



The ship-breaking industry in Chattogram remains extremely dirty and dangerous for workers and the environment. The top ship-recycling country in the world has failed to regulate the clandestine business effectively, for which frequent death, injury and pollution continue to be in the headlines. An investigation by Mostafa Yousuf of The Daily Star and Margot Gibbs of Finance Uncovered in the UK exposes how the weak regulatory system gets exploited for permission to scrap vessels containing asbestos and other hazardous materials.

Toxic ships sail in on FALSE PAPERS

Provision that allows ship-owners to self-certify the waste is up for abuse; environment ministry just not equipped to check toxic materials at scrap-ship yards in Chattogram

In 2018, aged just 43, Mazidul Haque developed severe breathing problems, consulted a doctor and was diagnosed with asbestosis, a potentially fatal respiratory disease which scars the lungs. After more than a decade working in the shipbreaking yards of Chattogram, he lost his job, and the means to support his family.

"I've lost hope for life," he said. The disease is caused by prolonged exposure to asbestos, a material once prized for its insulating properties, but banned in many countries because it is deadly to those who inhale its fibres. Its use, however, remains legal in Bangladesh.

For most of his adult life, Mazidul had been working with asbestos in the shipbreaking yards. A typical merchant vessel might contain around 10 tonnes of the material, hidden away in places like the engine room and fuel lines.

Mazidul wasn't aware of the risks involved when he started work; he was given no training to work with the material, and wasn't provided with

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PHOTO: STAR



With serious questions hanging over the authorities' verification systems, scrap ships like Portland are being dismantled along the Sitakunda beach, littering a vast area with materials that are allegedly highly hazardous to health and environment. *Inset*, an "asbestos oven", made of asbestos sheets from insulating materials on ships, is on sale in a Chattogram shop. Asbestos is a slow poison which causes harm to ship-breaking workers. The photos were taken recently.

COVID-19 DIAGNOSIS

Capacity up, yet testing on decline

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

When Covid-19 infections and deaths were rising in mid-June, about 16,000 people used to get tested every day at the 49 laboratories.

As the number of labs rose to 66 by the end of June, more than 18,000 people got tested for coronavirus each day.

Six months down the line, the number of testing facilities is now 137, but the daily tests have dropped.

A total of 13,191 samples were tested on Thursday, even though the detection rate and death rate have been on the rise since the advent of winter.

Experts and officials of the health directorate said people's growing unwillingness to get tested was the main reason behind such a poor number of tests. They blamed the government's slack awareness campaign for this.

"Earlier, the government used to say if anyone has a symptom, they should contact the IEDCR. But now we don't see such messages," Be-Nazir, former director (disease control) of the Directorate General of Health Services, told The Daily Star.

He also said the asymptomatic cases were another reason why fewer people were willing to get tested. Individuals who have contracted the virus but do have any symptoms are called asymptomatic cases.

Currently, Covid-19 tests are now being done at RT-PCR labs in 112 government and private hospitals across the country. Genexpert machines are used in 16 hospitals and antigen kits are used in 10.

As of yesterday, the officially confirmed death toll from Covid-19 was 7,192 since March 18 when the country

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COUNTRY	TESTS PER MILLION PEOPLE
Bangladesh	17,398
India	106,639
Italy	382,729
USA	625,164

Defrauded online

Pyramid scheme-like cyber scams with fake job offers target young women on Facebook groups

NILIMA JAHAN

"Do you want to earn Tk 20,000 per month working from home for only two hours a day?"

This is a common catchphrase in job offers for young women cropping up on Facebook, especially for those who are part of various groups formed by and for young women on the social media site.

Such seemingly lucrative job offers often generate significant interest among young women looking for a job they can do from home, unaware that these are posted by fraudulent groups to siphon off a small amount of money each from a

large number of people.

Interested in one such job offer, 20-year-old undergraduate student in Dhaka, Samira Jannat, posted from another Facebook account she had under the name "Adiba Noor", asking for a job description.

Almost instantly, she got a reply that said to secure the job she needs to pay Tk 60 through a mobile banking account number, as an "add fee", after which she will be added to a training group on Facebook Messenger.

Samira's key responsibilities would be writing

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Govt extends closure till January 16

EDN INSTITUTIONS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has extended the closure of all educational institutions, which remain closed since March, until January 16 amid a steady rise in the number of infections and deaths from Covid-19.

The education and the primary and mass education ministries issued separate statements in this regard yesterday.

However, Qawmi madrasas will remain

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Protect farmers from Covid-19 fallout

Experts from 6 Asian countries for implementing adequate agrarian, social security reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts and researchers from six Asian countries have called for implementing agrarian and social security reforms to protect farmers from the adverse impacts of Covid-19.

They made the call at an international webinar yesterday. The event, titled "Ensuring land and food rights at a time

of Covid-19 and beyond", was organised jointly by Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) and The Daily Star.

In his keynote presentation, eminent researcher Antonio B Quizon touched upon issues like increased rural indebtedness forces small farmers to sell off their homes and farmlands; agrarian reforms have slowed down as government's priorities

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BDS না তো দাঁতের ডাক্তার না

শুধুমাত্র সনদপ্রাপ্ত ডেন্টিস্টের কাছেই যান

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Teeth Savers Dental Chamber, Green Road, Dhaka

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

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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- 345
Prof. Dr. Md. Abul Kasem
Sigma Specialized Dental Care, H- 92, R- 4, Block- B, Niketon, Dhaka- 1212

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BMDC- 1244
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BANGLADESH
UPDATE



1,318
New cases in 24hrs



4,98,293
Total cases



7,217
Deaths



4,33,614
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,675,595
Deaths



75,701,147
Total cases

Ensure justice seekers get verdict copies without delay

President urges judges

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid yesterday called upon judges to ensure that “justice-seekers do not have to keep coming back to the court for days even after the verdict in a case is delivered”.

The president is thought to have been referring to the situation where inordinate delays ensue between the delivery of a summarised or short verdict in a case and the full judgement release.

Most of the time, petitioners are unable to avail any relief awarded by the court before the release of the judgement, at which point the case can be said to have been disposed of.

“As a lawyer, I know how difficult and complicated the judicial proceeding is and how much effort a judge has to give. But even then, I would say that the judges need to do more to keep pace with the growing number of cases,” Hamid said while delivering his speech on the “Supreme Court Day-2020” virtually from the Bangabhaban.

He said conducting the court proceedings virtually has made it possible for the judges to ensure justice without the physical presence of people on the court premises during the pandemic.

“An online cause list has now been introduced in the Supreme Court, and the online bail confirmation system is working effectively,” the president added.

Calling for all court proceedings to be carried out digitally, Hamid said, “Since the Supreme Court is the ‘Court of Record,’ it is crucial to preserve all of its documents and activities -- from the filing of the case to the announcement of the verdict -- digitally.”

Govt extends

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outside the purview of the government’s directive.
The public and private universities will also remain closed till January 16.
However, the University Grants Commission during a virtual meeting with the vice chancellors of 39 public universities on December 13, directed that they can hold honours and masters final examinations following proper health safety measures if the respective academic councils approve.
The first novel coronavirus cases in the country were detected on March 8. The government on March 17 closed the schools, hampering academic activities of around four crore students.
It extended the closure several times as the pandemic showed little sign of abating. The long closure led to cancellation of examinations and left academic calendars in disarray.
The fresh extension comes at a time when the country is moving closer to the 500,000 mark of Covid-19 cases. The tally of confirmed coronavirus cases now stands at 498,293 after the health authorities reported 1,318 new infections in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.
There has also been a spike in the number of deaths for the last few weeks. Twenty-five more people died from Covid-19 during the same 24-hour period, according to a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).
The total number of deaths now stands at 7,217 and the death rate is 1.45 percent.
Among the 25 deceased, 16 are men and nine women. Four of the deceased were aged between 41 and 50, nine between 51 and 60 while 12 were aged above 60.
PUBLIC EXAMS, SCHOOL ADMISSION CANCELLED
The epidemic has resulted in the cancellation of the Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalent exams, originally slated for April 1. For preparing HSC exam results, candidates are evaluated based on their results in JSC and SSC tests.
The government also cancelled Primary Education Completion and its equivalent exams, and Junior School Certificate and its equivalent exams due to the pandemic.
More than one crore students of classes six to ten will be promoted to the next classes this year without any annual examinations, the government announced. Instead, school authorities are giving assignments to students.
To avoid health risks amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the government moved to enroll students at schools for all classes for next academic session on the basis of lottery. The application process will be completed online. The lottery is scheduled to be held on December 30.
Because of the pandemic, the government will not hold the Textbook Festival on January 1 when textbooks are handed to primary and secondary students for free.
The authorities also delayed introduction of the new curricula by a year.

Toxic ships sail in on false papers

FROM PAGE 1
equipment to prevent the fibres from entering his lungs.

Asbestos is rife in Sitakunda, where most of Bangladesh’s shipbreaking workers live and work. Furniture shops sell cheap “asbestos ovens” for as little as Tk 250 (£2.20), popular with low-wage workers.

The raw materials, say shopkeepers, are supplied by the shipbreaking yards.

The powerful shipbreaking industry, which generates around half of Bangladesh’s raw steel supply, is frequently shamed in the international media for its devastating impact on workers’ lives and the environment.

But nearly a decade after the government was forced by the Supreme Court to introduce rules to protect workers like Mazidul, an investigation from The Daily Star and Finance Uncovered, a UK journalism organisation, suggests that a major part of the regulatory system is a sham.

These rules banned the import of vessels for scrap containing a range of hazardous materials including asbestos. And they demanded that shipowners must submit certificates to the Bangladesh authorities declaring their vessels have been “pre-cleaned” of these.

Our investigation obtained a cache of 28 such certificates. Each had been submitted to, and accepted by, the ministry of environment.

But respected ship recycling experts in Europe told us the documents were worthless. One branded them “rubbish”.

Even government officials privately admitted to us the certificates are not realistic, but they insisted they do not have the means to check the declarations through meaningful inspections.

Md Shahab Uddin, minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, said the ministry has plans to set up modernised laboratories to test such toxic materials.

“As the responsibility is given to the environment ministry to check the toxic material, we are determined to do whatever is needed to do to stop any malpractice,” he said.

Of the 28 documents obtained by The Daily Star, 17 were from companies registered in secretive offshore tax havens, making it difficult to hold them accountable.

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court ruled in a case brought by the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) against the state in connection with shipbreaking regulations. Its judgment was damning: it found that documents used to import a toxic vessel for scrap in 2016 were “superficially prepared” or “fabricated”.

The findings of our investigation now suggest the issue may be widespread -- with the role of offshore companies being a key aspect.

Lawyer Syeda Rizwana Hasan, director of Bela, said, “Officials have been allowing vessels to enter Bangladesh knowing full well that the country has no preparation to deal with the waste.

“It’s time to go heavily against such malpractices to ensure that cash buyers and their allies in the government are held liable if they continue to resort to their heinous tactics.”

She added, “Cash buyers are hiding behind anonymously owned offshore companies so we can’t hold them liable for the damage they cause.”

Dozens of workers have died in the yards in recent years according to local NGOs, but more still will suffer early deaths from their exposure to materials like asbestos.

Multinational shipping firms appear to have distanced themselves from these deaths in part by selling their end-of-life vessels to so-called cash buyers, many of them based offshore where their ownership is kept secret. These companies specialise in sending ships to scrap but also provide a firewall between the yards and PR-conscious shipowners.

Bangladesh is a signatory of the Basel Convention, which is supposed to stop hazardous waste being dumped in developing countries. In 2009 the Supreme Court ruled that, in keeping with this convention, ships should be cleared of their hazardous materials before they are imported for demolition in Bangladesh.

Two years later, the government imposed the import ban on toxic ships and introduced rules requiring shipowners to provide certificates showing no hazardous wastes on board.

Inspectors are then supposed to visit the ships at anchorage to check the vessels for hazardous materials before giving permission for scrapping.

But according to Rizwana, by allowing shipowners to self-certify the waste they contain, the government set up a system which was bound to fail and open to potential abuse.

And when contacted by The Daily Star, the senior government officials charged with responsibility for shipbreaking appeared to be ignorant of what the rules demanded.

In its judgment earlier this year, the Supreme Court found that the government had failed to implement this system in the case of the North



A worker, without any protective gear, climbs up a rope ladder on to the deck of a ship being dismantled in Sitakunda of Chattogram. Lack of safety measures often lead to deadly accidents at shipbreaking yards. The photo was taken in January.

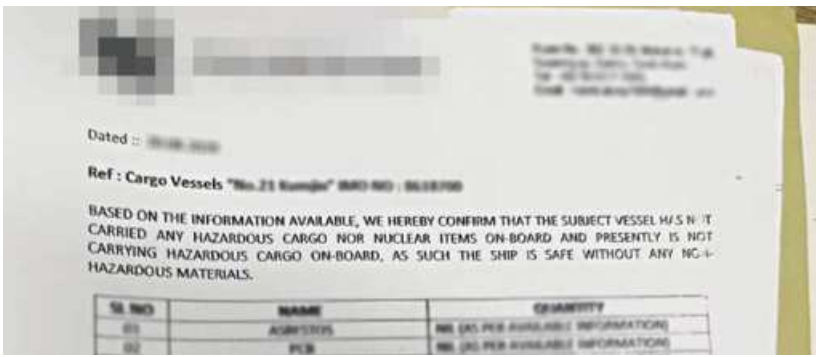
PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Sea Producer, an ageing oil tanker previously owned by Maersk and sent from the UK to be broken up in Chattogram. The court found that the presence of hazardous materials on the vessel had been “deliberately concealed or left vague”.

It singled out a document supplied by a company based in the Caribbean tax haven of Saint Kitts and Nevis, claiming the ship contained no hazardous materials on board, including “nil” asbestos.

It was later discovered that the ship had illegal levels of radioactive waste on board, and according to documents submitted to the court, 500kg of materials containing asbestos was removed from the vessel.

The rules have been amended a number of times in the last decade, meaning that there has been disagreement over whether they required hazardous materials to be



A pre-cleaning certificate submitted by a South Korea-based company to the Department of Environment of Bangladesh to get approval for a ship to be dismantled in Sitakunda.

moved from the ship’s structure.

But the Supreme Court ruling in the North Sea Producer case directed the government to “stringently regulate” cash buyers and enforce the pre-cleaning system.

Maersk has yet to comment on the matter.

Interestingly, the pre-cleaning certificates obtained by The Daily Star contain identical wording to the North Sea Producer document.

Of the 28 certificates leaked to The Daily Star, half were submitted by companies based in secretive tax havens, including five from St Kitts and Nevis. Ownership of “offshore” companies like these -- which stand to make million dollar profits on their deals -- is a tightly guarded secret.

According to Rizwana, cash buyers’ use of anonymous companies protects their true owners from potential liability for the damage they cause.

A third of the vessels in the cache used flags of convenience like Palau and St Kitts and Nevis, which are blacklisted by European port authorities for their poor enforcement of international shipping conventions.

Many of the certificates declare: “Based on the information available, we hereby confirm that the subject vessel [is] not carrying hazardous cargo nor nuclear items on board and presently is not carrying hazardous cargo onboard. As such, the ship is safe without any non-hazardous material.”

Around half the certificates then list the materials that the ships are clear from. First on the list is asbestos, frequently stating, “Nil -- based on the available information”.

Wouter Rozenveld, who runs a ship

recycling consultancy which works with yards in the EU, Turkey and China, said the declarations on the certificates are “rubbish”.

Most ships headed for the beaches in South Asia were built decades before international rules banned the use of asbestos in shipbuilding in 2011.

“You’ll find asbestos in the gaskets, in the fuel lines, in the sea water lines, in the firefighting lines,” Rozenveld explained. “You cannot operate a vessel without these things. The workers who clear this will in decades die of asbestosis.”

He said it would only be possible to clean a ship completely after cutting the ship down to its bare steel, which would take months of work from asbestos-trained workers.

“To do this removal would take a team on board for three months and it would cost you millions.”

certificates do not accurately describe the hazardous materials aboard the vessels.

But they say the problem is that if authorities impose restrictions regarding this, the shipbreaking industry would not exist: if scrutinised thoroughly, poisonous substances would be found onboard every ship.

Pre-cleaning is expensive and a regime that strictly imposed it could mark the end for Bangladesh’s beaching yards. One of the main reasons that places like Sitakunda are so popular for scrapping ships is that they are so cheap to use.

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is supporting Bangladesh in its efforts to bring yards up to standards set by the Hong Kong Convention, which sets out rules intended to protect workers and the environment from the damage they could cause.

Under that convention, all ships destined for demolition must have a full Inventory of Hazardous Materials, a detailed document marking the presence and location of all hazardous materials on the ship, along with a ship recycling plan agreed with the yard where recycling is set to take place.

But campaigners say these rules themselves are unacceptable as they would continue to allow thousands of tonnes of hazardous waste to be dumped each year in Bangladesh, which the country has no means to deal with. They also argue such standards would contradict Bangladesh’s own apparent ban on importing hazardous materials in ships.

Those familiar with the practices in Sitakunda say while some yards are making efforts to improve worker protections, far more is needed to satisfy the Hong Kong Convention standards.

Without these changes, workers like Mazidul Haque are likely to continue being exposed to asbestos.

The Daily Star talked to workers from five shipyards of Sitakunda about the protective gear and training they were given in their work.

Sahab Uddin says when he started working in 2010 at Khawaja Ship Breaking Yard he received no training.

“I started dismantling ships at the yard as a cutter man back in 2010 with no knowledge of the risks.... I came to learn about the risk as I lost my fellow colleagues in accidents like explosion, suffocation or fire incidents,” he said.

And although the yards now make protective gear available, the workers often remove it under pressure to work faster.

Another worker, preferring anonymity, said because the shipyards use loans to buy the vessels, they are in a hurry to pay them off quickly and avoid interest payments.

“That is why they want us to break the ship faster. The faster the ship is dismantled, the better for the owner. But it puts us at huge risk of accidents. We cannot wear proper protective gear fearing it would decelerate our speed,” he added.

Leading cash buyers Wirana and Global Marketing Systems (GMS), were contacted to comment on what basis they made declarations that the vessels were free of hazardous materials, and whether they were based on an Inventory of Hazardous Materials.

Only GMS, the world’s biggest cash buyer, which also acted as the agent for the import of the North Sea Producer, provided a response.

GMS instructed London law firm Carter Ruck to respond. Nigel Tait, a partner at the firm, said in a response that pre-cleaning certificates were based on an Inventory of Hazardous Materials provided by the original shipowners, and “reputable third party surveyors and agencies who have conducted the pre-cleaning”.

However, he also said the hazardous waste that forms part of the vessel’s structure would not be removed because it would create “safety issues while sailing”.

He said there was no legal requirement to strip backships to their bare steel to remove all hazardous materials from the ships’ structures.

“Our client ensures that, in compliance with the Sustainable Ship and Offshore Recycling Programme, the relevant green teams (with hazmat experts) inspect the vessel and mark all potential parts/material that could contain hazardous material.”

On whether asbestos was identified, he said, “Separate asbestos decontamination rooms are provided for individual yards in Bangladesh and safely disposed of in a vertical concrete column.”

He maintained that GMS had acted legally throughout.

Now unemployed, Mazidul Haque is struggling to support his wife, mother, two sons and daughter. They are currently living on microloans, but he has no idea how he will repay them.

At the point of despair, he is now working to raise awareness about the deadly issue. He has urged the government to make sure workers are no longer exposed to asbestos.

Without that, many more workers like him will continue to suffer.

[Pinaki Roy of The Daily Star also contributed to the report]

LABOUR-RECEIVING COUNTRIES

Govt ready to negotiate low-cost hiring

Says expatriates’ welfare minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expatriates Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad yesterday said he was ready to negotiate different issues with labour receiving countries to send abroad as many workers as possible at low cost.

“But I will not go down this road if I find that my country and workers are being affected,” he said.

The minister was responding to a question from a reporter on reopening of Malaysia’s labour market for Bangladeshi workers during a press conference at his ministry.

The press conference was organised marking the International Migrants Day.

Malaysia suspended hiring Bangladeshi workers in September, 2018 after allegations about high recruitment costs and syndication surfaced.

The two countries held meetings on multiple occasions since then. However, the market is yet to be opened for Bangladeshi workers.

Bangladesh already discussed reopening of the market with Malaysia at a meeting this year after the new government assumed office in the Southeast Asian country, the minister said.

Malaysia will set a date for holding the next meeting of the Joint Working Group, Imran said. “Hopefully, we will be able to clear the sticking points [at that meeting].”

About observing the International Migrants Day, the minister said the government would organise its main programme marking the occasion on January 6 next. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will attend the programme virtually as chief guest.

This year has been different than previous years considering the novel coronavirus pandemic, said Imran, adding that many migrant workers, especially those stranded after coming home from Saudi Arabia on vacation, have returned to their workplaces.

He said although there was an apprehension that about 10 lakh migrant workers might return home amid the pandemic, about 3.26 lakh have returned so far according to ministry data.

The minister said migrant workers have sent home \$10.9 billion in remittance in the first five months of the current fiscal year, up by over \$3 billion from the amount sent during the same period of the last fiscal year.

Imran said the government was ready to allocate more money to support migrant workers affected by Covid-19 in addition to its already declared Tk 700 crore loan schemes.

He called upon the media to report on migrant workers’ issues covering all aspects.

The minister said workers have already started flying to Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates for jobs. Besides, Jordan will recruit about 12,000 new workers from Bangladesh next year.

The expatriates’ welfare ministry is working to set up new technical training centres across the country to facilitate training of workers, he added.

Capacity up

FROM PAGE 1
reported the first death from the virus.
The death rate stands at 1.45 percent and there are 4,96,975 people infected with the coronavirus, according to the DGHS. The Covid-19 testing began in the country on January 21 and the first three cases were reported on March 8.

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

DGHS Director General Prof ABM Khurshid Alam said the facilities were now capable of testing over 20,000 samples a day.

“But if people don’t come for tests, what can we do? Tackling a pandemic is not the task of only a ministry. Rather, it requires a coordinated effort,” he added.

‘TESTS SHOULD BE FREE’

Md Khairul (not his real name) and his wife have fever, cough, sore throat, and have lost the sense of taste and smell. But they chose not to get tested.

“We have consulted our family physician and are observing the situation,” he said.

Laila Begum Lata, a housewife, said she considers the tests as a “hassle”. Her husband recently tested positive and she and her daughter had the symptoms.

“I don’t go outside and my condition is not bad. That’s why I did not get tested,” she said.

Muzaherul Huq, former regional advisor for South East Asia at the World Health Organization, said people should be made aware of the necessity of tests.

“Tests should be free for everyone. We have to keep in mind that without more tests we cannot contain the pandemic. It will linger on,” he said.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Lions at Maasai Mara.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Lion

The first time I saw a wild lioness was in Kenya’s Maasai Mara last year. It was fast asleep on a large slab of granite and least bothered by several tourist vehicles that stopped to watch. I was disappointed. I had hoped to catch its eyes on camera and this one’s eyes remained firmly shut.

Later, I found out the reason. Lions sleep up to twenty hours a day. They hunt at night, or very early in the morning. With the abundance of game in the park, she was napping after a full meal.

During the trip I saw several more lions. One had climbed a tree and was relaxing there. Three of its paws and its tail dangled from the H-shaped branch formation. The fourth paw on the branch maintained its balance, as did the rather large belly that dangled from its frame. Early morning one day, far away, I saw a group of lions around a large red object, probably a wildebeest they had killed. Later that day, I saw a lion pair mating. After the act the lion roared and the lioness covered low in the ground. Another lioness behind a bush was quite alert and scanning for prey. Several others slept, not bothered by flies that covered their face.

Lions are members of the cat family, Felidae, a family that also includes tigers, leopards, jaguars and our house cat. Male lions have a magnificent mane giving them a royal look, hence the name King of the Jungle. The male can be up to twelve feet long and weigh up to 500 pounds; females are smaller. A group of lions is called a pride. It includes a male lion, a harem of several lionesses, and cubs. When they grow older, male cubs are seen as a threat by the leader and forced to leave the pride. Younger males form their own groups and work towards displacing leaders in other prides. Lions are apex

predators of the jungle, feeding on large mammals such as antelopes, buffaloes, giraffes and zebras.

In *Cry of the Kalahari*, authors Mark and Delia wrote about lions. The authors lived in Southern Africa’s Kalahari Desert for seven years and became close to lions, leopards, and brown hyenas. In the book they describe the social behaviour of lions in great detail.

Take, for example, communication. By following a pride of lions, they discovered ways in which lions communicated with each other.

Two methods of their communication are obvious. They roar to locate each other after they spread out for a hunt, to warn other prides to stay away, and to send mating signals. And they use smell (by urinating, for example) to mark territory and inform other lions about their whereabouts.

But the authors also discover how lions used body language to communicate while watching three lionesses lazing near a river. A lone antelope was crossing the river. The older lioness spotted the antelope but the other two did not. So the older lioness cocked her ears forward, lifted her head and twitched the tip of her tail, as if to say, “Hey, over there!” The younger lionesses got the hint, spotted the antelope and pounced on it within seconds.

The lions I saw at Masai Mara presented a disarming and relaxed appearance. But that can also be said of many dangers of the world. They look harmless but pounce on the unsuspecting when the moment is right. And so I will keep my distance from lions.

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‘Form laws to punish vandals’

Nirmul Committee demands, after vandalism of Bagha Jatin’s sculpture in Kushtia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee yesterday expressed serious concern over vandalism of revolutionary Jatindranath Mukherjee’s sculpture in Kushtia. Popularly known as Bagha Jatin, Jatindranath was a freedom fighter who rebelled against British rule in India.

In a statement, the committee’s president Shahriar Kabir and general secretary Kazi Mukul demanded new laws to punish individuals and organisations involved in these kinds of activities.

On Thursday night, miscreants vandalised the sculpture at Kaya village of Kumarkhali upazila. In the first week of this month, miscreants smashed an under-construction sculpture of Bangabandhu at a key intersection in Kushtia town.

The committee believes that the latest incident is a continuation of threatening moves to destroy sculptures by Hefazat and Khelafat leaders, the statement said.

They also demanded immediate arrest and trial of those responsible for the vandalism and instigators.

“Article 24 of the constitution puts responsibility on the state to protect historically and culturally significant monuments of Bangladesh, including sculptures, from distortion, destruction or removal, but the government failed in this regard,” it added.

Govt moves to set up metro rail in port city

Pre-feasibility study to be launched soon

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government will launch a study to find possible routes for mass transit network (MTN), which may include one or more metro rail lines and dedicated bus service lines, in Chattogram metropolitan area.

Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) has recently submitted a project proposal for carrying out the pre-feasibility study, at a cost of around Tk 21 crore. The internal evaluation committee held a meeting on the proposal on December 15, with Nazrul Islam, secretary of Road Transport and Highways Division, in chair.

The meeting asked DTCA to complete the study within June 2021, six months earlier than what DTCA had proposed, sources said. Once the study is completed, feasibility study, detail design and other necessary work would be done before approving any construction project, they said.

The development came more than a year after Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said that a feasibility study for a metro rail project in Chattogram city will begin soon.

The government is implementing a time-bound working plan for building a 128.74km network, consisting of six lines in Dhaka and its adjacent areas, within 2030. Physical work of Mass Rapid Transit-6 (MRT-6), the first metro rail in Dhaka, has witnessed 53 percent progress till November.

The Tk 22,000 crore project is being implemented between Uttara Third Phase and Motijheel, and authorities are expected to open the metro rail in December next year.

Talking to reporters on October 15 last year, Quader said, “The prime minister has asked me

to start feasibility study for metro rail project in Chattogram city.” He asked the ministry secretary and all officials concerned to begin feasibility study immediately.

“We have submitted the proposal following the ministry’s instruction,” said Khandakar Rakibur Rahman, executive director of DTCA.

He said metro rail projects in Dhaka are being implemented following the revised Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for Dhaka metropolitan area. But there is no such plan for Chattogram city.

“The study is for preparing a transport masterplan for port city,” he said. “It would also be carried out for building metro rail there.”

A DTCA official, however, said while they want to prepare a comprehensive transport masterplan, doing so will take a long time. Therefore, the ministry currently has them focused on MTN, he told The Daily Star, wishing not to be named.

He said the MTN may include one or more metro lines and BRT lines. “Under the study, consultants would carry out traffic surveys to determine daily traffic and find suitable routes.”

Chattogram city is the second largest city of the country, and traffic jams are common there.

Citing national census of 2011, Chattogram City Corporation, on its website, said some 7.3 million people live in Chattogram metropolitan area, while 6 million live in CCC, which covers 155.4 square kilometres. When AJM Nasir Uddin was its mayor, CCC held a meeting around one-and-a-half years ago with experts on metro rail issues. But experts said it would be difficult to implement metro rail there due to “unplanned construction” of three flyovers and an elevated expressway.



A woman collects dry leaves that will later be used to kindle fire for cooking. Winter can be harsh, and these leaves provide much-needed warmth during the season. The photo was taken at Barishal’s Agailjhara upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: TTU DAS

Local fruits for better health

M’singh univ students start 400km awareness walk

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Marking the Victory Day, a group of university students in Mymensingh has started a 400km walk to promote production of local fruits.

Under the banner of “Falad Bangladesh”, a voluntary organisation, eight students of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University in Trishal began the walk, named “Brikha Padojatra” on December 16 as part of a social movement, said organisers.

Goutam Kumar Debnath, Mymensingh divisional coordinator of the organisation, said the 400km walk -- the longest of its kind so far -- started from the university campus and will end in Khagrachhari on December 31. In this time, the entourage will travel across 24 upazilas in seven districts.

University Vice-Chancellor Prof AHM Mustafizur Rahman inaugurated the programme.

Since beginning its journey in 2013,

“Falad Bangladesh” has so far planted 2.75 lakh saplings of local fruit trees in 46 districts, said Dravid Saikat, chief coordinator of the organisation and assistant professor of the university’s Department of Fine Arts.

Some 95 percent of the planted saplings have survived, said Saikat, who is also leading the eight-student team. “We have a target of planting five crores of fruit saplings by 2030,” he said.

However, he warned against the indiscriminate and unplanned planting of saplings. “We discourage people to plant exotic varieties of trees as we have observed that they can have a negative effect on our biodiversity and ecology,” said the teacher.

The organisers said the walk will aim to inspire people and local authorities to produce local fruits. They will also plant fruit saplings with help of local volunteers.

Till writing of this report at 6pm yesterday, the students’ team reached Kishoreganj, said Saikat.

Thakurgaon sugar mill begins operations

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Thakurgaon Sugar Mill, the largest sugar mill in the northern part of the country, started its production from yesterday afternoon.

Lawmaker of Thakurgaon-1 and also presidium member of Awami League Ramesh Chandra Sen inaugurated the operation as chief guest at a programme on the mill premises.

Sugarcane crushing this season has started amid a different atmosphere as the sugarcane produced under Panchagarh and Setabganj mills are being brought to Thakurgaon for crushing. This follows Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation’s decision to shut the two mills this season due to losses.

Managing Director of Thakurgaon Sugar Mills Md Shakhawat Hossain told The Daily Star that the mill will run for four to four-and-half months of the current season.

The production target has been fixed at 9,639 tonnes of sugar by crushing one lakh 53 thousand of canes, with the expected recovery rate from canes set at 6.3 percent, the official said. Of the canes, 60,000 tonnes will come from Thakurgaon zone, 48,000 tonnes from Panchagarh zone, while 45,000 tonnes will come from Setabganj zone.

Among others, Deputy Commissioner of Thakurgaon Dr KM Kamruzzaman Selim spoke at the programme.

Hearing on acquisition of Cumilla Town Hall today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs will hold a mass hearing on Cumilla Town Hall premises today over acquisition of Birchandra Ganapathagar and Nagar Milonayton (the town hall) as a heritage property.

Helal Uddin Ahmed, general secretary of Town Hall executive committee, said it will start at 11:30am.

AKM Bahauddin Bahar MP, an adviser of the Town Hall, will be present there.

Activists and residents have been protesting for a few months as a group is trying to demolish the historic Town Hall to construct a market there.

4 of a family die in Pabna road crash

7 killed in other districts

STAR REPORT

Eleven people, including four of a family, were killed in road accidents across the country over the last two days, report our correspondents and a news agency.

In Pabna, four of a family were killed and two others injured in a road mishap at Rangalia Tiktikipara in Bhangura upazila yesterday, reports our Pabna correspondent.

The deceased were identified as siblings Emon Hossain (16) and Imran Hossain (14), sons of Rashid Pramanik, their cousin Summa Khatun (13), and their aunt Nupur Begum (28).

Officer-in-Charge of Bhangura Police Station Anwar Hossain said a speeding truck hit a three-wheeler carrying them on their way to attend a programme at Haatgram, the OC said.

Police seized the truck but its driver managed to flee, said the police officer.

In Habiganj, two people were killed when a pickup collided with a battery-run easy bike and CNG-driven auto-rickshaw in Shaistaganj upazila yesterday.

The accident took place in Garur Bazar area of the upazila around 11am.

One of deceased was identified as Dr Diponkar, medical officer of Habiganj 250-bed District Sadar Hospital, reports our Moulvibazar correspondent.

In Patuakhali, Sobahan Mollah (68) was killed in a road accident at Doctor Bari bus stand on Patuakhali-Kuakata highway yesterday.

Sobahan from Ghatkhali village in Barguna’s Amtali upazila died after a Kuakata-bound bus from Dhaka hit him on the highway, killing him on the spot, said law enforcers.

In Brahmanbaria, a rickshaw-puller was killed after being hit by a sand-laden tractor on Cumilla-Sylhet highway yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Milon Mia (40) of Akhitra village in Sarail upazila.

Khatihata Highway Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mahbubur Rahman said Milon was killed after a tractor coming from the opposite direction hit him. He died on the spot.

In Kishoreganj, at least three people were killed and three others injured as a truck collided head-on with a CNG-run auto-rickshaw at Kalikaprasad in Bhairab on Thursday, reports UNB.

Bhairab Police Station OC Md Mamunur Rahman said the accident occurred as a truck plunged into a roadside ditch after hitting a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in the afternoon.

Police seized the truck, but the driver managed to flee, said the OC.

Pro-BNP teachers not contesting in Duta polls

Election to DU teachers’ association Dec 30

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

Election to the executive committee of Dhaka University Teachers’ Association (Duta) will be held on December 30, with the pro-BNP “white panel” not contesting.

Although some of the pro-BNP teachers had collected nomination forms, they declared at a press conference yesterday that they will not be contesting in the elections.

The white panel teachers wrote to the president-general secretary of the organisation and election director on December 9, urging them to postpone the election citing the Covid-19 pandemic and some other reasons.

The Awami League backed “blue panel” teachers, however, decided to take part in the polls and are now discussing among themselves on formation of their panel.

“To combat the second wave of coronavirus pandemic, government has stressed on maintaining social distance. The risk of contamination will increase due to the gathering on the polls day. Besides, our normal academic activities has remained suspended since March. Under these circumstances, holding the polls will create negative impression about us in students’ and people’s minds,” reads a statement of white panel.

“Also, the tenure of other statutory bodies like senate, syndicate, finance committee has been expired but the authorities did not take make any arrangement for those due to the Covid-19 situation. We do not think arranging Duta polls is logical where there is a great risk of spike in contamination,” added the statement, signed by panel convener Prof ABM Obaidul Islam.

Several pro-BNP teachers also told this correspondent that the white panel will not take part in the polls if it is held on December 30.

On the other hand, pro-AL (blue panel) teachers validated their demand by saying that holding the polls is mandatory as per the constitution.

They also proposed to hold faculty-based or online-based polls considering the Covid-19 situation.

Prof Abdus Samad, convener of blue panel, said, “We will ensure and maintain

proper hygiene. If there were 10 polling booths in previous years, we will arrange 50 this year. Besides, we will avoid person-to-person election campaigning and do it online.”

“The constitution mandates to hold this election every year and Duta is the platform through which Dhaka University teachers can raise voice on any national issue,” he added.

Sources in the teachers’ body said the executive body of Duta held a meeting on December 6 on whether the polls should be held. A faction of pro-AL blue panel teachers opined that the tenure of incumbent committee be extended.

But another faction -- vying for the top posts -- demanded holding the polls saying that the charter mandates so.

Later the teachers’ body sought opinion from all executive members on the decision of holding election.

Prof Md Zakir Hossain Bhuiyan of marketing department will be conducting the election.

According to the election manifesto, voting will take place between 10am to 2:30pm at the university teachers’ club.

Earlier, white panel convener Prof ABM Obaidul Islam said, “We may collect some nomination forms. Even if we do, we will hold a meeting to decide whether we will contest the polls.”

Selection of nomination papers, withdrawal of candidacy and final list of candidates will be completed by December 20.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Zakir Bhuiyan said the executive body of the incumbent committee -- which will be in charge till December 31 -- took the decision of holding election and entrusted him with the duty of conducting the polls.

“Only they [executive body] have the jurisdiction to cancel or postpone the polls. I was only given the responsibilities of conducting the election,” he added.

Duta general secretary Prof Md Nizamul Hoque Bhuiyan said, “The decision was taken unanimously at the executive meeting and we will hold it following health and hygiene guidelines.”

Ex-BGMEA vice president Sirajul Haque passes away

Bss, Dhaka

Md Sirajul Haque, former vice president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), passed away at a hospital in the capital on Thursday night.

He was 78.

Sirajul, also elder brother of the Industries and Trade Affairs Secretary of Awami League Md Siddiqueur Rahman, breathed his last around 11pm.

He left behind his wife, three sons, two daughters, a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Prime Minister and AL President Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the death.

In a condolence message, she prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

In another condolence message, Road Transport and Bridges Minister and AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader expressed sorrow at Sirajul's death.

Mujibnagar

FROM PAGE 12

large number of stenographers and typists are urgently needed to take over the responsibilities of the large number of stenographers and typists now working in English.

BHUTTO ENVISAGES SOME KIND OF LINK WITH BANGLADESH

Pakistan President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has envisaged some kind of link with Bangladesh. "A time will come when some kind of relationship will be established between us and the Muslim Bengal. We look forward to the moment when our differences with our brotherly people of 'Muslim Bengal' will cease to exist. No power on earth can prevent this," he adds.

INDIAN ARTISTS CALL ON BANGABANDHU

A group of Indian artists led by Gouriprasanna Majumdar calls on the Bangabandhu at the Gono Bhaban today. The artists now on a tour of Bangladesh stay with the prime minister for some time.

Source: December 20, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Bangladesh Observer and Ittefaq.

7 held

FROM PAGE 12

suspect, asked her to meet in Naraidartek Karaitola area on Thursday.

As she went there around 9:30pm, Shakhawat along with the seven others raped her, said the SI.

A case was being filed against the eight alleged rapists with the police station, said Farzana Yasmin, assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of Kaliganj circle.

The woman was sent to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital in the district for medical tests, she added.

Chicken

FROM PAGE 12

Scientists excavated the specimen from two slabs of stone and, using X-rays, found previously hidden skeletal elements and soft tissue -- including a section of the long, thick mane running down the animal's back that was preserved nearly intact. The arms were also covered in fur-like filaments down to the hands.



South Korea donated 5,000 face masks, sanitisers, desk shields and other medical equipment to the doctors and health workers of Korea-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital in Savar on Thursday. Korean Ambassador Lee Jang-keun and Doh Young-Ah, director of Koica Dhaka Office, handed over the medical equipment and safety kits at a programme at the hospital.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Protect farmers from Covid-19

FROM PAGE 1

have been shifted elsewhere; agricultural workers are not being properly paid; and pastoralist communities and indigenous people have been impacted as national borders have been closed.

"On the other hand, politicians and state leaders have taken advantage of the pandemic to consolidate their power by suppressing dissent," said Quizon, former chairperson and executive director of NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC).

Overall, the Covid-19 health crisis has created an environment, where it is easier to violate the land tenure rights of vulnerable populations, he added.

At the webinar, participants from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Cambodia, Indonesia and Philippines discussed farmers' land rights situation in their respective countries.

ALRD Deputy Executive Director Rowshan Jahan Moni said, "Despite bumper production of rice this year, harvested crops could not reach markets in time due to [the coronavirus-driven] lockdown. Incidents of land grabbing of minorities and indigenous people and violence against women, including their rape and torture, have also increased."

Ujjaini Halim, executive director, Institute for Motivating Self Employment (IMSE), India, said at present, 60 percent of India's population or an estimated 812 million people live below the World Bank-determined poverty line of \$3.2 a day for lower middle income countries. Due to the pandemic, 104 million more people could fall below that poverty line in India.

Dewi Kartika, general secretary of Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria (KPA) from Indonesia, said, "Agrarian conflicts have increased during this pandemic due to increased land grabbing, intimidation and political suppression. Demonstration and street protests have been prohibited or restricted in many countries."

Jagat Deuja, former executive director, Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC) and Expert Member of Land Issues Resolving Commission, Nepal said, "Violence and abuse have increased up to eight percent in Nepal during this pandemic. Farmers are also being forced to sell their products at much lower rate than the normal market price."

Vaing Samrith, programme manager, Star Kampuchea from Cambodia, said, "Many farmers who had taken loans from banks could not pay them back as they could not cultivate their lands or sell their goods during the lockdown. They are now selling their lands to repay the loan."

Nathaniel Marquez Don, executive director, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, said, "In the Philippines, more than two million hectares of lands have been contested in the last nine months which is way more than the normal times. An estimated 252,241 households have been adversely affected by these conflicts."

Followed by the participant's presentation, a panel discussion took place where panelists emphasised on immediate land reforms so that farmers' rights on lands can be protected legally. They also demanded reformation of social safety net programmes to include more farmers and small entrepreneurs in them.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), said, "We need to have law on right to food, we need to have legal promulgation on farmers' rights and we need to have law on the protection of agricultural land."

Prof Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir of Dhaka University's Department of Development Studies said, "To increase resilience against food insecurity and poverty induced by this pandemic, we need to introduce a universal social security system which covers formal education, nutrition, medical services and skill development training. This social security system is based on the human life cycle, which provides support for every phase of our life cycle."

Mohammed Helal Uddin, director research at Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (Cirdap), said, "According to the current vaccine development trends, we can estimate that the pandemic may last for at least another one to three years."

"This duration will prove fatal for many small farmers and entrepreneurs who don't have enough savings to sustain for such a long time. The governments should bring these extremely vulnerable populations under the social safety net programmes," he added.

Good move; now follow them up

FROM PAGE 12

facilitate Bangladesh's connectivity to Nepal and Bhutan," said Munshi Faiz Ahmad, former ambassador and chairman of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS).

India is also getting connected via inland waterways. Trial run of trans-shipment of Indian goods from Kolkata to Agartala via Chattogram has already taken place. The Sonamura-Daudkandi protocol route has been operationalised, while the trans-shipment of Indian goods through Chattogram and Mongla ports will also begin in the near future.

Munshi Faiz said India is investing in these connectivity projects, which is likely to draw more investments in the future. Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami on Thursday said Bangladesh can also use Indian ports for third-country exports.

Bangladesh earnestly wants implementation of the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) for augmenting regional connectivity. For the same purpose, Dhaka sought to join the ongoing India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway project.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said it is very positive sign that Dhaka sought to join the trilateral highway project, which

Delhi may consider.

"This highway would be crucial for Bangladesh as it connects South and Southeast Asia, and talks are underway for FTA in the BIMSTEC," he told this correspondent.

Implementation of the MVA is taking long, and the countries involved need to speed up to do whatever is necessary for its operationalisation, Prof Mustafizur said. He lauded Bangladesh's proposal to India on allowing Bangladeshi trucks to use the Feni Bridge, once completed, to transport goods from Chattogram port to India's North East.

The talks on Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement that took place between the two premiers need to be taken forward as it would be important for Bangladesh that is moving to graduate from the LDC category soon, he said.

The economist said it is a good sign that exports from Bangladesh to India are growing, but there are still some non-tariff barriers and anti-dumping duty on exports of jute products -- issues that need to be sorted out.

He also said it is a positive sign that India offered Bangladesh to join the New Development Bank of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as it can help get concessional loans for infrastructure projects.

"These are all great talks. What's needed now is to take these forward,"

Mustafizur said.

Dhaka University International Relations Prof Amena Mohsin agreed that the PM-level summit ushers new hope and is expected to yield concrete results.

While India's support to Bangladesh for Covid-19 vaccine supply as well as co-production is welcome news, one needs to keep in mind that lots of vaccine doses will be required for the pandemic to be controlled. Therefore, all avenues of vaccine supply should be kept open, she said.

All three analysts said the long pending issues of Teesta water-sharing deal and bringing border killing to zero has seen little progress, which may create mistrust in the public mind and therefore needs special attention from the Indian side.

Amena Mohsin said although India supports Bangladesh's position on Rohingya repatriation and is investing for development in Myanmar's Rakhine state, it is not clear how initiatives at the political level are being taken by India to convince Myanmar. It is more a political problem than an economic or social one and needs a political solution, she said.

Munshi Faiz said sorting out these issues can make the bond between the two nations even stronger. Also, it will help India lead on the global stage -- something to which the regional power is aspiring.

Sculpture of Bagha Jatin vandalised

FROM PAGE 12

quizzing. They were later freed after questioning.

According to police sources, the authorities tightened the security and set up CCTV cameras in the district after Bangabandhu's sculpture was vandalised.

However, another such incident happened.

SM Tanvir Arafath, superintendent of Kushtia police, told The Daily Star that the college authorities had shown negligence in protecting Jatin's sculpture.

They also clearly violated the

instruction of the government, he added.

Kumarkhali Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Rajibul Islam Khan said the government was already considering a proposal of renaming the college after Bagha Jatin.

Jatindranath Mukherjee, popularly known as Bagha Jatin, grew up here. However, none of his successors live here now, he added.

The night guard of the Kaya College Khalilur and his family live at Bagha Jatin's grandmother's house now, said local sources.

Ziaul Haque Swapan, chairman of

Kaya Union Parishad, said he never received any response from any higher authorities although he repeatedly asked them what measures were taken to protect the sculpture.

Abdus Samad, the then Khulna Divisional Commissioner, inaugurated the bust on December 6, 2016. It was built by Kumarkhali Upazila Administration.

Later the same year, the Governor of the Indian state of Tripura, Shri Tathagata Roy, visited the college and reopened the bust.

A memorial plaque was placed next to the bust in honor of the Tathagata Ray.

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Visit: www.unicef.org.bd

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Pre-bid Meeting date: **Please see the schedule mentioned in the RFP**

The deadline to submit proposal is **Sunday, 17 January 2021; Time: 11:00 Hrs**

Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.

www.unicef.org.bd

unicef for every child

Approval from 3 authorities must for foreign trips

FROM PAGE 12

This is to ensure that public money spent for the trip is not misused.

The bench of Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury and Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque made the observation on Thursday while delivering verdict on a writ petition filed in 2016 in connection with the issue, Deputy Attorney General Sk Shaifuzzaman told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said Jonny Corporation, a fog light importing company, filed the petition challenging the legality of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation's action to confiscate the contractor's bank security money of Tk 28 lakh as the company had imported and supplied 10 substandard fog lights for BIWTC ferries plying the Mawa and Paturia routes.

The lights were imported from the US in 2016.

Citing the HC observation, Shaifuzzaman said the government officials below the rank

of joint secretary must concentrate on the state purpose and cannot spend any leisure time during the official visit abroad.

In the judgement, the bench also observed that the government officials must report about the visit and expenditures to the cabinet division and finance ministry after joining the office, he added.

Shaifuzzaman said the government officials concerned are now to take permission from his or her own ministry for any official foreign tour.

He added that the detailed observations of the HC would be available when it would release the full text of its verdict.

Shaifuzzaman said the BIWTC had confiscated Jonny Corporation's security money after its probe committee found that the supplier company received a payment of Tk 6 crore for supplying 7,000W high-power fog lights, but those were not more effective than the 3,000W lights usually used in ferries.

He added that the probe also found that government officials -- one from the BIWTC, three from the shipping ministry and the managing director of Jonny Corporation -- had visited the US in summer instead of winter and that is why the effectiveness of the fog lights could not be tested properly.

Following the probe report, the BIWTC confiscated the security money of Jonny Corporation. Then the company filed the petition with the HC challenging the BIWTC's action.

The HC on Thursday delivered the verdict after rejecting the petition.

Jonny Corporation owner Omer Ali's lawyer Bahadur Shah told this paper yesterday that his client did not communicate with him after the judgment was delivered. So, he did not know whether the company would move any appeal before the Supreme Court's Appellate Division, the lawyer added.

Covax to begin

FROM PAGE 12

have access to doses in the first half of 2021, with first deliveries anticipated to begin in the first quarter of 2021," the statement said.

Mahmudullah

FROM PAGE 12

Ali, but fell short in the end.

Yesterday's final also marked the successful hosting of the second domestic tournament in the country amid the coronavirus pandemic, with the first being the 50-over BCB President's Cup in October. It sets the stage to host the West Indies for two Tests and three ODIs beginning from January next year.

The win was also Mahmudullah's first triumph in domestic T20 tournaments.

Five teams -- Khulna, Chattogram, Beximco Dhaka, Minister Group Rajshahi and Fortune Barishal -- participated in the Bangabandhu T20 Cup, which started from November 24.

Chattogram were by far the strongest team in the tournament, winning seven of their eight group games. However, they came up short in yesterday's final against the experienced Khulna, who also beat them in the first qualifier.

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)
PKSF Bhaban, E-4/B, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
Phone: 8181658-67, 8181664-9, 8181169 Fax: 8181671, 8181678
e-mail: pkssf@pkssf-bd.org; Website: www.pkssf-bd.org; www.facebook.com/pkssf.org

Request for Expression of Interest (REOI)

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), an apex microfinance and employment generation organization has been working for poverty alleviation in Bangladesh since 1990. PKSF wants to "Engage an Audit Firm to Conduct Audit of Computerized Information System (CIS) of PKSF".

Competent national Audit firms are invited to express their interest in the above service. They are requested to collect Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) with Terms of Reference (ToR) from the office of PKSF during office hours or from PKSF website (www.pkssf-bd.org).

Last date of Submission of REOI is **07 January 2021, upto 12:00 PM**.

Request for Proposal(RFP) will be issued to the short-listed audit firms for the submission of proposals. Firm will be selected based on "Least Cost Selection (LCS)" method.

PKSF reserves the right to accept or reject any or all expressions of interest without assigning any reasons.

Dr. Md. Jashim Uddin
Deputy Managing Director

‘Lies and conspiracy’

Modi defends farm reforms as protests grow

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said his government was a victim of “lies and conspiracy” as it struggled to defuse growing protests by tens of thousands of farmers threatening to encircle New Delhi.

With more protesters gathering at entrances to the capital every day, Modi stepped up efforts to placate the rural agitation against his market reforms.

Protesters have blocked major roads into Delhi for more than three weeks opposing laws which enable them to sell produce on the open market instead of just through state-run bodies that guarantee a minimum price.

Farmers have demanded the repeal of the laws, which they say invite corporate domination of food production.

So far, the protesters have mainly come from northern Indian states. But yesterday a union in the central state of Maharashtra said thousands of members would join the protesters.

Union leaders say they will take the action into the new year, and have set up tent cities for protesters to counter the freezing cold.

They have threatened to cripple the capital with a huge rally involving tractors on January 26, when British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is to be a special guest at the annual Republic Day celebrations.

Modi said in a video speech to one farmers’ group that opposition parties had exploited the protests, despite having supported the rural reforms. The government’s rivals were “spreading lies for their own political gain. They are using the farmers’ shoulders to fire their guns”, he said.

Claims that minimum prices would be ended were just part of the “lies and conspiracy”.

“I just want to make the farmers’ lives easier,” Modi said.

Agriculture employs about 70 percent of India’s 1.3 billion people and accounts for 15 percent of its \$2.7 trillion economy.

Five rounds of talks between ministers and unions have failed to produce a breakthrough.



Rescued Nigerian school boys sit together at the Government house in Katsina, Nigeria, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

MASS ABDUCTION BY BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA

344 schoolboys released; many remain missing

AFP, Kankara

More than 300 Nigerian schoolboys seized in a mass abduction claimed by Boko Haram experienced their first full day of freedom yesterday after a nearly week-long ordeal.

But relief at their survival mingled with concern that many others could still be captive, and the circumstances of their release remained unclear.

Looking dirty, worn-out and distraught, and most of them without shoes, the boys were brought to the governor’s offices in Katsina, the capital of Katsina state in northwestern Nigeria, after being released late Thursday.

The assault last Friday on a rural school in Kankara, carried out by gunmen arriving on motorbikes, was initially blamed on criminal gangs who have terrorised the region for years.

But on Tuesday Boko Haram, the brutal jihadist group behind the abduction of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok in 2014, claimed responsibility.

Local officials announced late Thursday that 344 boys had been released and would spend the night in the protection of security agents.

A security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they had been left in the forest after negotiations between the authorities and the abductors, but gave no further details.

It remained unclear, though, if all the abducted schoolboys had been released, amid ongoing uncertainty over the number taken in the first place.

In an interview with state channel NTA, the governor added: “I think we have recovered most of the boys, it’s not all of them.”

In a video released by Boko Haram Thursday, a distressed teenager said he was among 520 students kidnapped.

AFP, Brussels

British and EU negotiators plunged into the “final hours” of their scramble for a post-Brexit trade deal yesterday, deeply divided on the highly-charged issue of fishing rights.

The UK will leave the EU single market in less than two weeks and time has all but run out for any agreement to be approved in time to head off a severe economic shock.

The European Parliament has demanded that it see the text of any accord by Sunday at the latest, and the UK government says it will not allow talks to go beyond December 31.

Brussels’ chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier told the MEPs before heading to talks with his UK counterpart David Frost that Friday marked a “moment of truth”.

“We have very little time remaining, just a few hours to work through these negotiations... if you want this agreement to enter into force on January 1.”

Britain left the European Union on January 31 and will leave the EU single market on December 31 at midnight, with or without a follow-on accord.

Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday acknowledged difficulties in Brexit trade talks but vowed to plough on.

“Our door is open. We will keep talking but I have to say that things are looking difficult and there’s a gap that needs to be bridged,” he said on a trip to Bolton, in northwest England.



“We have done a lot to try and help, and we hope that our EU friends will see sense and come to the table with something themselves.”

Without a trade deal, cross-Channel trade will be conducted on basic WTO rules and a market built over 47 years of economic integration will be disrupted by tariffs on goods.

Late on Thursday, Johnson and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen held talks by phone that failed to break the logjam in the eight-month-old negotiation.

Barnier confirmed that fishing remains the main sticking point, with both sides now moving closer on the broader rules for ensuring fair

competition.

And he stressed that the issue of fish could not be side-stepped: “Everything comes together as a whole. Nothing’s agreed until everything is agreed.”

Britain is adamant that it will decide who gets to fish it in its waters after January 1, but Brussels wants to secure a long-term agreement guaranteeing access for EU boats.

Many in Brussels see the doom-laden rhetoric coming from both sides as manoeuvring for advantage in the last moments before the deal -- which is said to be 95 percent ready -- is signed.

“It’s like always in politics. It happens always at the end,” veteran MEP and former Belgian premier Guy Verhofstadt told Sky News.



A Palestinian demonstrator kicks a tear gas canister fired by Israeli forces during a protest against Jewish settlements, in Beit Dajan in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Defrauded online

FROM PAGE 1

and submitting a paragraph per day, for which she would receive a monthly salary of Tk 20,000. They would be on a wide range of topics -- like describing a winter’s morning or the feel of a village market, the kind of thing you were assigned to write on for English class at school.

Sounds preposterously easy, but there was a catch.

Besides, she was messaged, if she could recruit more job seekers like herself to the Messenger group, she would receive half the “add fee” as commission. She would also be entitled to a Tk 100 bonus if she was able to add 30 or more job-seekers.

After paying the ad fee, Samira was added to “Training Group-18”, where on an average 30 girls were added every day. She was also added to a “submit group”, where she was told to submit her daily paragraph.

Samira was also warned not to ask anyone else in the training group anything and if she had any questions, to directly message the person who had added her to the group. Otherwise, she was told, the group admin would remove her from the group and she would lose her “job”.

“After a few days,

although everyone started submitting paragraphs every day, I realised the admin was not interested in what we were writing. I don’t think they even saw what we submitted,” she said.

Rather, the group admin kept pressuring everyone to add more people to the group by posting the job offer in other women’s groups they were part of and collecting “add fees” from them, she said.

“Soon, I realised something fishy was going on. I saw the number of recruited persons become more than 250 in a few days and I was wondering how they would pay the promised salary to 250 people, which would be more than Tk 50 lakh a month,” Samira said.

Her suspicions were soon confirmed when the admin started removing everyone from the group who, like her, had been in the group for more than 20 days at that point and asked about their payment.

Afterwards, Samira searched but could not find the Facebook profiles of either the group admin or the person who recruited her -- she figured she was either blocked or they had deactivated their accounts.

When she called the mobile number where she had been sending the fees of those she recruited, she

found she had also been blocked from that number.

Samira’s account suggests that these group admins and the people behind the scheme -- if we count 250 members each in 20 groups who had sent them at least Tk 30 -- an estimated amount of Tk 1.5 lakh in two to three weeks, without investing a single taka.

To investigate further, this correspondent also replied to one such job offer and was added to “Training group-38” with more than 200 members at that point, in exchange for a Tk 300 fee.

If an average 200 people each in 40 such groups had sent half the fee to their respective group admin’s mobile banking account, the group admins have already received an amount of Tk 12 lakh in just a few weeks, by hoodwinking gullible young job seekers.

This correspondent spoke to 50 young women, mostly homemakers and students -- including some young men -- who were cheated by these scams. Technically resembling pyramid schemes, the members were forced to reel others into the Messenger groups in exchange for a fee ranging from Tk 60-500, half of which they got to keep.

The tasks ranged from placing a given code

number on images of clothes or selling clothes in girls’ groups to writing paragraphs. But none of these lasted a whole month -- all the members being removed from the groups at around the 20-day mark.

NEW TWIST, OLD SCAM In 2013, the government banned pyramid marketing by passing the Multilevel Marketing (MLM) Activities (control) Ordinance 2013.

The law was introduced after several scams like Destiny 2000, Unipay2u and ITCL were busted, which had been embezzling vast amounts of money from clients by selling non-existent products and services.

The scams these young people are encountering on Facebook are structured like the now-banned pyramid schemes, albeit on a smaller scale but with a new twist -- going online -- said experts.

Co-founder of Bangladesh Cyber & Legal Centre Gazi Mahfuz Ul Kabir informed this correspondent that they had encountered around 150 victims of such cyber scams and received around eight complaints.

AFM Al Kibria, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police’s Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, said they have

also received a number of complaints related to such scams based on Facebook Messenger groups.

The CTTC has also received two cases on this. “After our investigation, we found they are basically frauds, having no business,” he said.

“We even arrested two criminals who embezzled more than Tk 50 lakh, by adding people to their Messenger group, and seized around Tk 6 lakh from them,” Kibria added.

According to Kibria, since the amount is small, victims don’t want to complain, leading these frauds to continue their schemes online.

“The victims can come to us if they want to make a complaint against such Facebook fraud. Because if they don’t report, it becomes difficult for us to take action since these happen in ‘closed’ groups on Facebook.”

According to Facebook community standards, it has policies to prevent and disrupt fraudulent activities and removes content aimed at deceiving people deliberately. This includes users not posting content on false recruitment and ponzi or pyramid schemes, confidence schemes, or setting up false businesses or entities.

UN: 3,174 MIGRANTS DIED IN 2020

AGENCIES

Over 3,100 people lost their lives in 2020 on migration routes in the world despite limits to movement imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As of Thursday, the Missing Migrants project of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) had recorded this year some 3,174 deaths on migration routes around the world, a drop from the 5,327 in 2019.

The decrease in the number of deaths recorded on dangerous migration routes is not necessarily an indication that the number of lives lost did actually drop in 2020 since Covid-19 also complicated the IOM’s ability to collect data on deaths during migration and to monitor specific routes, the organization said in a statement issued yesterday in Geneva as part of International Migrants Day.

So far this year, at least 1,773 migrants died on internal routes within Europe and ones toward it, accounting for most victims recorded in the world. An increase in deaths was recorded in South America as well with 104 lives lost - most of whom were Venezuelan migrants - compared with under 40 in all the previous recorded years.

IOM noted that there is not sufficient evidence to corroborate information received on some shipwrecks. The Missing Migrants project is aware of at least 14 “invisible” shipwrecks in which an alleged about 600 lives were lost but which could not be included in this year’s figure.

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ফাইল নং ০৬.০২.৬৭৫৮.১৬৫.০৭.১৯৪.২০.৯৩৪

তারিখঃ ১৭ ডিসেম্বর ২০২০

পুরাতন গাড়ি বিক্রয় দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

অত্র প্রতিষ্ঠানের পুরাতন ০২টি গাড়ি ঢাকা মেট্রো-গ-৩৭-১০৬০ টয়োটা এলিও (কার) এবং ঢাকা মেট্রো-গ-৩৫-৯১৪৩ টয়োটা এলিও (কার) “যেখানে যে অবস্থায় আছে” এবং উহার রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদ, ট্যাক্স টোকেন ও ফিটনেস সনদ “যে অবস্থায় যে পর্যন্ত নয়ান আছে” সে ভিত্তিতে নিলামে বিক্রয়ের জন্য বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিক, অস্থায়ী রেসিডেন্ট/টিকাদারদের নিকট থেকে সীলমোহরকৃত বামে উল্লিখিত তারিখে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাইতেছেঃ

১	স্থান	ডকইয়ার্ড এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ওয়ার্কস লিমিটেড, সোনাকান্দা, বন্দর, নারায়ণগঞ্জ।
২	গাড়ির ধরণ	পুরাতন ০২টি গাড়ি, ঢাকা মেট্রো-গ-৩৭-১০৬০ টয়োটা এলিও (কার) এবং ঢাকা মেট্রো-গ-৩৫-৯১৪৩ টয়োটা এলিও (কার)।
৪	সিডিউলের মূল্য	টাকা ১০০০.০০ (এক হাজার) মাত্র (অফেরতযোগ্য)।
৫	বিড সিকিউরিটির পরিমাণ	এটো দরের উপর ৩% আন্তর্জাতিক হিসাবে ব্যাংক ড্রাইফট/পে-অর্ডার ডকইয়ার্ড এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং লিমিটেড এর নামে দরপত্রের সাথে জমা দিতে হবে। (তালিকাভুক্ত টিকাদার প্রতিষ্ঠানের জন্য প্রযোজ্য নহে)।
৬	সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের স্থান	হিসাব বিভাগ, ডকইয়ার্ড এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ওয়ার্কস লিমিটেড, বাংলাদেশ নৌবাহিনী, সোনাকান্দা, বন্দর, নারায়ণগঞ্জ।
৭	সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	৩১ ডিসেম্বর ২০২০ অবধি সন্ধ্যা সাতটায় সময় পর্যন্ত।
৮	দরপত্র জমা দেওয়ার শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	০৩ জানুয়ারি ২০২১ বেলাঃ ১২৩৫ ঘটিকা।
৯	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	০৩ জানুয়ারি ২০২১ বেলাঃ ১২৩০ ঘটিকা।
১০	যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম	মোবাইলঃ ০১৭৬৮৭১৯৮৮৭৭ www.dewbn.gov.bd
১১	দরপত্রের সহিত যে সকল কাগজপত্র জমা প্রদান করিতে হইবে	ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, হালনাগাদ আয়ের সার্টিফিকেট, ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট, ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি, পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবি ০১ কপি। (তালিকাভুক্ত টিকাদারদের ক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য নহে)

১২। বিশেষ আবেদনঃ

- দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত অন্যান্য তথ্যাবলী দরপত্র সংগ্রহকালে বাণিজ্যিক শাখা হতে জানা যাবে।
- দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ হতে ৩০ দিন পর্যন্ত দরপত্র বলবৎ থাকবে।
- নিদিষ্ট সময়ের মধ্যে মালামাল ডেলিভারী দিতে হবে।
- দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীত দরপত্র বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
- অধিস্র দাখলকালীন সময় সকাল ০৮.০০ ঘটিকা হতে বিকাল ০৩.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত সিডিউল ক্রয়কারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের সর্বোচ্চ ০৩ (তিন) সদস্য সমন্বয় প্রতিনিধি দল যানবাহন শপের কর্তৃত্বভুক্ত কর্মকর্তা/কর্মচারীদের মাধ্যমে উল্লিখিত গাড়ি ও মোটরসাইকেল সরঞ্জামে পরিদর্শন করতে পারবেন।

জিডি-২০১১

পক্ষে ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক



Photographs taken by Aly Zaker. The legendary thespian loved to take photographs.

BABA AS A PHOTOGRAPHER



PHOTOGRAPH: ALY ZAKER

IRISH ZAKER

My first distinct memory of Baba and photography is from 1982. It was my Khala's (Aunt) wedding, and Baba was taking pictures. He had recently gotten his hands on the 400 ISO colour film that time, and I remember him telling someone "this is a very high-speed film. 400 ASA!"

Another memory that sticks out is when he bought the Canon F-1. He was very excited about that camera. And then a few months later, he bought the 105 mm macro lens. We shot pictures of roses in our garden in New Bailey Road.

Baba loved buying cameras. In recent years, he was particularly attached to Nikon, and purchased every professional SLR that the maker came out with. I would admonish him for not buying enough lenses and too many bodies.

Maa would scold him for spending so much money on cameras, and not using them enough. He would solemnly declare each purchase to be his last. When a new model came out, he would promptly purchase it. New drama would ensue where I would be Baba's co-conspirator in hiding the latest purchase from Maa, while discretely performing my due ministrations about his profligacy.

Though Baba's most active phase as a photographer was between the 80s and the early 2000s, he carried his camera with him everywhere, until his last days. Though too weak to take



Aly Zaker and Irish Zaker

pictures, he took his Nikon D5 and his favorite 24-120 lens to Ratanpur, our ancestral village home, on our last trip there three weeks ago.

As a photographer, Baba was not preoccupied with technique. He did not bother much with rules of composition, or post-processing. He did not care about learning his cameras either. He just loved to take pictures.

Our friend and colleague, Neville, often told me that while we take pictures with our eyes, Baba takes them with his heart. As preoccupied as I was with the technical aspects of photography, I never paid much heed

to Neville's assertions, until recently. A few months ago, in the middle of the COVID lockdown, I started thinking about my practice of photography. I had become deeply dissatisfied with it of late. Upon much reflection, and discussion with betters, I realized that my dissatisfaction stemmed partly from the fact that I was taking pictures that I thought I should take, and not ones that I felt connected to. Photograph what you love --it seems like a simple epiphany. However, it took me 13 years to arrive at, while Baba had had it from the start.

As I go over the pictures that Baba has taken over the years, this keeps

jumping out at me. His pictures almost invariably reflect his pathos, tenderness, and love for his subjects -- whether they are family members, the people of Bangladesh, or nature.

You can literally feel his heart beating in the images.

There is a portrait of my sister, that especially comes to mind. Even though we both loved her fiercely, if I had to choose one that best encapsulates Sriya, I would choose the one taken by Baba. The kindness in her eyes, the compassion in her smile, the shyness in her demeanour. It is as close to the perfect portrait as I have ever seen. An image made with the heart, not with the eyes.

I suppose that for Baba, photography was more of a personal diary, than a book looking to be published. Every page of that diary reflects the enormity of his love, his compassion, his passion.



PHOTOGRAPH: ALY ZAKER

Because of the complete lack of self-consciousness, his photography most purely reflects the person that he was. Someone who loved deeply, and did what he loved, exclusively.

Bleeding for Survival- First Garo band to be featured on GAAN app

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Rock band Bleeding for Survival is the first ever band from Garo community-- an indigenous community of Bangladesh-- to be featured on the leading music streaming platform, GAAN app.

They released their debut track "Salni Teng'sue" on Gaan app on December 4, 2020 in their mother tongue -- A'chik. Anyone can download the song from the app after installing it from Google Playstore. The song's music video for the track will release on December 11 from their YouTube channel.

The song Salni Teng'sue-- meaning "the Sunshine"-- portrays the feelings of a person for his beloved. At different layers of the song, the composition exudes romanticism of a Garo youth for his loved one in an artistic way.

Bleeding for Survival started their journey 2013 under the name "Warriors", with Wesley Hadima, Polash Hawee as its founding members. Tonmoy Poddar and Aram Bawn joined later. After Polash

LINE-UP
Wesley Sangma - Vocal
Nobel Sangma -Guitar
Anindo Dango Guitar
Aram Bawn- Bass
Ronald Nengminja - Drums

Hawee and Tonmoy Poddar left the band, Noble Sangma replaced them.

"We believe music has no language barriers," says Wesley Sangma. "I hope that the song that we released in our mother tongue will be acceptable to everyone here." Wesley mentioned that the platform A'chik Band Community of Bangladesh (ABCB) has many talented rising bands to discover, and urged music lovers to explore the community.

"What they are doing for their community and music as a whole deserves appreciation," says Kazi Ashiqueen Shaju, who is one of the founders of GAAN and Artcell's fabled drummer. "Their song is already trending on our app, as it is catchy and melodic. I wish them well."

Shaju applauded Bleeding for Survival's heart, as they composed in their own mother tongue. "I hope, they will keep composing music in their language, and feel proud about it, without paying heed to any negativity."



Members of Bleeding for Survival



(L) Kim Ki-duk with Abu Shahed Emon. (R) Internationally acclaimed director Mostofa Sarwar Farooki (3-L) and Nusrat Imrose Tisha (2-R) with Kim Ki-duk".



REMEMBERING KIM KI-DUK

The master filmmaker of contemporary Asian films

Renowned South Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-duk passed away on December 11, due to Covid-19. He was one of the most prolific directors of contemporary Asian films.

He made his mark in the world of cinema internationally for his signature style of making realistic films. Yet, throughout his life, he was surrounded by controversies.

He won several accolades throughout his illustrious career, including the Golden Lion at 69th Venice International Film Festival for "Pieta", a Silver Lion for Best Director at 61st Venice International Film Festival for "3-Iron", a Silver Bear for Best Director at 54th Berlin International Film Festival for "Samaritan Girl", and the Un Certain Regard prize at 2011 Cannes Film Festival for "Arirang". The 2003 film, "Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring", is one of Kim's most successful films.

The director had a close alliance with internationally acclaimed filmmaker Mostofa Sarwar Farooki. After learning about Kim's demise, Farooki shared a heartfelt note on social media. "Seems like the terrible news is true! So many



Kim Ki-duk

PHOTO: COLLECTED

memories! At a total loss for words! You will be missed so badly, Kim Ki Duk!" he wrote.

Kim's brilliance and bravery as a director inspired filmmakers across the world.

His films explored themes surrounding death, life, love, and human relationships. His way of telling stories through honest brutality made him a controversial, yet successful artist.

Renowned filmmaker and producer Abu Shahed Emon wrote about Kim on his Facebook profile. "I have hundreds of memories with him...I had to accept the

fact that the great master of our time is no more. Your creations have inspired many young filmmakers around Asia and the world. Rest in peace," he said.

Celebrated director Ashfaq Nipun, shared his thoughts on Kim's career. "It is easy to become a filmmaker, but it is tough to become an artist. Kim was an artist," said Nipun. "I feel jealous of his brave and bold filmmaking as his works had a unique, defining tone, without having any mark of influence from anyone. He had his own style of telling stories."

"He was philosophically powerful and brutally honest about his work, and that clearly reflects on his films," mentioned Nipun. "Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring", "Pieta", "Moebius", "The Bow", and "Arirang" are some of Nipun's favourite films of Kim.

Moreover, popular director Sanjoy Somadder mourned his demise on social media. "Kim Ki Duk ! U will be always remembered & loved !! What a loss ! RIP Master," he wrote.

Kim Ki-duk was born in 1960. He studied Fine Arts in Paris and began his career as a screenwriter before he directed his first film, "Crocodile", in 1996.



Man who says no work too small gets offended at being called a ride-share driver

SAIMA SYKA

A Dhoka man, who made a career out of telling others that no work is beneath them, was offended this Friday for being mistaken to be a ride-share driver.

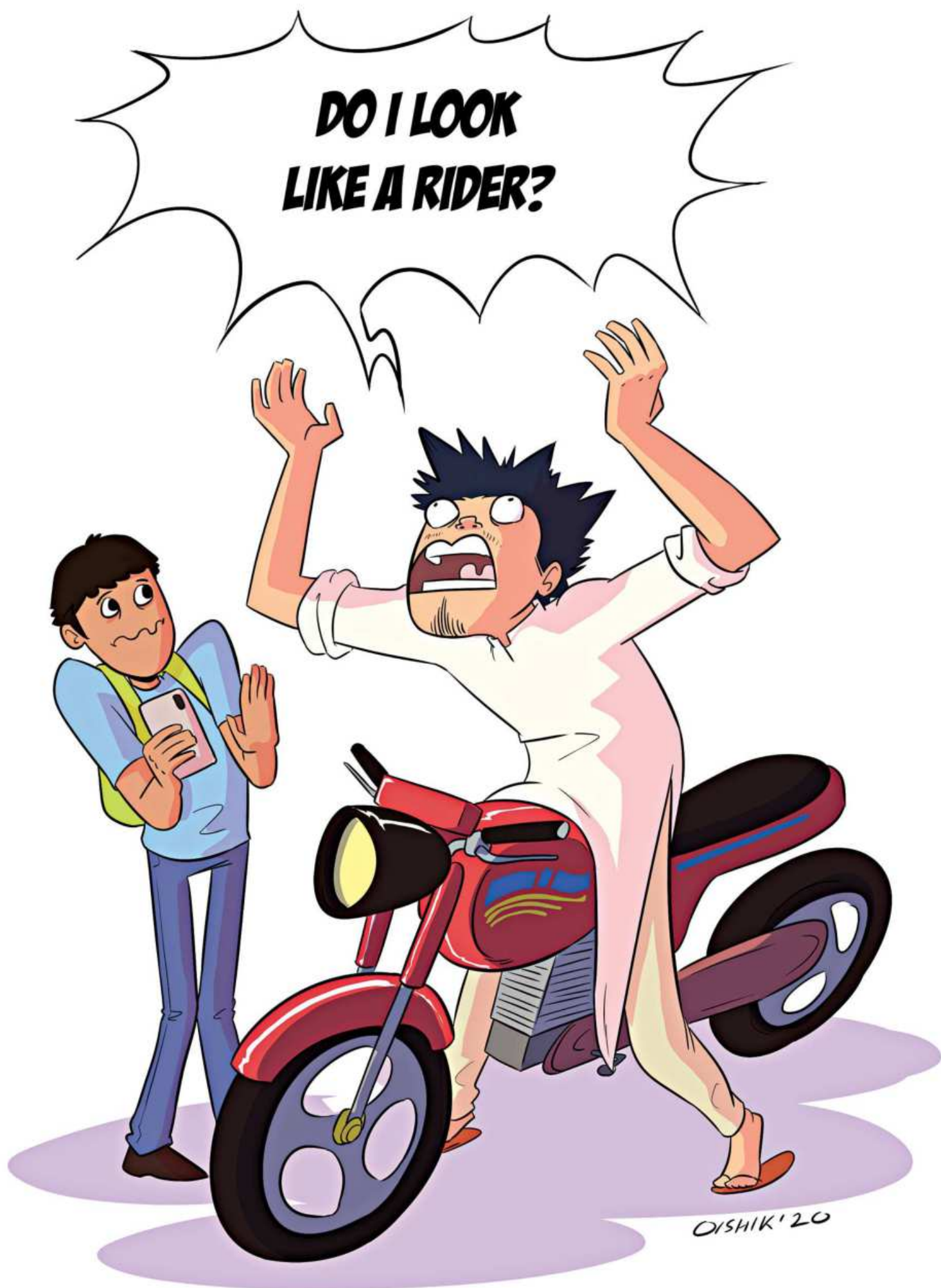
Afzal Ahsan, of the proud Ahsan family, was waiting illegally on a sidewalk when a boy with a mobile phone approached him and asked him if he was Zafar. "Who is Zafar?" Afzal asked, to which the boy said Zafar was his BhaiKoiJabenCancelKoren rider.

"How dare you think I am a BhaiKoiJabenCancelKoren rider? Just because I am on a bike, does not make me a rider!" he bellowed.

Afzal's screams of displeasure soon attracted a crowd, who asked him what the matter was. "This stupid boy thought I was his rider. Like I am someone who has a bike which he uses to help others while making a little income on the side," Afzal said, before further berating the boy.

Afzal, who loves telling his subordinates that no work is beneath them, also addressed this issue and said it was more about respect. "You can't mistake people for being someone else. It's not about being a rider. Day before yesterday, I was mistaken for a CEO, even though I was just a CFO. It's about respect. Respect," he said.

Afzal ended his tirade by asking the boy to buy his own bike. "Once you buy the bike, you won't have to ask others for help. Help yourself, first. Go to a bank, get a loan. Then use your bike to pay off your loans, there's no harm in that," he said. He chalked out an entire business plan for the kid after feeling a little stupid over his outburst. He later posted a feel good story on his Instagram about how he had helped out the kid, without going into the details of what had actually transpired.



Kohli's career hangs in the balance after birth of first child

This is not who we are talking about.

FAMILY PLANNING CORRESPONDENT

Pundits have cast doubt on the future of India's cricket superstar Birat Kholi's career after he became a first-time father last week, saying he may never reach his previous peaks following the new addition to his family.

Khohli had abandoned the tour of Australia to be with his expecting wife Rudshanka Varma, whose acting career, experts said, is likely to see a similar dip. Varma was expecting Khohli to come, but not the backlash it would create.

"I think we're already seeing what it will do to his career - he just left the tour," said former cricketer Sushil Gadhascar from his commentary chair. "His priorities have already changed, so I can't see him making the same

sacrifices he has made so far in his career."

While fans have also piled on, angry that Khohli's absence has weakened the team ahead of a tough assignment, Khohli's in-laws have welcomed the move and agreed that his cricket career was destined to take a hit.

"Your body changes when you become a father," Khohli's father-in-law said. "All those late nights, getting up to feed the baby and change its diapers does no favours for your posture."

Khohli's mother-in-law agreed, reminding her husband that it's not an "it" but a "he".

The lack of sleep would be a big problem, said former Pakistan captain Imran Kamran.

"You see, his eyesight would be affected... he won't be able to negotiate the fastest bowlers anymore. Also, because he will be bent over

cleaning diapers half the time, he won't be able to hop onto the back foot as easily," said Kamran. "That is why I didn't marry till I retired."

When asked whether him not marrying during his playing days had anything to do with his dating life, Kamran said he had a cabinet meeting to get to and rushed off.

Meanwhile, Khohli posted on his Instagram account asking whether it was anyone's business what he wanted to do with his life and whether people should be talking about how his body may change.

"Yes, it is their business and they sure will be talking," commented US tennis superstar Serena Williams. [The name in the heading is a misspelling, just for clicks...]

PHOTO: AFP

Fast food can help lose weight fast, studies show

NABILA BASHER

It has been discovered that the immense amount of fats and calories in fast food help dissolve the fat cells in your body! It's called "fast food" for a reason: it makes you fast! Otherwise, it would've been called "fat food."

This makes complete sense. It is definitely a complete meal; meat - check, grains - check, salad - check, healthy fats - check.

If we take a closer look, eating tasty food effectively leads to release of dopamine and we all know that a happy mindset leads to a healthy body!

Fat cells in your body will melt away faster than the wicked witch of the west from the Wizard of Oz!

But look at the ingredients of some of the fast food. The grains -- that is the bread -- is usually of superior quality. Needless to say, it's white, and anything white, as we already know, is superior in quality; as proclaimed by the former President of the United States of America (a credible source of information).

The meat is grilled and has additional components (aka doctored) that help to enhance the quality of protein. The salad, that is strategically non-existent, helps you fulfill your 5 fruits and vegetables count of the day (as ketchup is technically tomatoes).

As a result of this finding, we see tears of joy in many who have long waited for this kind of news. Well kids, the wait is over! You can now have your cake and eat it too!

The government has pledged to set up even more fast food chains around schools in hopes of encouraging healthy eating habits in children and parents alike. It is said to be the most revolutionary way of combatting the health issue we are facing as a nation right now. On top of that, giant fast food corporations have further lowered their prices in celebration of this and are demolishing small and independent business owners from selling unhealthier options.



PHOTO: UNSPLASH

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 19, 2020, POUSH 4, 1427 BS

Bangladesh and India’s relations must go to the next level

Stumbling blocks in the friendship have to be removed

AS Bangladesh approaches its 50th year and observes the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and Bangladesh-India celebrate 50 years of their friendship, the virtual summit between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Prime Minister Narendra Modi bears special significance. Many of the commitments made anticipate further strengthening of this close friendship. This includes India’s promise to promptly deliver to Bangladesh the Covid-19 vaccines it is producing and the commitment to strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation on trade and connectivity, especially by removing non-tariff barriers. Thus relations between the two countries, especially at the political level, are very amicable and positive. There are, however, certain issues that stand in the way of taking this friendship, which has great strategic significance to both countries, to a deeper level of trust, mutual understanding and cooperation.

Bangladesh is anxiously waiting for certain crucial issues to be resolved. PM Sheikh Hasina has sought early signing of the interim agreement on Teesta water sharing that had been agreed upon a long nine years ago. Although PM Modi has expressed India’s sincere commitment to address this, the people of Bangladesh would like to see a concrete resolving of this issue as quickly as possible.

There are also some trade-related thorns in the economic relationship of the two countries that need to be removed. We would, for instance, like to see the anti-dumping tax on jute products removed. The implementation of the Indian Line of Credit to Bangladesh aimed at boosting infrastructural development, among other things, has been delayed due to bureaucratic hurdles that need to be addressed. The condition of around 85 percent of materials to be sourced from India for infrastructural projects (which has been relaxed in special cases) needs to be revised as it may hurt Bangladeshi industries, such as those producing cement and rods. What is the logic of sourcing materials from India when they are abundantly produced in Bangladesh?

We are also less than happy with India’s role, or lack thereof, in the Rohingya refugee repatriation that Bangladesh has been burdened with. A more active role is sought from India, one that will be prioritised over its economic interests in Myanmar. The continuous border killings of Bangladeshi nationals by BSF despite India repeatedly promising to address this issue, has been cause of great disappointment for Bangladesh. A more sincere effort is needed from the Indian side to put a stop to these killings.

At this important juncture of their relations, the most important element is trust and sincerity. India must show greater understanding towards Bangladesh by letting go of its unnecessary prickliness regarding Bangladesh’s relations with China. Bangladesh, in its endeavour to develop and progress, will continue to reach out to other countries as it has to Japan, the US, China and the European countries. It will do so for its own interests. This in no way affects its close ties with India with which it shares a most important and emotional history—our Liberation War. Therefore, India must be rest assured that Bangladesh will not do anything that will in any way compromise India’s security concerns.

We hope that this auspicious milestone of relations between the two countries will usher in a significantly more meaningful height of mutual cooperation by removing all the stumbling blocks that keep coming in the way. Most decidedly, the ball is in India’s court.

Shipbreaking workers paid half of minimum wage

How are we allowing wage theft on such a massive scale?

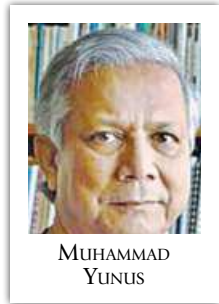
WE are alarmed that tens of thousands of workers in the shipbreaking industry—which remains one of the most dangerous occupations in the country, with disturbing levels of fatalities, injuries and work-related diseases—are being denied their rightful wages by employers. Although the government declared Tk 16,000 as minimum wage in 2018, a recent investigation by *The Daily Star* reveals that many workers are receiving only half of what they are legally owed. This essentially means that over the last two years, employers have robbed workers of crores of Taka. Workers and labour leaders report that the wage structure and labour laws are ignored in every single yard of the country, depriving workers of any semblance of dignity. As a result, an overwhelming majority are struggling to make ends meet, despite risking their lives on a daily basis.

Earlier this month, a 35-year-old man died after falling from the engine room of a ship in Chattogram. According to non-profit Young Power in Social Action, about seven shipbreaking workers have died this year, while another 24 died in 2019. Many more were temporarily or permanently disabled in the absence of sufficient protection gears or safety protocols. Meanwhile, with no enforcement of existing labour laws, workers are forced to work long hours, during holidays and without work contracts.

It is now well-documented how ruthlessly workers are exploited in the shipbreaking industry. But why is there so little monitoring of the industry from the government? What is the point of legislating minimum wages if there is no mechanism to ensure implementation? How have employers gotten away with such massive wage theft for the last two years?

We urge the government to take urgent steps to rectify this serious violation. It should ensure that employers not only pay minimum wages to workers going forward, but also back wages for the past two years. It is abhorrent that it is allowing exploitative employers to rob desperate and destitute workers of their dues under the government’s nose. This must end now.

People’s lives must matter more than pharma companies’ profit



THE history of human beings is a history of being driven basically by collective interest, not by personal interest. Economists made us believe that we are driven only by personal interest, and act accordingly through profit maximisation. It is time to restore our core identity by making businesses serve society’s needs first and foremost; profit cannot come at the expense of human well-being, and human life. Nowhere should that be more true than our health—which was enshrined by our leaders as a fundamental right when I was merely six years old, in the 1946 constitution of the World Health Organization.

It is tragic today that the pharmaceutical industry—which has been appropriately lauded for producing safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines in record time—has been pursuing secretive monopolistic deals with the fruits of taxpayer-funded innovation, rather than volunteering to hand over intellectual property rights and know-how for the next great task facing humanity: getting those vaccines to everyone, everywhere, at the lowest cost possible, at the fastest possible time.

Make no mistake: unless we collectively take on this task with single-minded determination, the consequences will be dire and long-lasting. Already, richer countries in Europe and America have locked up most of the global supply of vaccines for their own populations, pushing lower income nations to the back of the queue. As we emerge into 2021, rather than having a sense of possibility of a vaccine-led ending of the pandemic, many in the global south is gripped with a sense of dread and anger at the big new social chasm that’s about to open: between the vaccine haves and have-nots. The longer the pandemic goes on

anywhere, the more people will continue to die and the more the virus will have a chance to mutate and become vaccine resistant, threatening new waves everywhere. Meanwhile, under current mechanisms such as COVAX, which are commendable, there simply will not be enough vaccine doses to go around by the end of 2021. The Global North is hardly in a mood to listen to WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom’s solemn warning—“No one is safe until everyone

technologies, with South Africa, a country where the tragic history of needless lives lost to the HIV/Aids pandemic looms large, as a leading co-sponsor of the proposal.

A simple declaration to allow the vaccine to be patent-free will transform the situation dramatically. Instead, we see a clear emergence of North-South divide on this very issue of saving human lives in countries where most of the global population live.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

is safe.” To face this long year ahead, countries urgently need to ramp up diagnostics tools, get access to potentially effective treatments at the lowest cost, and vaccinate their most at-risk as rapidly as possible—such as healthcare providers and the elderly. That’s why nearly a hundred countries are supporting a proposal at the World Trade Organization this month to issue a broad-based general waiver on patents to all Covid-19 vaccines and medical

Rich countries, such as the US, Canada, Australia and Japan, have so far remained together to oppose the resolution, which will allow low income countries the ability to focus on getting life-saving Covid-19 medical technologies to their people at the lowest cost without the fear of being sued for infringing intellectual property rights getting in the way. What’s perhaps sadder is that Brazil has abandoned its long-held positions and joined the group of countries which oppose patent free production of these

On shared and contested histories



should have been given to the universities from the start and not to the politicians. In other words, he maintained that there should have been an objective academic archival process for the history of the Liberation War, rather than the repeated and passionate changes in the versions of history whenever there is a change in the political landscape.

Successful post-1975 military governments who tried to silence and overshadow their predecessors ended up obliterating the contribution of Bangabandhu and the movements that ultimately led to freedom. Their version of history, where the enemy could not be named, uncannily resembled that of Pakistan. My generation (and I am as old the country), grew up learning about the Liberation War in mixed metaphors: the perpetrators were “unnamed enemies” represented by symbolic hyenas, vultures or thunderstorms and the victims were nothing more than simple farmers or fishermen in dance dramas. For 21 years, the general undertone had been to “let bygones be bygones” and move on without engaging with history.

The octogenarian professor is among the fast fading first generation of intellectuals who both witnessed and archived the birth of the nation. He was one of the few with a camera in 1952 to photograph many of the images of Ekushey that we now see. While listening to his account of how he was arrested by the Pakistani Army on March 25 along with 14 others from the Dhaka University campus, who were put in a temporary jail in the second capital (the National Parliament House); how Professor Rehman Sobhan and some other expatriates in the US went to Senator Edward Kennedy to make him call Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and barter their release, it dawned on me that there are not too many of such individuals around to reflect on the nuances of the War. Once these individuals are gone, we will be left with simplified national and ideological narratives.

Hence, now more than ever, it is important that the academics undertake serious scholarly projects to record and preserve history for the posterity. It is our sacred duty to preserve the details of the sacrifice of our fellow human beings, which has made our existence possible. The intelligentsia was the first “national group” that was targeted for “systematic killing” on March 25, 1971 and the same group was targeted again on December 14, 1971. The circularity is no coincidence: for the Pakistanis, the spirit of freedom originated in the brains of these public

intellectuals. From their perspective, shooting at the brain of the freedom loving beast is the easiest way to handle the situation. Removing Bangabandhu from the scene was another strategic ploy on their part. They also targeted another “national group”—Hindus who were depicted as the agents of India, a country that they felt was involved in a political intrigue as a result of the 1965 War and was instigating insurgency in their eastern province.

There were three main actors in the Liberation struggle. Pakistan tried to put forward a version that focuses on a secessionist movement led by India-sponsored terrorists who killed many non-Bengalis. Their propaganda machinery during the war brought in a number of journalists to tell the world

a colony for 30 years.” This is an echo of General Yahya Khan, who on February 22, 1971, is reported to have said, “Kill three million of them, and the rest will eat out of our hands.”

Then there is India, a country that went around the world to gain diplomatic support in our favour against the backdrop of the Cold War, a country that sheltered 10 million refugees during the war, and a country that trained the guerrillas and helped them with military resources before resisting and overpowering the final blow of Pakistani attacks in December, thus expediting victory. The dominant narrative in India, however, has presented the war as an India-Pakistan war that somehow relegates the role of our freedom fighters. Their big-brother like arrogance, for the lack of a better word, in the post-Liberation



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

of the “atrocities” committed by the MuktiBahini. Anthony Mascarenhas, the author of *Bangladesh: A Legacy of Blood*, could not believe what he saw. He fled to London and published in *The Sunday Times* an article titled “Genocide”. Before he published it on June 13, 1971, Mascarenhas had to arrange the escape of his family members through the Afghanistan border to avoid Pakistani retaliation. In 2011, BBC credited the piece as “an article that changed history”. Mascarenhas told the world about the “GENOCIDE (that was) conducted with amazing casualness”. He quoted West Pakistani senior military officers saying, “We are determined to cleanse East Pakistan once and for all of the threat of secession, even if it means killing of two million people and ruling the province as

period has caused many in Bangladesh to interpret Indian involvement along religious lines, going back to the two-nation theory surrounding Partition.

As the third actor, we have been a stage for contesting narratives where versions of history are constructed, accentuated and omitted (albeit selectively remembered). Depending on who is telling the story, the viewing lens has been conveniently changed. Our textbooks were manipulated in such a way that many who attended schools in the late 1970s and 1980s did not even know of the Liberation War. Anam Zakaria, a Pakistani oral historian, in 1971: *A People’s History from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India*, mentions research done by Yvette Claire Rosser on the textbooks of the three countries. “Based on [Yvette’s] interviews with Bangladeshi students,

vaccines. It is the right time for G20 leaders to show that they mean every word when they declare their policy of “sparing no effort” to leave no one behind. They have to rise up to show that their actions speak louder than their own words.

European leaders have a choice before them as they head into the EU Council meetings led by Chancellor Merkel—whether to look only within their own borders and put the financial interests of their pharmaceutical companies first, or renounce vaccine capitalism forcefully and stand in solidarity with the world’s most vulnerable people. If Europe joins the Global South to put people above patents and enable countries to waive intellectual property rights, then it will decisively tip the scale to pass the resolution with three-fourth of the votes at the WTO.

The climate crisis has already created a global emergency, posing a huge threat to all human beings on the planet. Now, the pandemic is set to escalate this by leaving the South with no vaccine, and worse yet, with a flood of fake vaccines, unless we care to protect them with one simple decision to cancel intellectual property rights on vaccine production, the way it was done in the case of the polio vaccine.

Joining hands for a safe and effective Covid-19 vaccine to reach all corners of the world, as fast as possible, at the least cost possible—could launch humanity into this new decade with a foundation of renewed trust in our ability to survive together. I hope European leaders do not miss this historic chance.

Professor Muhammad Yunus launched a call for the Covid-19 vaccine to be a Common Good, which has been joined by 24 other Nobel Laureates and another 100+ eminent global figures. Nearly one million people globally have also joined him on this call to make Covid-19 vaccines and medical technologies available everywhere without barriers related to intellectual property and know-how.

Professor Muhammad Yunus is Nobel Laureate for Peace, 2006.

Depending on who is telling the story, the viewing lens has been conveniently changed. Our textbooks were manipulated in such a way that many who attended schools in the late 1970s and 1980s did not even know of the Liberation War.

she writes, ‘there may be a generation of young adults who are partially unaware that Pakistan was actually the enemy’, and many mistakenly believe that the ‘Bangladesh army fought the Indian army’. Children in Pakistan read about the infidels, children in India read about the final days of the war in which their army got involved—instead of talking about the guerrilla war that weakened the enemy. Only now, we are finally reading a history that glorifies the role of our national heroes.

We need a national history that will speak of the emergence of Bangladesh in a way that negotiates with the narratives of the two other actors of this political history. We need a history that is connected with the formation of our national, cultural and political identity, and protect ourselves from the exploitative and hegemonic discourse promulgated outside our national borders.

Then again, we should not insist on having a single truth. We need to academically engage with the contesting versions and tackle them with historical evidence. We need to establish before the Pakistanis that our desire to have a land of our own was not an act of treachery; it was conditioned by their apathy and atrocities. We need to establish before the Indians, we are not ungrateful for your support—then again, it is time for you to withdraw your shadow for us to grow. We need a smart young generation who will look into the eyes of their Pakistani counterparts with pride and demand an apology for their misdeeds, and will tell their Indian counterparts to respect our boundaries. Above all, we need to tell our people: rejoice, you are a 50-year-old nation who has made the most of your freedom to give the other actors a run for their money; our niche in the Global Development Index speaks for itself. Let our history be our source of strength. Let us not reduce histories into simplistic binaries of pro- and anti-; let us listen to all, and have the scholarly competence and academic confidence to deal with the sociopolitical dynamics that shaped our nation-state, and have the genuine curiosity and open-mindedness to learn and reinterpret past events against present contexts.

Shamsad Mortuza is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of ULAB.

89TH BIRTHDAY OF BADRUDDIN UMAR

Badruddin Umar: Our leading Marxist revolutionary

AZFAZ HUSSAIN

DECEMBER 20 marks the 89th birthday of Badruddin Umar. Bangladesh's foremost Marxist revolutionary—one who has been speaking truth to power for more than six decades now—Umar is the author of more than a hundred books and countless articles. His three-volume work on our Language Movement of 1952 called *Purba Banglar Bhasha Andolon o Tatkaleen Rajneeti* (The Language Movement in East Bengal and Contemporaneous Politics; 1970, 1976, 1981) is trailblazing, while his *tour de force* also includes his two-volume work titled *The Emergence of Bangladesh* (2004, 2006), published by Oxford University Press. Indeed, we are yet to assess the entire range—staggering as it is—of Umar's contributions to studies of politics, culture and history, among others. I had the privilege of working with Umar closely for several years in the 1990s, as I worked as the General Secretary of Bangladesh Lekhak Shibir—the country's oldest national organisation of writers, artists and activists on the left—an organisation that Umar had led as its president for many years. Theorist, historian, columnist, essayist, researcher, educationist, editor and political activist, Badruddin Umar studied at the University of Dhaka (DU) and Oxford University. He received his Honours degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from Oxford. He first taught philosophy at DU, and at only 32, Umar joined Rajshahi University as the founder-chair of the Department of Political Science. He also founded the Department of Sociology there. But in 1968—being in conflict with the government of Pakistan—Umar willingly abandoned his extraordinary academic career and turned to full-time political activism dedicated to the cause of peasants and workers. He has since been involved in communist

politics while playing the role of a combative intellectual, for whom “writing is fighting.” Umar is currently President of the National Liberation Council in Bangladesh and an active member of the Anti-Imperialist and Anti-Fascist Committee in the country. Also, he has been tirelessly editing the left magazine called *Sanskriti* for more than four decades now. Given space constraints, I can barely even scratch the surface of Umar's massive *oeuvre*. But I should point out that Umar made his interventions as a historically grounded and politically engaged writer with the publications of his unparalleled trilogy—*Sampradayikata* (Communalism, 1966), *Sanskritir Sankat* (The Crisis of Culture, 1967), and *Sanskritik Sampradayikata* (Cultural Communalism, 1969). They are all groundbreaking interventions that for the first time acutely theorise in our contexts the dialectics of culture and politics *vis-a-vis* the phenomenal forms of “communalism.” Indeed, no other writer has broached the question of communalism—while accentuating a historically specific interplay between colonialism and communalism itself—in ways in which Umar has done. In short, Umar is a first-rate, indeed an outstanding, theorist of communalism in our part of the world. But to say that Umar is just a theorist of communalism is by no means adequate. When there was a strong need in the 1960s for a theoretical framework within which Bengali nationalism could be grasped in all its possible configurations and contours, Umar's trilogy made significant intellectual contributions to the growth of Bengali nationalism itself. To call him an early theorist of Bengali nationalism is certainly a right move in the direction of characterising part of his work. Despite his extensive body of work, one may tabulate at least some of Umar's characteristic theoretical and thematic preoccupations pursued to varying degrees



Badruddin Umar PHOTO: COURTESY

over the last six decades, during which he has been exemplarily steadfast in his commitment to the democratic and socialist transformation of class society. Some of those preoccupations, then, encompass the class question and for that matter the historical formations of the ruling classes and other classes in Bangladesh; the questions of realpolitik itself, informed as they all are by Marxism-Leninism as a rich body of dialectically engaged and interventionist analytic apparatuses and practices; the “political physics” of mass movements, including peasant, working-class and national liberation movements themselves; the rise of a historically determinate form of fascism in India and Bangladesh; and the demystifying and devastating ideology-critiques of the *lumpenbourgeois* political culture in Bangladesh, among numerous other topics. Let me now briefly return to Umar's three-volume work on our Language Movement. It is here where one can underline Badruddin Umar's contributions as a historian. But

to say that Umar is an important historian of that movement is only a slender acknowledgement of his actual achievements. Umar's contributions primarily reside in mobilising, for the first time in our country, a particularly radical and sustained approach that views *history itself from below* or that recognises the people themselves—workers and peasants in particular—as the true protagonists of history. Running against the grain of traditional, bourgeois, elitist and colonialist historiographies, Umar's work for the first time—empirically, historically and analytically—reveals that the Language Movement is not just a movement of some middle-class leaders or enthusiasts, but a movement of the masses, a movement in which their liberationist and emancipatory consciousness manifested itself in some form. On January 12, 2016, the poet Alfred Khokon and I visited Badruddin Umar at his residence in Mirpur, Dhaka. That evening was full of Umar's energetic and spirited presence, accompanied by his unflagging verbal zest. He recounted many stories of his life, including the ones that are not probably covered in his multi-volume autobiography *Amar Jeebon* (My Life). I did not know until then that Umar could recite so wonderfully well! He recited verses first from Madhusudan Dutta and then from Rabindranath Tagore. And, finally, from Ghalib and the great Urdu Marxist poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz. Umar recalled his meetings with Faiz himself, while telling us how he felt when he received a lovely letter from Faiz at a time when the poet was visiting Algeria. Umar also fondly recalled his conversations with the world-famous Marxist Ernest Mandel—the author of *Late Capitalism*—and the American Marxist political economist Paul Sweezy. Both of them respected Umar for his work, although Umar did not always concur with them. Let me conclude with a few words concerning Umar's character and

disposition. Unusually courageous and uncompromising and principled as he has always been, Badruddin Umar has never in his life sought power in the establishment and cheap comforts in his life. Simplicity, straightforwardness and honesty are the hallmarks of Umar. Further, it is none but Badruddin Umar who could reject, as he did, prize after prize— and the most “prestigious” ones at that—including the Bangladesh Itihas Parishad Prize, the Bangla Academy Prize, and even the Ekushey Padak, telling us rightly that prizes are never innocent *vis-a-vis* the power of mainstream institutions. In this respect—as in others—Umar has simply no parallel in the history of Bangladesh. It's not for nothing that Ahmed Sofa said once: “I'm proud to be alive in the time of Umar.” Indeed, Umar represents a paradigmatic combination of oppositionality, integrity and dignity in a society where compromise and opportunism continue to be deemed the qualities of the “fittest” and the “smartest”. On the occasion of his 89th birthday, I dedicate to Badruddin Umar a short poem by his own favourite poet and comrade Faiz Ahmed Faiz—a poem that I myself translated into English, a poem whose injunction is already realised in the life and work of Umar: Speak, your lips are free. Speak, it is your own tongue. Speak, it is your own body. Speak, your life is still yours. See how in the blacksmith's shop The flame burns wild, the iron glows red; The locks open their jaws, And every chain begins to break. Speak, this brief hour is long enough Before the death of body and tongue: Speak, 'cause the truth is not dead yet. Speak, speak, whatever you must speak.

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Priorities in the post Covid-19 era

MANMOHAN PARKASH

THE coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has caught almost every country off-guard, requiring painful adjustments to the new reality. Bangladesh is also not an exception. However, Bangladesh has relatively well-managed the acuteness of the pandemic, and its impacts on economy and society are less severe than many other economies, including developed ones in north America and Europe, and other neighbouring countries in South Asia. A key factor behind the relatively less severe economic impacts in Bangladesh is the recovery of domestic consumption, fuelled partly by remittances from abroad. In addition, stimulus and social protection packages and pragmatism shown by the government in gradually loosening the lockdown and ensuring continuation of economic activities, have helped maintain a moderate pace of economic growth. The recent progress of the Covid-19 vaccine development raises hope that economic activities in major export destinations of Bangladesh will return to normal by mid to late 2021. The experiences during the pandemic, however, give an opportunity to reflect on key development strategies and see how these can be recalibrated to deliver a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable future. The pandemic highlighted significant inadequacies and inefficiencies in the healthcare sector and social protection schemes. Public healthcare spending in Bangladesh is among the lowest in the world and has resulted in severe under-investment in public healthcare facilities. In the post Covid-19 era, public expenditure in the health sector should be significantly increased. The introduction of a universal healthcare system will be a key priority. A leaner and more capable administrative structure of relevant agencies will help in effective management of the expanding health expenditure. A more efficient healthcare administration would



PHOTO: COLLECTED

also help with prudent utilisation of funds for various emergency projects taken during the pandemic. There are about 125 social protection schemes currently managed by the government in Bangladesh. However, various temporary social support measures were introduced to fill the gaps in the face of prolonged lockdown. In a post Covid-19 era, the social protection schemes can be mainstreamed with increased budget allocation, wider coverage, better targeting, and strengthened administration and effective delivery to the beneficiaries using digital technologies. Informal businesses faced severe challenges during Covid-19. Appropriate policy measures should be developed to encourage formalisation of the informal businesses, including easier access to finance and incentives for cottage, micro, small and medium enterprises to create employment opportunities and jobs. Supply chain disruptions has created a desire among major trading economies to diversify their supply chains. In the post Covid-19 world, Bangladesh can capture such opportunities by focusing on improving

the business climate, simplifying business regulations, and aggressively marketing its endowments such as more affordable skilled labour, strategic location and new economic zones. The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of e-commerce. Development of new startup ventures in e-commerce should be encouraged with appropriate policy and financial support for the seamless flow of commodities. The pandemic has also exposed the inadequacies in the education sector to utilise technology for online education. Improving the delivery and quality of online education should be a key priority in the post Covid-19 era with particular attention to rural and lagging areas. Enhancing the quality of education at all levels starting from primary to tertiary level, and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to improve skillsets of its workforce, should be pursued vigorously. A quality labour force with appropriate skills will be an essential conduit of a competitive and drastically changing business climate in the post pandemic era. The pandemic has also outlined the need for quality infrastructure investments, particularly in urban areas. Developing

smart public transport systems in large urban areas should be a key priority. Reliable, uninterrupted electricity supply and internet connectivity are prerequisites to provide essential services such as work from home, education, healthcare, food supply services, online businesses and social protection services. Adopting a national grid code, together with upgrading the transmission and distribution infrastructure and increasing the internet bandwidth through better digital infrastructure, should be key priorities. Increased focus should be directed towards clean water access and modern sewerage facilities in urban areas. Reshaping rural areas as economic centres is an important lesson from the pandemic. Localisation of growth can facilitate equitable economic growth throughout the country. Launching of programmes such as One Village, One Product (OVOP) or One District, One Product (ODOP) could create local employment, strengthen rural ecology and rejuvenate local economies. Accelerated implementation of the government's “My Village My Town” programme will bring urban amenities to the doorsteps of rural dwellers. Agriculture and rural non-farm sectors should be given more importance in light of the recent reverse migration caused by the pandemic as well as a risk of food scarcity. Modernisation of agriculture for increased productivity and developing robust supply chains for agricultural products should be key areas to focus on. Agricultural logistics systems should be strengthened to directly link the farmers and small agri-entrepreneurs to the consumers, curtailing the influence of the middlemen. Focus on research and development (R&D) in agricultural products can pave the way for increased food security and export potential. The private sector will play an important role in the post-pandemic era. Prudent fiscal and monetary policies should be formulated so that they benefit the sectors that fit in the new norm after the pandemic.

Enough liquidity should be provided to those sectors with proper regulatory reforms. Borrowings from international financial markets and multilateral institutions should be wisely planned so that the sectors with strong investment needs can be adequately supported. Reforms in the financial sector will be critical to enhance resilience of the economy. Building economic resilience, diversifying trade and production networks, and enhancing business competitiveness and agility are at the core of economic recovery in the post pandemic era. Assessing economic vulnerabilities through risk assessments and preparing policy responses such as easier access to finance, incentives for new industries, trade agreements for deeper linkages to regional and international markets, and improved trade facilitation and international logistics can all help make the economy resilient to future shocks. Adopting agile management practices, connecting to digital platforms, digitalisation of value chains for enhanced quality, traceability and compliance are other actions that will help businesses compete, sustain and prosper in the new normal. Although the pandemic is still on, and the second or third wave is raging in many countries and regions, the development of vaccines is progressing well and recently reported successes provide hope for the new year. As the world cast its sight towards a post Covid-19 era, Bangladesh needs to prepare for a new normal based on lessons from the pandemic. With relatively less fatalities and economic damage from the pandemic, Bangladesh is well positioned to move forward vigorously with reforms. The once in a century pandemic can open up once in a century opportunities for a young, resilient and vibrant nation like Bangladesh. Prioritisation and pragmatic policy shifts are the needs of the hour.

Manmohan Parkash is Country Director for Bangladesh, Asian Development Bank (ADB).

BOB DYLAN
(Born on May 24, 1941)
American singer-songwriter

No one is free, even the birds are chained to the sky.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Fall quaff
6 Butler's love
11 Love, to Luigi
12 Disconcerted
13 Bowler's challenge
14 Candle sight
15 Farm machines
17 Gloss spot
18 Imitating
19 Most spooky
22 Laugh sound
23 Sports spot
24 Adhere
25 Show up
27 Blue
30 Sewing machine part

DOWN

1 Algiers section
2 Gazelle's cousin
3 Buck
4 Pennsylvania city
5 Fell back
6 Not running
7 Movie computer
8 Flowery shrub

31 Pitcher's stat
32 Do something
33 Game trip
35 Intense beam
38 Breaks, in a way
39 Scoundrel
40 Clear
41 Completely full
42 Cars' scars

9 Negligent
10 Skilled
16 Soaps
20 Brought to life again
21 Squid's squirt
24 Spring site
25 Secret stuff
26 Watched Rover
27 Tar
28 Haul in
29 Speakers' stands
30 Mediation events
34 Flight cost
36 Time of planning
37 Spectrum end

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



POETRY

Three Songs of Freedom

TRANSLATED BY SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Music has the power to delve into the heart of the listeners and create decision affecting moods. During the liberation war, songs became a weapon to influence the mood and morale of the nation. Some of these songs are products of their time, and could have only be written against their cultural, political, and emotional backdrop. They are successful because they

captured the spirit of the age, zeitgeist. Some of these songs are cheery marching songs that glorify personal sacrifices for the collective goal.

In 2006, BBC conducted a survey to find out about the popular songs that resonate with Bengali listeners. Surprisingly, most of these songs are either patriotic or war songs. One of the top ten songs is “Joy Bangla,

Banglar Joy.” This was originally written for a movie called *Joy Bangla* (1970). Gazi Mazharul Anwar recalled how he took the half-finished lyrics from Anwar Parvez, and put it to music while standing opposite to an alley near where the parliament building stands today. The recording was secretly done at a studio in Indira Road, and somehow the news got leaked. When

the musicians came out of the recording they found people chanting Joy Bangla. The film however had to change its name to *Shanghat* (The Struggle). Each song has many such stories behind their composition. It’s important to preserve the stories behind the songs too for future enthusiasts and scholars. Here’s an attempt to translate three war songs.

জয় বাংলা বাংলার জয়

LYRICS: ANWAR PARVEZ

MUSIC: GAZI MAZHARUL ANWAR



Victory to Bangla, Bangla’s victory
Victory to Bangla, Bangla’s victory -
It’ll happen, it’ll happen, it’ll happen,
It’ll happen for sure!

This dark night, millions of souls have risen as one-
Time has come now for the new sun to shine.

For each Bangla’s house all we want is rice,
Liberty’s thoughts in our bold youthful blood rise.

No more fear
Of the blood canvas where victory will be drawn -
No more fear; no, no, no!

Quiet is the shepherd’s tune under the Asoka’s shadow;
Everywhere deep laments and anguishes harrow.

The dictator’s mill grinds in the name of ruling,
The thunderous roar of the mass will break that chain of
grueling.

No more of the Bengali’s slow slide into defeat;
We are not afraid, not afraid anymore -

Victory to Bangla, Bangla’s victory
No jobs, no food –rise their numbers;
Scorched in the sun, soaked in the rain – cries of theirs I
hear.

No more the clever dove will raid our fields of rice,
Enemies of Bangla, their lackeys and leeches — beware!
The day has come:
We will revel in the colours of creation
No more we will let doubts come to fruition!

Victory to Bangla, Bangla’s victory
Victory to Bangla, Bangla’s victory -
It’ll happen, it’ll happen, it’ll happen,
It’ll happen for sure!

This dark night, millions of souls have risen as one-
Time has come now for the new sun to shine.

নোঙ্গর তোলো তোলো

LYRICS: NAIM GOWHAR

MUSIC: SAMAR DAS

Anchor aweigh, anchor aweigh
Time has come to sail away
Anchor aweigh, anchor aweigh!

Heigh Ho, heigh Ho
O boatswain, O boatswain
With the wind in its chest,
Let the boat glide in tide;
Let the clenched fists
Rope in the thunders.
Fare forward, fare forward!
There’s no turning back
Set your eyes on the sun’s chariot
That lies on the horizon.
Hopes of green dreams
Through our eyes;
Liberty lights up the souls -
Open the light’s door!



মোরা একটি ফুলকে বাঁচাবো বলে

LYRICS: GOBINDA HALDER

MUSIC: APEL MAHMOOD

We fight but to save a
flower,
We take up arms but
to behold a smile,
The love of the land
that fills my body,
The rivers, waters and
flowers that script my
dreams,

The blue sky against
which my mind spreads wings--
For all life long, their blessings I take in.
We fight but to write a new poem,
We fight but to sing a new song,

We fight but to paint a good picture,
We fight but to bring peace to the world.
The woman whose love moves my soul,
The child whose smile erases misery,

The house-pigeon that opens the doors of heaven
We take oath but to save that canopy of peace.
We fight but to save a flower,
We take up arms but to behold a smile.

Shamsad Mortuza is a professor of English at Dhaka University (now on leave). Currently, he is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of ULAB.



FICTION

Three, Not Three

FAYEZA HASANAT

ONE

In the farthest end of the horizon across the river by the edge of a forest surrounding the dark hills sat a cottage made of dried palm leaves and rattan sticks in which lived an old woman. She was lonely like the hills that stood alone, the trees that wrapped the forest, and the river that ran, piercing through the woods and hills—like a three not three. The old woman was very old, but not too old to not remember how to see her life in three fragments—of past, present, and no future—or how to distinguish the hills from the river and the forest, and find herself lost in all three of them, or how to see morning, noon, and night as nothing but an



felt like, especially when it entered a woman and swirled inside of her, as if to make room for the drooling knives waiting for their turn to enter her secret cave—the cave that every woman carries so that one day some men would enter and howl a shriek of victory—over the woman whom they bed or over the land on which she lies—bare, gutted, ripped, raped—not once and not by one, but by many and for countless days and months. The old woman was not that old, but she was too old to be drowned in her memories of fears. People did not care for her—a raggedy crazy woman that she was—and useless too. She did not care about people’s apathy because she was afraid of them, especially of men. She lived in the woods because she felt safe around wild animals and in wilderness. Once in a while she would go to the nearby village to beg for food. But most of the time she depended on the forest and the river for her nourishment. She was afraid of the night. Because night brings out earth’s darkness, and people’s too. She had been afraid of night since she was fifteen and had not slept at night for fifty years. She would sleep all day and then wander around the forest all evening in search of food, and then she would come back to her hut and wait for the night to be over, holding a rusty knife tightly clasped in between her two craggy hands.

One such night, while sitting inside

her lonely hut guarding herself from the silent night outside, the old woman heard some strangers—shouting and scolding—asking someone to shut up and lie still. She heard a woman’s voice—pleading for mercy—to some men and to God. “O Allah, let me die! Why don’t you take my life Allah—and spare me this pain? Do whatever you want to do with me, but let my little girl go. Don’t you have mothers and daughters at home?” The woman kept pleading until her voice failed. Someone yelled ecstatically and someone cheered. The old woman was old but not too old to not remember the joyful hisses of lustful men. Her hands tightened around the wooden handle of her weathered knife, and her head that had had no trace of sanity for years suddenly became alert in anticipation of danger. She unlatched the door and stepped outside in the dark, holding a knife in one hand and a bamboo stick in the other. She saw a gang of men, laughing, roaring, and drinking—feasting on two female bodies that lay unconscious in the pool of their own blood by the river bank.

TWO

The old woman flung her knife at the man who was hovering over the little girl. As the knife flew by him, slightly cutting him on his shoulder, the man jumped off his prey. One of the men attacked the old woman from behind and wrestled to grab the bamboo stick from her. She twirled the bamboo pole hitting everyone and anyone who came near her. All the while she kept screaming and cursing at those men, challenging them to fight her if they had the courage.

“Where the deuce did she come from?” a man yelled.

“Crazy bitch! Get out of here before I kill you!” said the one struck with the knife.

“We should kill her. Else she’d tell everyone.” Another man said.

“Forget her. No one will believe this mad old bitch,” one of them said reassuringly.

“Let’s go anyway,” said another. “We got what we wanted, didn’t we?”

“But wait, let me get some souvenirs of our nightly fun.” One of the men chuckled as he raised up his machete and chopped off a bruised breast from the unconscious girl’s rampaged chest. Then he thrust the machete through her parted legs and shredded her inside like a piece of paper. The girl groaned until she went numb in pain. The other woman—the girl’s mother—lay unconscious, while the butchers played with her daughter’s body and laughed in sheer amusement. The old woman attacked them with her bamboo stick but they snatched it away and pushed her on the ground.

“Don’t try to go to the police. We’ve recorded everything on our phone. We’ll come for you and make a whore out of you if you rat us out.” One of the butchers hissed at the girl. The girl, unable to move or talk, shed her silent tears and watched those happy men—eight of them—who went back home to be someone’s loving son, brother, father, or husband.

THREE

The old woman used a part of her torn sari to bandage the wounded girl’s chest. She then sat beside the mother and shook her vigorously.

“Wake up! We’ve to leave this place before they come back. Wake up! We’ve to save your daughter!”

When the mother finally opened her eyes, the old woman asked her to stand on her feet and help her carry the wounded girl. “We have to run fast before they come back. Now get up and get going,” She pushed the mother on her side and pulled her by the hand. But the mother still lay there, as if lifeless.

“My baby, my little girl, will she be okay?” the mother asked.

“Yes, yes. The *Muktibahini* will save her. Maybe they’re already on their way.”

“Who?”

“The *Muktibahini*. They’re fighting those thugs, don’t you know?” The old woman was visibly shocked. “Don’t you know the country is at war? The enemy soldiers are everywhere—killing and raping and looting. And then there

are these thugs who come for you. They came for me too. They said they were peacekeepers and asked my father to help them retain the country’s peace by handing me over to them for the military. They killed my father and took me with them to their sanctuary where they tore me up and ate my flesh before delivering me to their masters. I was fifteen and scared. Unfed, unclothed, and chained, I lay in their bunker, carrying in between my legs a dark cave—for the vermin to crawl in and out all day long. I was not alone though. There were many other caves in that bunker and the rats crawled in them too. Some of them choked us. Some of them cut us inside—not with machetes though—but with bayonets or rifles. Three-not-three’s. Some of us lost reason, some of us died, and some of us waited for the light. Then one morning, the *Muktibahini* came and saved us. They’ll save your daughter too.”

“The war has ended fifty years ago, long before I was born,” said the mother. “There’s no war. And there’s no *Muktibahini*.” The mother lay by her wounded daughter and kept sobbing. “No one will help—neither God, nor men.”

“The war has ended, you said? The enemies are gone? Then where did those thugs come from? Why did they do this to you? If the war has ended, then why does this place look like a battleground? I don’t understand this.” The old woman looked confused. “There’s no *Muktibahini*? Then who will save this little girl?” Feeling utterly helpless, the old woman lay down by the mother and started crying.

The night was dark. The river was calm and the hills were asleep. The old woman’s hut was empty like the shadow of the woods. And amidst all darkness, in the blood-soaked grass by the river, lay three women. But they were not three anymore. Only one of them was alive, awake, and waiting: crazy with hope.

Fayeza Hasanat is an author, academic, and translator.



endless struggle to forget the pains that she hardly recalled. She was too reluctant to reason and too placid to remember her name and her home, but she was not too old to not remember what a three not three looked like, or



The players and officials from the Gemcon Khulna dug-out run in to celebrate with the ones on the field following their nail-biting five-run win over Gazi Group Chattogram in the final of the Bngabandhu T20 Cup at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Riyad's Khulna triumph

MAZHAR UDDIN

The adage that says that you cannot buy experience was proved once again as Gemcon Khulna skipper Mahmudullah Riyad rose to the occasion on the biggest stage on offer and led from the front to lift his maiden domestic T20 trophy yesterday.

It was a cracker of a Bangabandhu T20 Cup final. Gazi Group Chattogram's Shykat Ali kept hopes alive till the end during their chase of 156, but the form team of the tournament fell short by just five runs.

Defending 15 runs in the last over, pacer Shohidul Islam held his nerve and dismissed the dangerous Shykat on 53 with a brilliant yorker to start the celebrations for Khulna. It was Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's fifth T20 title and his inclusion in the middle of the tournament seems to have worked as a lucky charm for Khulna.

Mahmudullah, however, did not leave it up to luck as Khulna's title owed much to his crucial, unbeaten 70, which he followed with outstanding captaincy when defending the middling 155-run total.

Considering Chattogram's form throughout the tournament, it was expected to be an easy chase but Mahmudullah and his team made sure there was no let-up in pressure.

Chattogram's success throughout



We peaked at the right time. The boys showed their character and I can't ask for more. I could not bat the way I wanted to in the first few games but I kept on and Alhamdullillah finally contributed for the team.

MAHMUDULLAH RIYAD



Boys played really well the whole tournament but [unfortunately] the final did not go our way. Our top order was in very good touch [in the tournament]. Maybe it would have been easier if we had some partnerships going in the beginning.

MOHAMMAD MITHUN

the tournament had much to do with their in-form opening pair of Liton Das and Soumya Sarkar, but they failed in the all-important final as Suvagata Hom dismissed the latter for 12.

Skipper Mohammad Mithun also departed cheaply, trapped-leg before by Al-Amin Hossain for seven. Mahmudullah then rotated his bowlers smartly and managed to deny boundaries to Liton and the frustrated right-hander was eventually run out for 23.

Earlier, Khulna's ploy to go after the bowlers and use the Powerplay

backfired after Jahurul Islam, who struck a blistering 80 in the first qualifier between the teams, was out off the first ball of the innings going for a big shot against off-spinner Nahidul Islam.

Khulna then lost another experienced hand in Imrul Kayes to the same bowler.

On 42 for two after the Powerplay overs, Khulna were searching for momentum but kept losing wickets -- Zakir Hasan and Ariful Haque, who was sent up the order to number four, departed in their twenties.

But then skipper Mahmudullah took over, fighting the lone battle of not just holding the innings together but also looking for those boundaries to post a fighting total. He made sure he made up for the absence of star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who left for the US after the first qualifier to be with his critically ill father-in-law.

The 34-year-old mixed aggression and calm to great effect and reached his first fifty of the tournament off 39 balls, but the job was not yet done.

The Bangladesh T20I skipper then launched himself on the Chattogram bowlers and, courtesy of his short-arm jabs, Khulna added 37 in the last three overs. Mahmudullah smashed Soumya Sarkar for 17 runs in the final over of the innings.

He remained unbeaten on 70 off

Gemcon Khulna: 155 for 7 (Mahmudullah 70 not out, Zakir 25; Nahidul 2-19, Shoriful 2-33)

Gazi Group Chattogram: 150 for 6 (Shykat 53, Liton 23; Shohidul 2-33, Al-Amin 1-19)

Result: Gemcon Khulna won by 5 runs

Player-of-the-final: Mahmudullah

Player-of-the-tournament: Mustafizur Rahman

48 balls, which included eight fours and two sixes, as Khulna posted 155 for seven in 20 overs.

An all-round success

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangabandhu T20 Cup posed a lot of challenges for not only organisers but also young, upcoming cricketers along with the seniors of the national side. The consistency of batsmen and bowlers came to the forefront over such a long tournament and it also served notice of the importance of such tournaments to gauge the performance of the crop of players closest to the national team's sphere while also bringing such players into view who can challenge perspectives going forward.

Most importantly, the tournament's performances will provide impetus for the national side's think tank to get things moving in terms of finding their footing in a format where Bangladesh have generally struggled, and form a specialised side for T20s.

The three tons of the tournament from Parvez Hossain Emon, Nazmul Hossain and Mohammad Naim, all scored at tremendous strike-rate, showed the direction that the national outfit can take to improve their T20 credibility.

That Nazmul's ton, when his side Minister Group Rajshahi posted the highest total of the board, was assailed by an aggressive 42-ball ton from Emon showed the merits of such a tournament with only domestic players on view.

Established stars also made their mark as national team stalwart Tamim Iqbal ended as the second highest-run getter in the tournament. Although his fluency was often questioned, that he finished amongst the top scorers once again showed his consistency as one of the top batsmen in the country.

Liton Das also made the tournament count, impressing Gazi Group Chattogram's fans with his array of strokes and the composure and consistency that so many craved from him. His opening partner Soumya Sarkar also found his rhythm and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza got in on the act after

joining Gemcon Khulna and scalping a career-best five-wicket haul in T20s.

There were some let-downs as well as Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur Rahim did not always get going while all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who staged a return to competitive cricket through the tournament after serving out a one-year ban, could not quite get his bat to shine the way he would have liked but still featured economic bowling as potent as ever in the format.

Meanwhile, Beximco Dhaka batsman Yasir Ali's haul of 294 runs proved his potential in difficult situations with the bat.

However, the tournament was however not just about batsmen. Mustafizur Rahman staked his claim as one of the best performers, with line, length and above all his intelligence once again brought to the fore. His energy while running in to bowl and getting his rhythm going showed signs of him being able to overcome the injury issues that had plagued him before the Covid-19 pandemic stalled cricket.

His bowling partner Shoriful Islam proved his potential with 16 wickets, generating pace, bounce and swing with the new ball. With the old ball, he got his yorkers going and proved a capable deputy. Spinner Nahidul Islam also impressed as he opened the bowling for finalists Chattogram and grabbed early breakthroughs to set the stage for the likes of Mustafizur and Shoriful.

Experienced campaigner Rubel Hossain of Dhaka showed venom with the ball and the youngsters like Dhaka's Shafiqul Islam and Khulna's Shahidul Islam impressed with their performances in pressure situations. Kamrul Islam Rabbi's hatrick in a tough game also brought much-desired competition.

The performances of local players meant that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president was certainly in favor of such tournaments taking place. "We are considering how to keep this tournament in the calendar," BCB president Nazmul Hassan said.



TOP FIVE RUN-GETTERS

Player	Mat	Runs	HS	Ave	SR	100	50
Liton Das	10	393	78*	49.12	119.45	0	3
Tamim Iqbal	9	324	77*	40.5	115.30	0	2
Najmul Hossain	8	301	109	37.62	156.77	1	2
Yasir Ali	9	294	67	36.75	124.57	0	2
Soumya Sarkar	11	292	63	29.2	125.86	0	1

TOP FIVE WICKET-TAKERS

Player	Mat	Overs	Runs	Wkts	Best	Ave	Econ
Mustafizur Rahman	10	38.5	243	22	4/5	11.40	6.25
Muktar Ali	10	31.0	285	17	4/37	16.76	9.19
Kamrul Islam Rabbi	9	33.0	286	16	4/21	17.87	8.66
Shoriful Islam	10	38.0	304	16	3/27	19.00	8.00
Shohidul Islam	8	26.5	205	15	4/17	13.66	7.63

Kiwis draw first blood

AFP, Auckland

QThe Black Caps ended on 156 for five with seven balls to spare after losing Qthe toss and being set a target of 154.

Tim Seifert top-scored for the hosts with 57, while debutant paceman Jacob Duffy took four for 33.

Pakistan never recovered from a slow start, despite a fighting 42 from stand-in captain Shadab Khan.

Haris Rauf was the tourists' best bowler, taking three for 29.

Pakistan had a rocky preparation for the match when 10 of their touring party tested positive for Covid-19 during quarantine after arriving in New Zealand.

Players also received a rebuke from local health authorities for flouting social distancing rules, and were unable to train until they were allowed out of their hotel on December 8.

In contrast, New Zealand were coming off a 2-0 series win over the West Indies and playing in home conditions.

The second and third T20s will be played in Hamilton and Napier on Sunday and Tuesday, with the first of two Tests starting in Mount Maunganui on December 26.



Ashwin four-for gives India lead

AFP, Adelaide



Ravi Ashwin bagged four wickets as a dominant India held a 62-run lead at stumps on day two of the Adelaide day-night Test after Australian captain Tim Paine ran out of batting partners.

Paine was left stranded on 73 not out when the Australian innings ended at 191 to trail India's 244 by 53 runs. Ashwin had figures of four for 55 while Umesh Yadav took three for 40.

At stumps, India in their second innings were one down for nine with Mayank Agarwal on five and nightwatchman Jasprit Bumrah yet to score. Prithvi Shaw was bowled by Pat Cummins for four.

Fifteen wickets fell on the day which started when Cummins and Mitchell Starc took just 25 deliveries to knock off the final four India batsmen.

Australia in turn struggled to make headway as Bumrah, Ashwin and Yadav worked their way through the batting order. Even with India spilling five chances, they never allowed Australia to settle apart from a determined Paine who plugged on to his eighth half century, aided in part by being dropped on 26.

It was Paine's only misstep and he brought up his 50 off 68 deliveries.

One who put Messi, Ronaldo in shade

AFP, Berlin



Nicknamed 'The Body' and dubbed a 'machine' by his wife, Robert Lewandowski has done what many thought impossible -- relegating superstars Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi to supporting roles at a football awards show.

On Thursday, Bayern Munich's Polish striker claimed FIFA's 'The Best' prize for the year's top footballer, a season crowned by a European Champions League medal.

"He deserved it more than anyone else. He played the season of his life," said Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge after Lewandowski's 55 goals in 2019/20 were a key factor in Bayern winning the treble.

The Poland forward has already scored 18 goals in 17 games this season, hitting the net twice against Wolfsburg on Wednesday to pass the milestone of 250 Bundesliga goals.

The fact Lewandowski has had to wait until he is 32 to be crowned at FIFA's 'The Best' awards is down to the way he proved himself in the knock-out stages of the Champions League last season.

Despite having been the Bundesliga's top-scorer for five of the last seven seasons, Lewandowski was getting a reputation for struggling to find the net in key Champions League games. Up until February, he had

failed to score in his previous seven matches in the knock-out stages.

His four goals for ex-club Dortmund in the 2013 semifinal, first-leg, against Real Madrid seemed a faded memory.

All that changed in February's last 16 win over Chelsea, when Lewandowski scored at Stamford Bridge, then set up Serge Gnabry's two

two short of Ronaldo's record for a single season and was dubbed 'LewanGOALski' by Bayern teammate Thomas Mueller.

His three goals in this season's group stages puts him level with Real Madrid legend Raul on 71 Champions League goals, short of Messi's 118 and Ronaldo, who has scored 134 times.

In October, Lewandowski was



goals in a 3-0 away win.

When the return leg was played nearly six month later, Lewandowski had a hand in all four goals -- scoring twice and creating two more -- in the 4-1 win at the Allianz Arena.

Lewandowski followed that up by scoring in the historic 8-2 quarter-final rout of Messi's Barcelona and netted again in the 3-0 semifinal win over Lyon.

He finished as the Champions League's top-scorer with 15 goals,

named UEFA's Player of the Year after Bayern added the UEFA Super Cup to their Bundesliga, German Cup and Champions League titles.

Lewandowski was spotted as a raw 21-year-old playing for Polish club Lech Poznan, where he scored 41 goals in 82 games and joined Dortmund in 2010. He made his breakthrough under Jurgen Klopp, helping Dortmund win back-to-back Bundesliga titles in 2010/11 and 2011/12.

Russia welcomes CAS decision

AFP, Moscow

Russia's Olympic Committee on Thursday expressed its satisfaction with the Court of Arbitration for Sport's decision to not ban the country's athletes from participating in the Olympics.

Sport's highest court on Thursday barred Russia from the international stage for two years including the rearranged Tokyo Olympics and Beijing Winter Games, but halved a four-year ban for systemic doping imposed by WADA.

The country will also miss out on the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Speaking to reporters on Thursday, the Russian Olympic Committee's president Stanislav Pozdnyakov expressed satisfaction that CAS had not "collectively" banned Russia's athletes, who will still be able to participate under a neutral flag if they prove no connection to doping.

However Pozdnyakov blasted as "unacceptable" CAS's decision to ban Russia's high-ranking officials, including the country's president Vladimir Putin, from attending the Games.



Good move; now follow them up

Experts suggest settling pending issues discussed during Hasina-Modi summit

PORIMOL PALMA

The Bangladesh-India prime minister-level summit on Thursday was a remarkable step forward in advancing not only bilateral relations but also regional connectivity and economic integration, analysts have said.

They observed that the outstanding issues, including water-sharing deals, border killings, and trade barriers, need to be settled at the earliest, clearing the path for continued progress between the two friendly neighbours who share a common history.

The summit also opened a scope for deepening friendship as the countries will be celebrating jointly and separately the 50 years of Bangladesh's victory, which is also a victory for India whose army fought against Pakistan for Bangladesh's birth in 1971, and the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

Foreign relations experts say there were some concerns in Bangladesh over India's

National Register of Citizenship (NRC) and Citizenship Amendment Act. Leaving those aside, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her counterpart Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke with great warmth, albeit virtually, in a clear demonstration of the will to move ahead.

The two sides signed seven MoUs for advancing cooperation on modernising agriculture, digital economy, renewable energy, hydrocarbon, environment conservation, technology transfer and trade and investment.

A significant event in the summit was the inauguration of the Chilahati-Haldibari rail link after 55 years. The Karimganj-Mahisashan rail link on the Assam side is likely to become operational in 2022. With these, all six rail connections between the two countries will be operational, making it easy for mobility of goods and passengers.

"This [Chilahati-Haldibari] is an important rail link that will eventually

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Gemcon Khulna players celebrating with the Bangabandhu T20 Cup trophy at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. They beat Gazi Group Chattogram by five runs in an enthralling final of just the second cricket tournament held in the country amid the coronavirus pandemic.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mahmudullah sparkles as Khulna take the title

STAR SPORT DESK

Skipper Mahmudullah Riyad played the decisive hand to help Gemcon Khulna overcome Gazi Group Chattogram by five runs in the final of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh's T20I captain hit a polished, unbeaten 70 to fish his side out of trouble and post a competitive 155 for seven. Chattogram, led by Mohammad Mithun and the form team in the tournament, fought till the very end courtesy of a sparkling 53 from Shykat

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

ROHINGYA GENOCIDE CASE 104 UK MPs urge govt to support it

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

More than 100 UK MPs have called on the British government to support The Gambia's Rohingya genocide case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as human rights violations against the Rohingyas continue.

"Ending impunity is essential not only to ensure justice and uphold international law, but also to deter further international crimes by the military in Myanmar," according to a letter to UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Dominic Raab MP, issued on Thursday.

Rushanara Ali and Jeremy Hunt, co-chairs of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Rights of the Rohingyas, signed the letter on behalf of 104 lawmakers.

The MPs said, "We are convinced that if the United Kingdom joins the case, it will bring significant added value, both legally and symbolically."

The Gambia has brought proceedings against Myanmar for breach of the Genocide Convention, in response to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Mujibnagar officials to get 9 months' arrears

December 19, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU LAUDS SERVICES OF PROVISIONAL GOVT Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman acknowledges the highest sense of patriotism and sacrifice of the officials who helped run the provisional government from Mujibnagar. While addressing a function arranged by Mujibnagar Karmachari Samity, Bangabandhu says today that the independence of the country has been their greatest reward. He announces the government's decision to pay nine months' arrears to the officials who worked from Mujibnagar. This announcement is greeted with cheers.

Bangabandhu, however, upbraids the officials who stayed back and helped the occupation forces.

IMPART VOCATIONAL TRAINING TO YOUTH: BANGABANDHU Bangabandhu has stressed the paramount need to impart vocational training to the youth of the country. He tells a delegation of the teachers of the technical institute of Mohammadpur that the new nation needs a large number of technically trained hands who would contribute their expertise to the development of the country. The prime minister points out that since Bangla has become the national language of the country, a



SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Sculpture of Bagha Jatin vandalised in Kushtia

Case filed; cops quiz 4

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Some unidentified miscreants have vandalised a statue of British revolutionary leader Bagha Jatin on the campus premises of Kaya College in Kushtia's Kumarkhali upazila.

The nose and some parts of the right cheek of the statue was damaged on Thursday night, said police.

An under-construction sculpture of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was also vandalised in the district town on December 5.

Principal of Kaya College Harun-ur Rashid filed a case with Kumarkhali Police Station yesterday against a group of unnamed people.

Meanwhile, police summoned four people, including the principal, for

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Chicken-sized dinosaur with fur mane discovered



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A new chicken-sized dinosaur with flamboyant features used to attract mates or intimidate foes has been discovered.

Ubirajara jubatus, which lived about 110 million years ago, had elaborate plumage including a long fur mane and stiff ribbons projecting from its shoulders.

Researchers said these shoulder ribbons were not scales, fur or feathers and are believed to be unique to the animal. Each had a small sharp ridge running along the middle.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

7 held over gang rape in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Police yesterday held seven men over gang-rape of a woman in Gazipur's Kapasia upazila.

The prime suspect, however, was still at large, said Sub-Inspector Aminul Islam, in-charge of Kapasia Police Station.

The woman, a mother of one, was visiting her parents' home in Kapasia. One Shakhawat, the prime

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 19

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



A solitary patient receiving treatment while the other beds of the eight-bed ward on the 8th floor of the Mugda Medical College and Hospital remain empty. While the ICU was full, the number of patients at the general wards had halved over the last three or four days. There was an even greater reduction in the number of Covid-19 tests at the facility.

PHOTO:

ANISUR RAHMAN

Covax to begin vaccine delivery in early 2021

Says WHO; Moderna shots set for imminent US approval; India ready to start voluntary inoculation

AGENCIES

The World Health Organization and partners yesterday said that the Covax facility, created to ensure equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines worldwide, expected to begin delivering jabs early next year, as Moderna's vaccine was set for imminent approval in the US.

The UN health agency, the Gavi

vaccine alliance, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) announced they had now secured nearly two billion doses of various vaccine candidates still under development on behalf of the 190 countries taking part in Covax.

"The arrangements announced today will enable all participating economies to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Approval from 3 authorities must for foreign trips

Rules HC about officials below rank of joint secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court has ruled that any government official below the rank of joint secretary must take permission from the cabinet division and finance ministry, along with the approval from his or her own ministry, for any official foreign tour.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
University Grants Commission of Bangladesh
UGC Bhaban, Plot # E-18/A, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
Website: www.ugc.gov.bd

Commonwealth Scholarships (PhD) in the United Kingdom-2021
Applications are invited from Bangladeshi nationals for higher study under the Commonwealth Scholarships (PhD) in the UK-2021.

Eligibilities of the Scholarships

1. Doctoral degrees, of up to three year's duration.
2. Applications are invited under six themes (mentioned below) for PhD Program:
(i) Science and technology for development (ii) Strengthening health systems and capacity (iii) Promoting global prosperity (iv) Strengthening global peace, security and governance (v) Strengthening resilience and response to crises (vi) Access, inclusion and opportunity.
3. Candidates must mention the Broad Subject under the Six Themes (The Broad Subject means on which the applicant has obtained his/her first degree (Hons/Bachelor)/terminal degree (Masters).
4. Qualification for PhD program: Holding a first degree of at least upper second class (2:1) honors standard, or a second class (2:2) degree and a relevant postgraduate qualification (a Master's degree).
5. Not have commenced and be currently registered for a PhD, or an MPhil leading to a PhD, in the home country or elsewhere.
6. The Application Form must be typed (not hand written) in the prescribed form. Additional papers can be attached with this form for the description of the publications (if necessary).
7. Candidates for medicine or dentistry must show the year of passing of each part of MBBS/BDS, marks obtained, total and average marks in the application form.
8. Incomplete or faulty applications will be rejected.
9. All the information (including the soft copy of the application form, direction/s, short list/s, interview date/s, selection/s and result/s etc.) will be uploaded at UGC website (www.ugc.gov.bd) under the heading of "Notice Board" or "Scholarship". Applicants must check and collect all the information from the UGC website by his/her own responsibility. No communication will be done with the applicants from UGC side.
10. Completed application form (Hard Copy) must be submitted to "The Secretary, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207" within 07 January 2021. No application form will be received after the last date of submission. Attested copies of certificates, mark sheets of examinations passed, result sheets of IELTS (if any) etc. examination and 1 (one) copy of passport-size attested photograph must be enclosed with the application.

Dr. Ferdous Zaman
Secretary (Additional Charge)
UGC

GD-2012