach out to the mass people. Capacity building programmes would be necessary as well.

Ms. Ilryoung Lee,
Deputy Country Director, KOICA, Bangladesh

Climate risk insurance is a newly introduced initiative in Bangladesh. In regard to this, we need to focus on two things. Firstly, the implementations carried out in this project need to have visible outcomes. Next, we need to consider the issue of sustainability. For this to happen, it is necessary to build a technically sound insurance system for the analysis of the claims. It is also just as important to make people understand the importance of insurance premium payments in advance.

Mr. Piet Vochten,
Deputy Country Director, WFP Bangladesh

Climate risk insurance can act as an alternative crisis management technique. It can provide people with financial certainty during disasters and ensure that people have food security even during the most uncertain times. Climate risk insurance can also be a part of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management.

WFP has been involved with climate risk insurance for several years now. In fact, there are currently 2.5 million people being protected against climate risks through the insurance products developed and supported by WFP. Examples include microinsurance under the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative and national level insurance under the African Risk Capacity (ARC) Replica initiative. ARC Replica, in particular, is a novel initiative that reaches around 1.3 million people and protects these people from cases of severe droughts.

In Bangladesh, the agriculture sector is still a source of employment for almost half the population. This makes the country and its people particularly vulnerable to climate change. Therefore, building resilience is highly important in the context of Bangladesh.



Dr. Md. Enamur Rahman,
Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), Government of Bangladesh

Due to global warming, the incidents of natural disaster are ever-increasing. In the last two years, Bangladesh has observed three cyclones and two major flood events. These natural disasters result in loss of lives and property. The marginal population residing in the coastal areas lose their livestock, crops, and fisheries whenever these natural disasters hit our country. Covering these losses becomes a major feat for the government to tackle alone. In this context, climate risk insurance will be able to create major opportunities for the victims to overcome the loss and damages inflicted by the disasters.

MoDMR has a long history of successfully preparing for and responding to disasters and coordinating the various parts of the government including the numerous international partners to ensure a harmonised and effective recovery for the affected communities across the country.

The protection of people and assets is a key component of sustainable development. Although insurance is only explicitly mentioned once in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is implicitly intertwined with multiple goals. Insurance provides a safety net and an economic protection mechanism for all.

Climate risk insurance needs to be developed to protect the growth of all small businesses. Climate change threatens the livelihoods of all marginal people. Bangladesh is the seventh most vulnerable country in the world to natural disasters. Our Honourable Prime Minister has mentioned that there is a need for insurance to play a more effective role in the economic development of the country. The insurance industry’s contribution is currently less than one percent.




Zahidul Islam Sajal,
Moderator of the session

The Daily Star thanks Oxfam in Bangladesh and the UN WFP and the other partners for supporting us in the organisation of this event.

Mash magic sees Khulna in final

Firebrand Mushfiquir keeps Dhaka alive

SPORTS REPORTER

 Mashrafe Bin Mortaza rolled back the years, taking five wickets as a fired-up Gemcon Khulna gunned down high-flying Gazi Group Chattogram with a comprehensive 47-run victory in the first qualifier to reach the final of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup yesterday.

The former ODI skipper for the Tigers became only the second pacer for Bangladesh to pick up 150 wickets in this format after Mustafizur Rahman with his maiden five-wicket haul, helping Khulna bundle out their opposition for 163 runs.

It always looked like a tough ask for Chattogram chasing 211 runs as Mashrafe got into rhythm right away and got rid of the two big guns -- Soumya Sarkar for naught and Liton Das for 24 -- very early in the innings.

The veteran pacer, who was roped in by Khulna in the middle of the tournament following his eight-month hiatus from competitive cricket -- put the brakes on the chase by picking up those two wickets with great line and length and clever variation of pace. He went on to pick three more wickets and ended up with the figures of five for 35, announcing himself in this tournament in grand style.

Skipper Mohammad Mithun kept Chattogram's hopes alive but his departure for 53 put paid to those hopes. The port city side, however,



Gemcon Khulna players joined in the fun with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who returned career-best T20 figures of 5 for 35 to dismantle Gazi Group Chattogram innings in the qualifier 1 of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

will get one more shot at the final berth when they take on Beximco Dhaka in the second qualifier today. Earlier, Khulna's batting fired on all cylinders at the right time after being sent in to bat, courtesy of a blistering start from Jahurul Islam. The veteran right-hander, along with his partner Zakir Hasan, added 71 runs for the first wicket before the latter departed for 17.

Jahurul, however, went on and

reached his fifty off 33 balls while Imrul Kayes, who was making a comeback to the side, kept the tempo before his dismissal for 25.


Jahurul continued his aggressive approach while Shakib Al Hasan joined the party as the left-hander seemed to return to his groove.

Jahurul departed for a well-made 51-ball 80, an innings featuring four sixes and five fours. If Jahurul's innings laid the platform for a

big total, skipper Mahmudullah Riyad made sure that big became mammoth with a whirlwind nine-ball 30, which included three consecutive sixes against young pacer Shoriful Islam.

Shakib struck a couple of sixes and fours for his tournament-highest 28 before departing in the last over as Khulna added 77 runs off the last five overs to post 210 for seven in 20 overs.

SPORTS REPORTER

 On the same pitch which produced 441 runs in one of the group stage matches of the ongoing Bangabandhu T20 Cup, Beximco Dhaka yesterday managed to defend a sub-par total of 150 runs, beating Fortune Barishal by nine runs in eliminator.

Skipper Mushfiquir Rahim marshalled his troops with great authority, if at times with a bit too much of aggression, as the Dhaka bowlers kept the pressure till the end to restrict Barishal to 141 for nine in 20 overs. The victory helped Dhaka qualify for the second qualifier while eliminating Barishal from the tournament.

Coming to chase a modest target, Barishal batters looked shaky right from the start as they lost opener Saif Hasan for 12. Barishal kept on losing wickets at regular intervals and played away too many dot balls -- 51 to be precise during the course of the innings, which proved vital in the final reckoning.

Young Parvez Hossain one was of those who succumbed to the early pressure, with the left-hander perishing while trying to go for a big shot against off-spinner Robiul Islam. Parvez lost his castle and gave the first success to Robiul, who finished with brilliant figures of 15 for one in four overs.

Tamim, barely recovered from his physical discomfort, looked uncomfortable throughout his 28-ball 22. The opener eventually handed a straight-forward catch at deep square-leg against Muktar Ali, who bagged three wickets.

Afif Hossain led the charge for Barishal with a 35-ball 55, featuring four gorgeous sixes and three fours, but his dismissal off the bowling of Shafiqul Islam, who ended with three wickets, signalled the end of Barishal's chances.

Credit must go to the Dhaka bowlers, who gave away only three extras and were always kept on their toes by Mushfiquir. The

wicketkeeper-batsman, known to be a very emotional individual, did not shy away from expressing raw emotion every time a poor delivery was bowled or a sloppy fielding effort took place in the field.

The former Bangladesh captain was extremely animated on one occasion and gave a bit of a dressing-down to Nasum Ahmed after the two almost collided while going for the catch of Afif at short fine-leg in the final ball of the 17th over, bowled by Shafiqul Islam. The collision was just avoided and Mushfiquir held on to the catch, but the skipper made Nasum feel the heat, attempting to throw the ball at him before being calmed by his teammates.

Earlier, Barishal bowlers did well



to reduce Dhaka to 25 for three in the Powerplay, including the dismissal of previous-match centurion Naim Sheikh for five.

Mushfiquir steadied the ship with support from Yasir Ali, the two resurrecting the innings from the disastrous situation.

Mushfiquir was dismissed for a 30-ball 43 but Yasir went on to score his second fifty of the tournament before being dismissed for a 43-ball 54. Young Akbar Ali played a cameo of 21 runs off nine deliveries to help Dhaka post 150 for eight, which eventually proved to be a winning score.



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ROUND OF 16

Messi battles Neymar as Liverpool face German guns

REUTERS

 Barcelona will face Paris St Germain and former striker Neymar while title holders Bayern Munich are up against Italy's Lazio in the last 16 of the Champions League after UEFA's draw was held on Monday.

The clash of Lionel Messi and Barca with last year's runners-up PSG is a repeat of their remarkable meeting at the same stage in 2017 when Barca overcame a 4-0 first leg loss to beat the French club 6-1 in Spain with Neymar scoring twice for the Catalans.

"We know them (PSG) well, they've got some exceptional players. Paris want to fight for the Champions League, last year they came very close to winning it and they want to go one better this time round, but we've got something to say about that," said Guillermo Amor, Barcelona's Director of Institutional Relations. Bayern will start as favourites in

| ROUND OF 16 |
|--|
| Borussia Moenchengladbach v Manchester City |
| Lazio v Bayern Munich |
| Atletico Madrid v Chelsea |
| RB Leipzig v Liverpool |
| Porto v Juventus |
| Barcelona v Paris St Germain |
| Sevilla v Borussia Dortmund |
| Atalanta v Real Madrid |
| ***First legs to be played on February 16, 17, 23, 24. |
| Second legs to be played on March 9, 10, 16, 17. |
| ***The draw for the quarter-finals, semi-finals and final will take place on March 19. |

their tie but will be wary of Simone Inzaghi's Lazio team who have reached this stage for the first time in 20 years.

"Lazio are an uncomfortable opponent, you saw that in the group," said Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic. "It is always uncomfortable against Italian teams."

Premier League champions Liverpool will play last year's semi-finalists RB Leipzig creating a match-up between Germany's most highly

rated young coach Julian Nagelsmann of Leipzig with Liverpool's Juergen Klopp, the country's number one coach. Liverpool are unbeaten in their last ten matches against German teams in all European competitions, a run going back to 2002.

13-times European champions Real Madrid face Serie A club Atalanta, who reached the quarter-finals in their first Champions League campaign last season. Real have won ten of their last eleven games with Italian clubs.

Atletico Madrid will face Chelsea in a game which could include the return of striker Diego Costa to Stamford Bridge. Manchester City will take on Borussia Moenchengladbach, who are in the last 16 for the first time in the Champions League era.

Italian champions Juventus will face Porto, a game where Cristiano Ronaldo will return to his homeland Portugal.

The two legged ties will be played from Feb. 16

Gerard Houllier

dies at 73

REUTERS, PARIS

Former France manager Gerard Houllier, who rebuilt Liverpool from Premier League underachievers into a cup treble winning side in 2001, has died aged 73, his former club said on Monday.

RMC sport and sports daily L'Equipe said Houllier, who also coached Paris St Germain, Olympique Lyonnais and Aston Villa, died after having a heart operation in Paris.

After an insignificant playing career in France's lower leagues, Houllier began coaching in 1973, earning his first big job with Lens before taking over at Paris St Germain. He became France's assistant coach in 1988 and then manager in 1992 but had a short, unsuccessful spell in charge.

A diamond in the rough

ANISUR RAHMAN



After a seven-year hiatus, the third edition of women's football league just drew to a close on Sunday with the star-studded Bashundhara Kings becoming the new, undisputed champions, thanks to national forwards Sabina Khatun, Krishna Rani Sarkar and Tahura Khatun in their roster to make the key difference with other teams.

The prolific trio together scored 72 goals out of 249, struck in 42 league matches by over 60 players, without facing much challenge from the opponents but former national age-group right-back-turned forward Sadia Akter of Jamalpur Kacharipara Ekadosh came into the spotlight after slotting a stellar double hat-trick in a 7-1 win over FC Uttar Bango, a feat even Sabina, Krishna and Tahura could not achieve in the league though they had struck a few hat-tricks.

Having skipped the first-leg of the league due to SSC examination, Sadia began playing for Kacharipara Ekadosh in the second leg and helped her side finish third behind champions Bashundhara and Nasrin Sports Academy, also an outfit full with national players. The 16-year-old struck seven goals in six matches.

Sadia is not new to competitive football as she played for national U-14 and national U-16 team in Sri

Lanka and Tajikistan in 2013 and 2016 respectively after debuting through Bangamata Primary Gold Cup in 2012. She has also been in the camp of national U-19 team in 2019 but the BKSP student, who captained BKSP women's football team to win Subrata Cup in India twice in 2017 and 2018, surprisingly could not make the cut to the final squad.

Her adoptive mother -- Kamrunnahr Khan Mooni -- paved the way for Sadia to play for Kacharipara Ekadosh where

some seven players from Mooni's Monalisa Women's Sport Academy were given chances to play, and while Mooni herself played the role as the assistant manager of Jamalpur outfit.

"I haven't had her in my womb but I am her mother since 2017 and she stays with me," said Mooni. "Her father and mother live in Narsingdi and Sadia often meets with them."

"If I kept my mother identity aside, as an AFC C license coach, I will say that Sadia is a talented

player with quick decision making skills in midfield and that too while being two-footed, becomes a rare combination from our perspective," said Mooni, who is also a teacher of Uttaran Govt. Primary School of Tangail.

"I can play in different positions -- right wing, right back, midfield and striker but I think I can play better in striking position," Sadia told The Daily Star. "I believe I can get a call for the national U-19 camp on the back of my good performances in the league, although I am doubtful on getting a call following the apparent nepotism in the national camp."

"I struck a double hat-trick in my second match but I could not find the net as I was kept under strict marking in the remaining matches. Besides, there were no such midfielders who could provide me with opportunities to score," said Sadia.

"Sadia had been in our national age-group teams as the right back but she was dropped due to sub-standard performances. I was not there to witness her double hat-trick due to my sickness but I did watch her in the next four matches where she could not keep the momentum going," said national head-coach Golam Rabbani Choton while adding that some eight to nine players outside the national players caught his eye, and those are likely to be called in the national camp.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Kings sign 28 players

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Bashundhara Kings partially completed their players' registrations for the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League as they signed 28 players including four new foreigners and as many local players yesterday.

They are also on verge of signing England-born Bangladesh midfielder Mahadi Ahmed on the last day of registration today, depending on the availability of documents like the player's Bangladeshi passport and others.

After cutting ties with all their previous foreign players including influential Daniel Colindres, the Kings have now pinned their hopes on two Brazilians Jonathan Da Silveira Fernandes and Robson Azevedo Da Silva, one Argentine Rahul Oscar Becerra and an Iranian Khaled Shafiei.

They have also signed fit-again midfielders Masuk Mia Jonny and Atiqur Rahman Fahad, who played for Kings last season. They also roped in two junior players -- goalkeeper Mehedi Hasan and defender Tariq Miah -- from lower leagues.



Neymar sustained a left ankle injury following a heavy tackle from Thiago Mendes, who was then red carded, during PSG's 1-0 home defeat against Lyon. "No news about Ney(mar)," PSG coach Thomas Tuchel said after the game on Sunday.

PHOTO: TWITTER

'Focus on series against Pakistan'

REUTERS, WELLINGTON



New Zealand stand-in captain Tom Latham said on Monday their sole focus was the upcoming Test series against Pakistan despite their 2-0 sweep of West Indies putting them in contention for a place in next year's world test championship final. The Black Caps boosted their hopes of reaching the ICC World Test Championship final after securing back-to-back innings victories against West Indies. New Zealand moved into third place in the table for the world Test championship when they completed an innings and 12 run victory over West Indies in the second Test. The top-two sides face each other in the final at Lord's next year. The two ahead of New Zealand, Australia and India, will start a four-match series in Adelaide on Thursday.

"When you look too far ahead you can sometimes get caught out," Latham, who stood in for the absent Kane Williamson at the Basin Reserve, told reporters.

"Our focus will shift to Pakistan and whatever happens post that we'll assess.

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FARMING AFTER FLOODS

Battered, they keep on trying

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Abdus Samad could not harvest a single grain of coriander (dhoney) or sesame (til) or an ounce of jute from his five bighas of land due to this year's prolonged flood.

The 65-year-old farmer in Khanurbari village of Tangail's Bhuapur upazila also did not get any government assistance or flood rehabilitation support.

Yet Samad, a father of four, continued the battle for survival and has started cultivating fresh crops after the floodwater receded from his fields on the bank of the Jamuna river.

Samad was seen preparing his fields to cultivate peanut with his wife and other family members joining hands with him.

"No matter the government helps me or not, I can't sit idle. I have to earn for my family," Samad told this correspondent, who recently visited Khanurbari village.

Displaced by the erosion of the Jamuna a decade ago, Samad now lives on others' land. He said he has taken loan from a bank to cultivate peanut and different kinds of pulses on his farmland.

"I have to engage my family members in the cultivation as I can't afford to pay labourers. I have to start paying instalments of loan," he said.

Samad is not alone. Many farmers in char areas of the Jamuna under the worst-affected Bhuapur upazila are facing similar financial hardship due to the prolonged floods.

During the visit to the char areas, including in Gabsara, Arjuna, Nikrail and Govindasi, this correspondent saw many farmers along with their family cultivating different Robi crops like peanut, vegetables and pulses.

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Farmer Abdus Samad, holding the plough, and his wife and son-in-law try to sow peanut seeds again at a char on the Jamuna in Khanurbari of Tangail's Bhuapur upazila after missing out on three crops due to prolonged floods. Displaced by the erosion of the Jamuna a decade ago, Samad now lives on others' land.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Govt plans to evict forest grabbers

STAR REPORT

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change yesterday decided to conduct drives to evict illegal grabbers of protected forest land.

The ministry made the decision in a special meeting presided over by Minister Md Shahab Uddin. They did not reveal any date for the drives.

A total of 1,38,613.06 acres of 33,10,907.52 acres protected forest land have been grabbed by 88,215 individuals and entities, the ministry said in a press release.

Among them, 140 grabbers built factories grabbing 820.34 acres of forest land, while another 5,982 built markets, resorts, farms, and educational institutions grabbing 14,149.17 acres.

Moreover, 82,093 others built houses and turned 1,23,643.55 acres of forest land into farmland, an official of the ministry said.

In the meeting, the ministry decided to start drives in Gazipur, Tangail,

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US ELECTIONS

Electoral college votes to confirm Biden win

REUTERS, Washington

Electors gathered in state capitols across the country yesterday to formally vote for Joe Biden as the next US president, effectively ending President Donald Trump's frenzied but failing attempt to overturn his loss in the November 3 election.

The state-by-state votes, traditionally an afterthought, have taken on outsized significance this year in light of Trump's unprecedented assault on the nation's democratic process. Pushing false claims of widespread fraud, Trump has pressured state officials to throw the election results out and declare him the winner.

In the United States, a candidate becomes president not by winning a majority of the national popular vote but through an Electoral College system, which allots electoral votes to the 50 states and the District of Columbia largely based on their population.

Election results show Biden, the Democratic former vice president, won 306 of the 538 electoral votes available - exceeding the necessary 270. Trump, a Republican, earned 232.

In capitols such as Lansing, Michigan;

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Indira felicitates Bangabandhu

December 15, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

INDIRA'S MESSAGE TO BANGABANDHU

Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi has sent a message today felicitating Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the occasion of Victory Day. In her message she and her colleagues in the government of India pays glowing tribute to the martyrs of Bangladesh and send sincere good wishes to Bangabandhu personally as well as to the people of Bangladesh and shares Bangabandhu's pride on the consolidation of the independence of Bangladesh as reflected in the adoption of the constitution.

MCAS HAVE FULFILLED THEIR PLEDGE: BANGABANDHU

Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman says in Gono Parishad today that the members of the assembly have fulfilled their pledge by giving the country a constitution. In a tone of obvious satisfaction, the prime minister says that by suggesting the dissolution of the Gono Parishad, the members have created a history unique in the annals of parliamentary democracy. He requests the speaker to announce the dissolution of the Gono Parishad today.

SOURCES: December 16, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.



8 to die for murder, rape of 9-yr-old

3 others get death penalty for killing 2 boys

STAR REPORT

A court in Chattogram yesterday sentenced eight people to death and fined them Tk 1 lakh each for murdering a nine-year-old girl after gang-raping her in the port city's Akbar Shah area in 2018.

In another incident, three people were handed death penalty, three jailed till death while three others were given life-term imprisonment in a case for killing two boys after abduction in Tangail's Mirzapur in 2016.

In Chattogram, Md Jamiul Haider, judge of Chattogram Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-4, delivered the verdict in the presence of seven accused in the courtroom, said Public Prosecutor MA Naser of the tribunal.

The seven convicts are Md Belal Hossen alias

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Hubble observes strange, distant exoplanet



CNN ONLINE

A massive exoplanet orbiting in a double star system 336 light-years away may be similar to the alleged "Planet Nine" that may exist on the outskirts of our solar system, according to a new study.

The exoplanet, or planet located outside of our solar system, is called HD106906 b and it's 11 times the mass of Jupiter, the largest known planet in our solar system. It takes 15,000 Earth years for the exoplanet to complete one orbit around the pair of stars.

The study published in The Astronomical Journal.

Although the exoplanet was discovered in 2013

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

37 more die, 1,799 infected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 37 people have died from Covid-19 in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release issued by the DGHS.

With this, the total number of deaths has reached 7,089 and the death rate 1.44 percent.

In the same 24 hours, a total of 1,799 new infections were recorded, taking the total number of people infected to 4,92,332, the release added.

Against a total of 16,828 tests in those 24 hours, the positivity rate was 10.69 percent, while the overall positivity rate was 16.49 percent.

In the 24 hours, a total of 2,949 Covid-19 patients have recovered, taking the total number of recoveries to 4,23,845. This was around 86.09 percent of all confirmed cases.

Among the 37 deceased, 27 were men and 10 were women.

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FACEBOOK.COM, BD

Court stops domain use as facebook files case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following a hearing of a case filed by the authorities of social media giant Facebook against a Bangladeshi firm called A1 Software, a Dhaka court has banned the "facebook.com.bd" domain in Bangladesh.

The court has issued an interim injunction against the defendant, along with a show-cause notice, and has asked to respond within the next 15 days, said Moksadul Islam, Facebook's appointed lawyer in Bangladesh for the case.

The next hearing date has been set to March 9, 2021, Moksadul said.

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 15

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:20 12:45 3:45 5:22 7:00
JAMAAT 5:55 1:15 4:00 5:25 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Up to 900 migrant workers wishing to travel abroad for work get tested for Covid-19 at this designated area of Chattogram General Hospital every day. They need to arrive a day ahead to register. The migrants usually start to queue up as early as 4:00am to get tested.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

'Healing is coming'

Says New York nurse after being first in US to get the vaccine

REUTERS, New York

An intensive care unit nurse became the first person in the United States to receive the newly authorized Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine yesterday, calling it a sign that "healing is coming" as the US coronavirus death toll approaches 300,000.

Sandra Lindsay, who has treated some of the sickest Covid-19 patients for months, was given the vaccine at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in the New York City borough of Queens, an early epicenter of the country's Covid-19 outbreak, receiving applause on a livestream with New York Governor Andrew Cuomo.

"It didn't feel any different from taking any other vaccine," Lindsay said. "I feel hopeful today, relieved. I feel like healing is coming. I hope this marks the beginning of the end of a very painful time in our history. I want to instill public confidence that the vaccine is safe." Cuomo tweeted a picture of Lindsay, wearing a mask and staring resolutely ahead, as a doctor injected her in the arm, and said she was the first American to get vaccinated.

"This is what heroes look like," Cuomo wrote.

Minutes after Lindsay received the injection, President Donald Trump sent a tweet: "First Vaccine Administered. Congratulations USA! Congratulations WORLD!" Northwell Health, New York state's largest health system, operates some of the select hospitals in the United States that were administering the country's first inoculations of the a Covid-19 vaccine outside of clinical trials yesterday.

The vaccine, developed by Pfizer Inc and German

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