



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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**"It was not an election, why evaluate it?" I am rejecting the results of the municipal elections.**  
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR



**"We need to get ready for something that may even be more severe in the future."**  
WHO EMERGENCIES CHIEF MICHAEL RYAN WARNS OF WORSE PANDEMICS



**"I will serve the people in whatever ways I can, without entering electoral politics."**  
INDIAN FILM STAR RAJINIKANTH ON ENDING POLITICAL CAREER OVER HEALTH FEARS



## NEXT YEAR'S PUBLIC EXAMS PLAN

# SSC in June, HSC in July-August

Candidates can attend on-campus classes from Feb; 2020 HSC results after govt circular next week

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government may defer next year's Secondary School Certificate and Higher Secondary School Certificate examinations by three to four months due to the coronavirus pandemic.

It plans to hold the SSC exams in June and the HSC exams in July or August, given that the Covid situation doesn't worsen. Usually, the SSC exams start on February 1 and the HSC on April 1 every year.

The exams will be held based on curtailed syllabuses, and the candidates will be informed about it by January, Education Minister Dipu Moni said yesterday.

She said they are considering resumption of classes on a limited scale in February for the SSC and HSC candidates to help them with their exam preparation.

The results of this year's HSC and equivalent exams will be published following the issuance of an ordinance in the first week of January.

Besides, all primary and secondary students will get their new textbooks by

- KEY POINTS**
- Curtailed syllabus for next year's SSC, HSC exams
  - Short syllabus for SSC by Jan 15, for HSC by Jan 31
  - All textbooks will be distributed by mid-January
  - Primary textbooks will be handed over to guardians
  - Secondary textbooks will be distributed in phases

mid-January, she added.

### SSC, HSC EXAMS

The government will try to hold next year's SSC exams in June and HSC exams in July or August if the situation remains favourable, Dipu Moni said at a virtual press briefing.

"The NCTB [National Curriculum and Textbook Board] will prepare customised syllabuses for the SSC and HSC students."

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SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ



RAFIQUL ISLAM ROWLY



SYED MAMNUN QUADER



ASIF ZAHIR



RASHAD KABIR



TASHFIN DELWAR



TANVIR TABASSUM



SEE PROFILES OF THE AWARDEES ON PAGE 2

## 2020: THE YEAR OF PANDEMIC

COVID-TIME EDUCATION

# New approach, old disparity

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and WASIM BIN HABIB

When the Covid-19 outbreak led to a closure of educational institutions in late March, students, guardians and teachers alike speculated that the disruption would last a few months.

But with a continuous surge in infections and deaths, the pandemic is now likely to keep many students out of the classrooms until well into 2021.

It has changed how students are being taught, and left the education system scrambling to meet the needs of schools, families and over four crore students over the last year.

With traditional classroom learning coming to a complete halt, the pandemic compelled the government to take measures like promoting students to the next class without having them sit for final exams -- a move not seen in recent memory. It also caused many private schools, especially kindergartens, to close down for good.

But the pandemic has also become a catalyst for educational institutions worldwide to search for innovative solutions in a relatively short period. In Bangladesh too, online learning and recorded lessons were adopted to make up for educational losses.

Such efforts to reach students staying home seem to have been successful to a greater extent in urban areas, but a lack of digital devices and poor internet connections disrupted the learning process of many rural students.

Amid such a reality, educationists say it is high time the government introduced "blended learning", combining online education and traditional face-to-face classroom teaching.

The institutions should also continue airing recorded lessons and other remote learning methods alongside in-person classes because this shift can keep students away from private tuitions, coaching centres and guidebooks, they said.

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# Tech heroes triumph in the time of pandemic

2 entrepreneurs, 5 firms honoured with The Daily Star ICT Awards 2020

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five firms and two individuals were awarded at the 5th The Daily Star ICT Awards yesterday for elevating the industry to a new height defying all odds and even distressing times like the coronavirus pandemic, creating a solid footing and establishing a footprint in global markets.

The country's leading English language newspaper and the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) handed the prestigious awards to the winners at a virtual ceremony in the presence of Planning Minister MA Mannan and VEON Group Co-Chief Executive Sergi Herrero.

The winners are Sindabad.com, Dream71 Bangladesh Ltd, Southtech Ltd, Kotha Apps & Technologies Ltd, Sigmind.ai, Rafiqul Islam Rowly, owner and managing director of CSL Software Resources Ltd, and Shaikh Abdul Aziz, founder of Leads Corporation.

Sindabad.com, Bangladesh's first business-to-business e-commerce site, won the award in the digital commerce category.



MA Mannan  
Planning Minister



Sergi Herrero  
Group Co-CEO, VEON

A venture by Ananta Group, it was formally launched in June 2016 with dreams to become a top one-stop online shop, catering to offices and businesses for their regular purchase needs.

Since then, it has grown exponentially, serving more than 500 institutions and 300 SMEs.

The winner in the ICT Solution Provider - International Market Focus category was Dream71 Bangladesh Ltd.

Apart from serving the local market, Dream71 Bangladesh is now providing software solutions to a number of countries, including Japan, South Korea, the UAE, Nigeria and Kenya.

Southtech Ltd scooped the award in the ICT Solution Provider - Local Market Focus category.

Set up in 1996, the globally certified software company has more than 240 regular customers and more than 4,890 successful implementations all across the world.

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## Ex-DSCC mayor Khokon sued for embezzlement

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation former mayor Sayeed Khokon and six others have been sued on charges of embezzlement of Tk 34.89 crore.

Delwar Hossain, president of Traders-Owners Association of Fulbaria City Supermarket-2 in the capital's Gulistan, filed the case with the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Ashek Imam yesterday, Atiqur Rahman, bench assistant of the court, told The Daily Star.

The six other accused are: Yusuf Ali Sardar, former chief revenue officer of the city corporation, Md Mazed, former deputy assistant engineer of the city corporation, and their assistants Kamrul Hasan, Helena Akter, Atiqur Rahman Swapan and Md Walid.

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## ROHINGYA RELOCATION

# New home for landmine victim Saiful

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA  
from Bhasan Char

Seven-year-old Saiful Islam had to seek refuge in Bangladesh along with his parents in late 2017, during the military crackdown in Myanmar against the Rohingya community.

While crossing the border, his left leg was suddenly blown up after he stepped on a land mine. Before he knew what happened, he lost consciousness.

After rushing to cross the border, his parents Md Rafique and Ayesha Begum were finally able to admit their son to a hospital.

Saiful, now ten years old, on his first day on Bhasan Char yesterday walked out of the naval ship and took a long breath of joy.

"Now I can walk freely and even play," he said with a smile on his face, while walking with a crutch and a severed leg.

The Cox's Bazar Rohingya camps, where he and his family lived before, were made on hilly areas.

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A little girl plays with her pet chicken as she disembarks a naval ship and arrives at her new home on Bhasan Char. Inset, some of the Rohingya refugees getting off a ship at Bhasan Char yesterday. They are part of the second batch of Rohingyas to reach the island.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

# Tk 89,500cr in GDP lost to pandemic

Says five-year plan report

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused Bangladesh Tk 89,500 crore in GDP losses at current prices in the last fiscal year, according to a summary report of the government.

Before the pandemic, the planning ministry had projected that the country's gross domestic product would stand at Tk 28,85,900 crore at current prices (no adjustment made for inflation) in the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

But due to the highly transmissible virus that struck the country in early March, the GDP stood at Tk 27,96,400 crore, said the summary report prepared on the 8th Five-Year Plan placed at the National Economic Council meeting at the planning ministry in the capital yesterday.

"We have made the projections on the basis of several studies and by using economic models," Shamsul Alam, member of the ministry, told The Daily Star.

The NEC approved the 8th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) at the meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair. In the five-year plan, targets were set to attain 8.51 percent GDP growth and reduce the poverty rate to 15.6 percent at the end of the period.

The report painted a grim picture on losses in export earnings due to the pandemic and said the export earnings declined to \$33.67 billion in the last fiscal year from the projected \$45.5 billion.

It said the poverty rate would rise to 23 percent in the current fiscal year from 20.5 percent in pre-Covid times. The number of ultra-poor would rise by 12 percent from 10.5 percent in the current fiscal year, it added.

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**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**1,181**  
New cases in 24hrs



**5,11,261**  
Total cases



**7,509**  
Deaths



**4,54,563**  
Recoveries



**GLOBAL UPDATE**



**1,785,857**  
Deaths



**81,877,644**  
Total cases

## THE DAILY STAR ICT AWARDS 2020

Over the last five decades the export-led economy of Bangladesh has grown mainly riding on the apparel and textile sectors, because of a lack of product diversity. Now ICT and IT-enabled services have emerged as the most successful export products of the country as thousands of local experts, engineers and entrepreneurs in the sector have been thriving, defying all odds in business to serve both local and international markets. A silent revolution in ICT and IT-enabled services has been taking place because of relentless strides by local entrepreneurs. The Daily Star has been proudly recognising these unsung and silent ICT heroes since 2016. This year, seven such heroes and companies receive The Daily Star ICT Awards for their outstanding performance and contribution in this field.



**SHAIKH ABDUL AZIZ**  
Chairman, LEADS Corporation Limited  
Category: ICT pioneer



**RAFIQUL ISLAM ROWLY**  
MD, CSL Software Resources Ltd  
Category: ICT Business Person of the Year



**SYED MAMNUN QUADER**  
MD & CEO, Southtech Group  
Category: ICT Solution Provider - Local Market Focus  
Winning Company: Southtech Limited



**ASIF ZAHIR**  
MD, Sindabad.com  
Category: Digital Commerce  
Winning Company: SINDABAD.COM LIMITED



**RASHAD KABIR**  
MD, Dream71 Bangladesh Ltd  
Category: ICT Solution Provider - International Market Focus  
Winning Company: Dream71 Bangladesh Ltd



**TASHFIN DELWAR**  
Co-founder, Kotha Apps & Technology  
Category: ICT Startup of the Year  
Winning Company: Kotha Apps & Technology



**TANVIR TABASSUM**  
Co-founder & MD, SIGMIND.ai  
Category: ICT Startup of the Year  
Winning Company: SIGMIND.ai

Shaikh Abdul Aziz is a visionary leader who has contributed greatly to technological advancements in Bangladesh's ICT sector and a pioneer in bringing disruptive technology to improve and facilitate living standards.

It was his lifelong dream that the country's technically skilled individuals represent Bangladesh all over the world.

Keeping this dream in mind, Aziz founded LEADS Corporation Limited in 1992. He established LEADS Training & Consulting to impart training relevant to current technology to the youth of the nation, thus realising the dream of Digital Bangladesh.

"We are a company having vast experience, observing ethical standards, excelling in dedicated service and cultivating our associates," said Aziz.

Approximately 5,000 former LEADS employees are now working across the globe.

Aziz played a pivotal role in advising the government in 1997 about the need for extending special assistance to the ICT sector, which eventually led to the formation of Bangladesh Association of Software and Services (BASIS).

Born on February 7, 1941, Aziz studied commerce at the University of Dhaka in the early 60s, and then did his MBA from the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi, in 1965, majoring in marketing.

He pioneered in designing, developing and maintaining banking application software.

With the country's garment and textile sectors thriving, CSL has also grown over the years as the company has been supplying software to various leading garment and textile companies since 1998. The company also supplies software to the banking, distribution, mobile and pharmaceuticals sectors.

"We wanted to help the local economy through digital transformation," said Rowly, who graduated with a finance degree from the University of Dhaka. He joined Beximco in 1984 but left the job after a year, going on to build a career in the software industry.

The company, which employs 122 people, has a target to increase its number of clients to 250.

CSL also exports software to six countries -- Sri Lanka, India, Japan, Ethiopia, Jordan and the USA. "We are working hard to grab more foreign market share," said Rowly.

Rowly served as president of BASIS between 2008-09. An expert in business process analysis and reengineering, designing workflow-based application architecture and implementation methodology, he is co-founder of Computer Solution Ltd. and SoftEdge Ltd.

He is also currently chairperson of the executive committee and member of the governing body of Dnet.

Southtech started its journey as a software company in 1996 mainly to provide Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions mainly for banking and microfinance institutions. For instance, Southtech has been providing two lakh employees' ERP solution to Brac and is working with the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

It aims to serve large local corporations in the next four to five years.

Although the company has been working locally, it is also providing ERP solutions to a large microfinance enterprise in Myanmar. The company successfully set up a data centre and network in a remote part of Myanmar despite significant challenges, with the country soon set to be a good market for providing ERP solutions.

The company also has a small office in Bhutan and has been eyeing the African region with its fast-growing economies.

Southtech, with 70 clients and more than 4,890 successful implementations across the world, counts 95 percent repeated clients. It now has a team of more than 240 employees and has been growing at 10 percent year on year.

"Getting an honour from the Daily Star is indeed an honour. Getting recognition of this kind is truly inspiring for us," said Quader in his reaction to the award.

Sindabad, which started its journey in 2016, has proved that any company can grow rapidly by serving local SMEs, especially grocery shops, through an online buying and selling platform.

A venture of Ananta Group, Bangladesh's first and largest B2B e-commerce site caters to offices and businesses for their regular purchase needs.

Since the company supplies goods through its online platform directly from wholesalers to retail shops, the middlemen cannot take away profits and transparency is also ensured. Any enterprise can download the Sindabad app and place orders and will receive the goods within the specified time.

As a result, the platform became very popular within a short time. The company has grown extraordinarily, at 600 percent, in its basic commodity segment during the pandemic. Currently, Sindabad has 15,000 enlisted customers -- pre-Covid, this figure was 5,000.

"The year 2020 was a trial by fire for all of us and the industry," said Asif Zahir, managing director of the company, adding, "During the pandemic, we were able to reach the customers through the app and e-commerce site and delivered essential products."

Sindabad has already won the Best Startup by BASIS in National ICT Awards 2018 and the 18th APICTA Merit Award for Best Startup.

Dream71 Bangladesh Ltd is a promising software, web application, mobile application and game development company which aims to create a new standard in the era of software technology.

"Dream71 has supplied software to the government's a2i programme, Wasa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ICT Division of the government and Biman Bangladesh Airlines," said Kabir.

Graduating from Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet) with a degree in electrical and electronics engineering, Kabir set up his own business in 2014.

Currently, he employs 74 skilled software engineers in his company, which has been growing at 30 percent every year based on high demand from his clients.

Dream71 Bangladesh Ltd is also providing software solutions to a number of countries -- including Japan, South Korea, UAE, Nigeria, and Kenya.

The company's next step is to increase its reach in foreign markets. For instance, it has been working to supply its software to East Timor Parliament and to Turkey under a UNDP project. Dream71 has supplied its software to 12 countries with African countries gradually becoming a major hub for the company.

Kotha is the first Bangladeshi social and lifestyle platform, which has a growing community of 1.5 lakh users of the app.

While the concept of starting the business originated back in 2015, the company was formally launched on February 12 this year after taking feedback about its services and products from users over the years.

The app, the objective of which was to reduce dependence on foreign platforms, saw a big jump in the number of users during the pandemic.

The company has been working on communication and social networking as Bangladesh has a big market of lifestyle and digital services like ridesharing, e-health tips and e-learning.

"On our platform, we have brought all these daily life services into a single window where our customers can get their expected services and products," said Tashfin Delwar.

Other online marketing platforms Daraz and Hungrynaki have also been included in Kotha platform so that customers can avail these services in a single app. The company is also working to integrate bKash into its platform.

The company employs 13 skilled professionals and its business model is earning commission from partnering companies.

Recently, it established a joint venture for the Sri Lankan market.

The gruesome attack at Holy Artisan Café prompted a local company to use artificial intelligence to ensure that the police be alerted to realtime criminal incidents with a signal. Sigmind.ai can transform regular cameras into artificial intelligence cameras for surveillance.

For instance, facial recognition technology can be used to detect a criminal, whose photo has been uploaded onto the server, if seen on these cameras. Similarly, car theft can be prevented with an application using the same formula," said Abu Anas Shuvom, founder chairman and CEO, Sigmind.ai.

"Currently, we are working with the police to set up the system in the Gulshan area. It is also possible to identify whether anybody is wearing masks or not through this special kind of camera."

The private limited company was formally launched in July 2016 by five entrepreneurs. It has delivered its application to 12 clients, including Indian state of Maharashtra's traffic management system in 2018.

Sigmind secured its name in the top 10 out of 1,200 startups in Istanbul, Turkey in November last year. Last year, it won the BASIS National ICT Award in the startup category.

"It is a big achievement for startups like us and a recognition of our hard work," Tanvir Tabassum said about the award.

## Tech heroes triumph in the time of pandemic

FROM PAGE 1

The ICT Startup category award went to Kotha Apps & Technologies Ltd, the first Bangladeshi social and lifestyle platform.

It has a growing community of 150,000 Bangladeshi users for its social media and lifestyle contents and services integrated into one app.

Sigmind.ai took home the award in the ICT Startup category.

Riding on its expertise in deep learning and transforming any normal camera with artificial intelligence, the company's facial recognition technology works for a broad range of conditions with great accuracy, allowing for more robust, less biased detection and classification.

Rafiqul Islam Rowly was named the ICT Business Person.

An expert in business process analysis and reengineering, designing workflow-based application architecture and implementation methodology, Rafiqul served as the president of the BASIS from 2008 to 2009.

Shaikh Abdul Aziz, who contributed greatly to the establishment of the technological sector in Bangladesh, won the award in the ICT Pioneer category.

He founded Leads Corporation Ltd in 1992 and about 5,000 of its former employees are now working all over the world.

Planning Minister MA Mannan congratulated the awardees and termed the young entrepreneurs contributing to the information technology sector game-changers.

He said the country had progressed much in the use of digital technology thanks to the immense role played by the young IT professionals in the private sector.

"People in remote areas of the country are now able to get goods and commodities through online orders," he said, adding that the government is proactively helping to create the environment for digital transformation, which is also taking place in government activities.

"The government has introduced e-tender to bring changes to bidding procedures by using IT."

He hopes the energetic young

generation and the experienced elder generation would work together to make further progress in the IT sector. He thanked The Daily Star and other organisers for arranging the ICT awards for the fifth time.

Speaking at the ceremony, Sergi Herrero said it was very important to



**SELIM RF HUSSAIN**  
Managing director and CEO of Brac Bank

recognise the talents Bangladesh has. "Believe me, I spent twelve years of my life in Silicon Valley and I can tell you that the talent of Bangladesh engineers is second to none."

"We have to provide the right tools and facilities so that everybody can develop their talents in a country like Bangladesh."

Sergi said he was delighted to see the awarding event and the recognition. "It is not something that we should forget tomorrow morning... I think it has to be on top of our mind on how we can change the world from Bangladesh. It may sound a bit naive or grandiose, but I truly believe it... I think the capacity and talent is there. It is up to us to support and encourage this type of development."

He believes the first thing is investment as gaps need to be closed. "There is a big digital gap. We have to unite forces to ensure we allow these new technologies to empower people. If we can't do that, I think it is going to be a missed opportunity."

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, began his speech with a quote by Albert Einstein -- "Every crisis is an opportunity."

"We, in Bangladesh, like in many other countries, have shown how to make this crisis into an opportunity."

"Yes, it was most devastating. It hit us at the family level, society level, the industry and government level. Yet, given the traditional resilience of our people, government policies and futuristic entrepreneurs, we all turned the crisis into opportunity."

The pandemic has made the



**MD SABUR KHAN**  
Chairman, Daffodil Int'l University

impossible possible although it came at a great cost, he said, adding, "But a nation is known, praised and appreciated by how it turns around and Bangladesh did that. We are doing an excellent job."

Mahfuz Anam said the awards were introduced to recognise, inspire and encourage.

"Through recognition, inspiration and encouragement, this award is trying in its own modest way to push the country forward."

The award also aims to draw the attention of the policy-makers, who see the initiatives and new thinking now prevalent in the society through the awardees.

"We also like to attract additional investment to this sector because ideas can't go too far without funds."

Selim RF Hussain, managing director and CEO of Brac Bank, said, "This is a very inspiring time for the ICT sector of Bangladesh. Possibly, the only positive outcome of the pandemic is the entire digitalisation agenda in Bangladesh has received a great a boost and significant acceleration."

He added that information technology and digital technologies, in particular, have made new headways and reached people in this country in



**SYED ALMAS KABIR**  
President BASIS

almost every level.

"Our march with innovative ideas in terms of ICT and digital services began many years ago with the honourable prime minister's dream of a Digital Bangladesh. Today, that dream is a reality," he said.

Md Sabur Khan, chairman of



**MAHFUZ ANAM**  
Editor and publisher The Daily Star

Daffodil International University's board of trustee, said the pandemic has made people realise the importance of digitalisation in daily life, business, social life and even in family life.

The newspaper and the ICT sector should now focus on how industries can benefit from the best practices in the ICT sector, he added.

The pandemic changed lives overnight, took away lives, caused businesses to close and revenues to plummet. But the world survived and this has been possible because of the ICT sector, said Syed Almas Kabir, president of the BASIS, adding, "The pandemic has made us realise the necessity of ICT across all sectors. New opportunities for the sector will also open up in this new normal."

Almas said the ICT is a perfect industry for Bangladesh because it depends on knowledge workers that the country has in abundance.

In order to embrace the fourth industrial revolution, upskilling and reskilling the human resources is extremely important, he said. "By making ourselves skilled in frontier technologies, we will rebrand Bangladesh as a country of skilled labour, not cheap labour anymore."

The ICT Awards is powered by Brac Bank and Daffodil International

University and enlightened by the BASIS.

"The award is more for the employees and everyone," said Zeeshan Kingshuk Huq, co-founder and CEO of Sindabad.com.

Asif Zahir, its managing director, said, "The year 2020 was a trial by fire for all of us and the industry."

When the pandemic began, the traditional supply chain collapsed, and there was massive disruption everywhere, he said.

Luckily, Sindabad was prepared to some extent and stepped up to face the new challenge, filling the gap in the areas where customers were looking for a solution, Asif said.

"During the pandemic, we are able to reach the customers through the app and e-commerce site and delivered essential products. This is an excellent testament to the power of digital technologies and e-commerce."

He dedicated the award to the frontline workers who worked day and night risking lives to deliver the goods, the warehouse staffers and the sourcing and IT teams.

Sayed Mamnun Quader, managing director of Southtech, said, "Getting the award means a lot not only to myself but also to everyone who works at Southtech."

In response to a question during a newspaper interview in 1992, Shaikh Abdul Aziz had said all documents had to be thrown out of the windows of government offices to develop the ICT industry.

"I am telling this even today. Otherwise, our ICT industry would not flourish," said Aziz yesterday.

Rafiqul Islam Rowly said The Daily Star has been organising the awards for five years. "It has already set a benchmark and encouraged many other companies."

He said when the whole world had been going through the pandemic, technology players and businesses kept nations up and running.

Abu Anas Ibn Samad, CEO of Sigmind.ai, said, "The pandemic hit hard in the beginning of 2020 but it could not stop our progress that much. We have been innovating and reimplementing our solutions, thinking out of the box."

Tashfin Delwar, chief executive officer of Kotha Technologies, said,

"The award really means a lot to us." Dream71 Managing Director Rashad Kabir said, "We have been working for the last six to seven years to export Bangladeshi IT products and services to other countries. We are also working to present that Bangladeshis as a skilled workers and engineers."

According to the ICT division, Bangladesh's export earnings from the ICT sector reached about \$1 billion, riding on the growth of more than 1,500 firms and 40 offshore development centres.

The sector received a massive boost in 2008 when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid out the vision of building a Digital Bangladesh by 2021.

## 2 Star journos win best reporting awards of CRAB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two journalists of The Daily Star got Best Reporting Award 2020 announced by Bangladesh Crime Reporters Association (CRAB) yesterday.

They were awarded in different categories.

Mohammad Jamil Khan for best investigative report (print/online) on narcotics and Rafiqul Islam for best report (print/online) on human rights.

Eight journalists got the award in as many categories. Every awardee will be given Tk 30,000.

The other awardees are: Aynal Hossain of Sharebiz for best investigative report (print/online), Sajjad Parvez and Imtiaz Momin Sony of Jamuna Television for best investigative report (television/radio), Sajjad Parvez of Jamuna Television for best investigative report on narcotics (TV/radio), Samir Kumar Dey of Ittefaq for best report on women and children repression (print/online), Nadia Sharmeen of Ekattor TV for best report on women and children repression (television/radio) and Shafiq Shaheen of NTV for best report on human rights (television/ radio).



## SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

## Probe report delayed for 77th time

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to submit by February 3 the probe report of a case filed over the murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.

With yesterday's date, the investigation officer has so far taken 77 dates to complete the investigation.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Abu Sayeed passed the order after Rab's Additional Superintendent Khondoker Shafiqul Alam, also the case's IO, failed to submit the report yesterday.

On November 11 last year, the High Court expressed disappointment at the lack of significant progress in the investigation into the sensational Sagar-Runi murder case.

Sagar, news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and his wife Runi, a senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February

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With the clear waters of Surma reflecting an early morning sky, Rostom Mia appears to have rowed his boat-full of winter vegetables through the clouds. The 55-year-old farmer arrived at Tuberbazar Kheya Ghat at Sylhet Sadar Upazila to sell radish, cauliflower, tomato, gourd and red spinach to wholesale buyers last weekend. Due to periods of drought and water shortage, his farmlands didn't yield the expected amount of vegetables, but he is optimistic about earning at least Tk 65,000 in profit this year. Around 500 farmers like Rostom trade at this bazaar every day.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

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## BATTLING CLIMATE CHANGE

## Regional water sharing crucial

Speakers tell webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With climate change looming as an ever-present threat, regional cooperation in water and resource-sharing is even more crucial, said speakers at a virtual discussion yesterday.

Titled "Water and Climate Change: Fostering Regional Cooperation and Sharing", the session was organised by The Daily Star, Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA).

"The Green Climate Fund was supposed to raise USD 100 billion per year by 2020, but only USD 18 billion has been raised over the last 8 years. There is a gap between the commitment and the funding," said M Zakir Hossain Khan, senior programme manager (climate finance governance) at Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a fund established by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to combat the effects of climate change.

"For Bangladesh, we need USD 40 billion up until 2030 for mitigation of climate change and adaptation. Private investment is nearly zero for adaptation projects, and adaptation projects receive the least funds. For climate vulnerable countries, the climate debt will be huge," he added.

"Only six percent of the overall budget of the Green Climate Fund has been disbursed. This is the reality of the fund. In terms of the rapid response to the disaster in countries like ours they are not at all effective," stated Zakir.

"The National Adaptation Plan is going on. The Green Climate Fund pledged USD 2.55 million for the formation

## RU teachers demand removal of VC, admin

RU CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of Rajshahi University (RU) demanded immediate implementation of recent government orders and prompt removal of the current university administration for corruption and irregularities that were proved in a UGC probe.

Around 70 teachers under the anti-corruption teachers' faction of Progressive Teachers' Alliance formed a human chain in front of the university senate building with this demand. They were seen with black flags as a symbolic rejection of the Vice Chancellor Professor M Abdus Sobhan and other administration officials.

Speaking at the programme, Sultan Ul Islam of geology and mining department said, "The UGC probe found evidence of the VC's corruption after we brought allegations against the administration. Following the probe report, the Education

Ministry sent some 12 different orders to implement, including registrar's removal. But the VC did not take any action yet. This has proved his moral turpitude. But he is still performing duty as VC. So we want his removal as well as other officials."

Prof Akram Ullah of political science said, "The VC did not step down yet and he is still violating government's order. So we are displaying black flag as a symbol of our refusal and condemnation of this administration. We demand the government to remove him."

During the demonstration, a group of people had snatched the protesting teachers' speaker around 10:30am. Prof Shafiqunabe Samadi of Bangla department said, some outsiders that are following the administration's orders tried to hamper the peaceful demonstration. "We will go for tougher movement if this continues," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Two more cases against Shahed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed was recently charged with fraud and drug cases filed with Uttara Paschim Police Station in July this year.

The first case was filed against Shahed and four others on July 17 for misappropriating Tk 31,43,500 from a businessman.

The other case was filed against Shahed on July 19 for possessing five bottles of foreign liquor and 10 bottles of phensidiyl.

Md Ijaz Uddin, an inspector of Criminal Investigation Department of police and also the case's investigation officer, on December 27 submitted the charge sheet against Shahed and four others in a fraud case.

The other accused are: Regent Group Managing Director Masud Parvez, Kazi Robiul Islam, director (Finance) of Regent KCS Ltd, Amit Banik, manager (operation) of KCS Ltd, and Saiful Islam Saikot, company secretary of Regent Group.

Of them, Shahed and three others are now in jail, while Saikot is absconding.

The IO appealed to the court to issue an arrest warrant against Saikot as he was shown fugitive in the charge sheet.

## Saif wins bragging rights of Star GENIUS

SHOUT DESK

A three-month journey to find the first ever Daily Star GENIUS powered by Walton Smart Fridge came to an end last Monday, when Saif Al Imam Shota, from Scholastica, Uttara, found himself at the top of the leaderboard at the finishing line of the final.

Students from 27 schools from across the country participated in a game of knowledge and trivia, and after 12 gruelling weeks, only three participants remained. The final was worth the wait, however, as Shota of Scholastica; Sumaiya Mahmud of International Hope School Bangladesh, Chattogram, and Sameer Zia Chowdhury of BAF Shaheen English Medium School put on a stellar show, answering difficult questions encompassing many fields to prove themselves as true geniuses.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, inaugurated the final with words of advice and encouragement directed at all participants, as well as the young audience. He focused on the need to love one's country, and using one's genius to serve public interests.

The quizzing kicked off with a bizarre turn of events as none of the contestants were able to correctly answer any of the first two questions. But usual service soon resumed, as record holding favourite from the previous rounds, Sumaiya, took an early lead. Sameer fell behind as his nerves

took over. In the middle, however, was Shota with his rock-solid determination as he stayed within touching distance of the top spot at every interval. The difference in points between leader and chaser fluctuated between 100 and 200 points, meaning the game could change at any time given two incorrect answers at the top.

After 40 questions, in the Rapid Fire round, it looked as though Sumaiya would hold on to her impressive lead. But Sumaiya had a bad ending to her journey, while Shota cashed in, and it came as a great surprise when the final leaderboard showed Saif Al Imam Shota at the top with 2866 points. The game was extremely close, as evidenced by Sumaiya Mahmud's haul of 2818 points. Sameer Zia pulled back from his nervous start as well to end up with a respectable 1996 points.

The winner was revealed in the presence of Firoj Alam, executive director, Marketing & Communication, Walton Group, who once again expressed praise for the level of knowledge among the young ones fighting it out.

This brought an end to the first series of The Daily Star GENIUS, powered by Walton Smart Fridge, the country's first-ever and biggest online inter-school quiz competition. It was an initiative of SHOUT, the youth supplement of The Daily Star.

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Students under 11 can apply for sixth grade admission: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared way for the students under 11 years to apply for admission to class six in government high schools across the country.

In response to a writ petition, the court stayed the effectiveness of a government circular that imposed a condition that the students under 11 years cannot apply for admission to class six in public high schools.

It also issued a rule asking the government to explain in four weeks why the circular should not be declared illegal. The stay order will continue till disposal of the rule.

At the same time, the HC directed the authorities concerned of the government to extend the time for submitting applications for admission through online for seven working days, as many students could not submit the applications due to internet and server problems.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## 3.26 lakh returned home in Apr-Nov

RMRRU report says monthly average of migrants returning home increased by 4 times in last 3 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The average monthly return of migrant workers increased by four times in the last three months than what was in previous five months, Refugee and Migrant Movements Research Unit (RMRRU) said yesterday.

Between April 1 and August 27, some 85,790 migrant workers returned home from 26 countries, RMRRU said, citing government data.

The number of returnees increased to a little over 3.26 lakh as of November 30, it said.

RMRRU shared the data while unveiling its report "Pattern and Trends of Labour Migration 2020: Achievements and Challenges" during a virtual press conference.

Alongside the coronavirus pandemic, fall in global oil price, and job loss in tourism, services, and construction sectors in the Gulf countries were key reasons behind workers' return, it said.

RMRRU called upon the authorities concerned

to put pressure on multilateral organisations for issuing an embargo on forced deportation of workers by host countries amid crisis period.

Besides, demand should be raised in multilateral forums to implement a mandatory "migrant protection policy" during crisis time in both receiving and sending countries. Natural disaster, economic recession and health crisis could be included in the policy, it said.

Presenting the report, RMRRU Founding Chair Prof Tasneem Siddiqui said migrant workers faced multi-dimensional challenges amid the pandemic.

"From this year's review, we could see how rights violation that migrant workers have been facing deepened further during a crisis," she added.

Amid the pandemic, many workers got stranded after coming home on holiday, many despite completing all procedure could not fly abroad, while migrant workers suffered most due to virus infection in host countries, she said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Sabrina denied bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday refused to grant bail to JKG Healthcare's Chairperson Dr Sabrina Sharmin Hossain in a case filed for issuing fake Covid-19 certificates.

The court rejected a petition filed by Sabrina seeking bail in the case.

The HC bench of Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain and Justice K M Zahid Sarwar passed the rejection order considering that the bail petition was not presented properly before it.

During hearing of the petition, the bench said it will not grant bail to Sabrina as the trial court has already recorded statements of 11 witnesses of the case and the trial proceedings are at the final stage, Deputy Attorney General Monirul Islam told reporters.

Sabrina's lawyer Syed Mamun Mahub could not be reached for comments.



A bunch of surgical masks have been left to dry on the verandah of this Tejgaon household, even though they're not meant to be washed and reused. While non-medical fabric masks can be washed and used multiple times, these surgical masks should be disposed of promptly after use.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Man, dropped off bus unconscious, dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man -- who was dropped off a moving bus in an unconscious state in the capital, passed away minutes after he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Shafiqul Islam (38), manager of a Narayanganj based garment factory.

Hailing from Daulatpur upazila in Khulna, Shafiqul used to live in Narayanganj's Bandar upazila with his wife and daughter, deceased's brother Sirajul Islam said, adding that they did not know where Shafiqul was headed on the bus.

A rickshaw-puller, Ibrahim, said he was taking rest near the DMCH new building when some passengers of a Gabtoli-bound bus dropped Shafiqul off in an unconscious state and asked him to take him to the hospital immediately.

Doctors declared him dead after Ibrahim and another rickshaw-puller took him to the emergency unit around 3:45pm, said Bachchu Mia, in-charge of DMCH police outpost.

One of the rickshaw pullers fled after Shafiqul was declared dead while police were quizzing the other, he said.

Sub-inspector Munsir Abdul Lokman of Chawkbazar Police Station said they were investigating whether the deceased fell prey to a dope gang in the bus.

The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy, he said.

## BNPS extends capital support to women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Nari Progati Shangha (BNPS) has taken initiatives to build capacity and capital support for women who have lost their job or capital as vendors during the pandemic.

Last Monday, Dhaka east sector of BNPS supported 20 women in the first phase at Sabujbagh area of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

Deputy director of the organisation, Shahnaz Sumi, yesterday said they have a plan to support at least 5,000 poor and marginalised women who lost their job or capital for small businesses. They are providing training on small businesses for them. Everyone will get Tk 5,000 to restart their businesses.

Suye Min Zho, deputy secretary and regional

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



## Missing girl found dead in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaajpur

A girl was found dead in a pond in Rangpur City yesterday, a day after she went missing on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as 7-year-old Mysha Akter, daughter of Monwar Hossain of Borobari Sarkarpara under Rangpur city.

She was found dead in a pond in the same area. She was discovered with torture marks on her neck and ear, said Shahidullah Kawsar, Additional Deputy Police Commissioner.

Her uncle Anwar Hossain said she went missing on Tuesday noon after she went out to play nearby. Later, villagers saw a body floating on the pond and informed police of the matter.

A police team soon rushed to the spot and recovered the body, and sent it to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Initially, a general diary was filed over the incident.

More action will be taken after getting the autopsy report.



**PLASTIC BEACH... Indiscriminate dumping of plastic and other trash has made a wasteland out of the canal at Sylhet's Malnicherra. Located at the city's Fazilchist, the canal is something of a symbol of the area. But over the years, its water has dried, become severely polluted, and narrowed in volume, while the stench is unbelievably bad. Locals admit that they throw their waste into the water body, but only because there aren't adequate waste dumping facilities around the area. They point the finger straight at the authorities concerned. These photos were taken recently.**



PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## Abdul Mabud Kochi no more

CITY DESK



Syed Abdul Mabud Kochi, general manager of Ibrahim

Securities, has passed away at a Dhaka hospital on Monday. He was 68.

The father of Syed Ashique Mohammad, PRO of United Commercial Bank, he is survived his wife, two sons, two daughters-in-law, two grandchildren and innumerable relatives and admirers.

## Prof Abdun Noor no more

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Prof Abdun Noor, former principal and head of English Department of Brahmanbaria Government College, breathed his last yesterday. He was 72.

His janaza was held at Niaz Mohammad High School ground after Zuhr prayer. He was buried at South-Mourail graveyard.

Bishwo Shahitto Kendro, BGC and BGC Teachers' Association, has expressed deep grief at his passing.

## Regional

FROM PAGE 3

of the plan. Compared to that, Bangladesh has allocated over USD 2 billion annually from its own resources for the implementation of climate change projects," said Dharitri Kumar Sarker, deputy secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Bangladesh.

"Rich countries as a matter of principle do not behave. Climate change is the greatest transfer of the irresponsibility [of stronger nations] on the vulnerable ones," said Dr A Atiq Rahman, executive director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS).

"Migration is nothing new, but this rapid, non-voluntary migration of millions of people has to be dealt with. Where are people migrating from and where are people going to? For the first time there is absolute urgent need for planning from source to destination," he added.

"We need to collectively come up with evidence and arguments about loss and damage. When there is river erosion or water level rise, people are moving, they are moving into uncertainty -- we need to understand that and plan accordingly," said Farah Kabir, country director, ActionAid International.

The speakers also talked about the lack of regional cooperation in water-sharing.

In recent history water sharing by two or more countries has always been hindered due to the unilateral decision of one country or the other, said Shamsul Huda, executive director, ALRD.

"When we talk about river-sharing we talk about

water. But rivers need to be re-conceptualised as water, energy, biodiversity and sediment," said Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, professor of International Relations and director of Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka

"When you talk about the protection of any ecosystem, I would like to be more ecocentric rather than anthropocentric. The rights of a river as an ecosystem and a life system should in turn dictate the rights of people. I don't think states are willing to sit together to talk about the rights of rivers," said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, executive director of BELA.

She stated that river-related negotiations are devoid of any consultation with the people who depend on the rivers.

"If we put all the blame on India that is not correct. Within the national domain we have failed to respect rivers. We treat our rivers as cesspools, as dumping grounds, as mining zones or as irrigation sources," she added.

"We need to develop sharing and learning across borders of different countries," Prof Dr Liyan Zhang of Tianjin University, China, told the webinar.

Former Minister of Water Resources of Nepal Dipak Gyawali; Ajaya Dixit, editor of Water Nepal; Chakma Circle Chief and President of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Network on Climate Change and Biodiversity Barrister Raja Devasish Roy and Associate Professor of the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies at Kyoto University Rohan D'Souza also spoke at the event.

## Two held for making fake sanitary napkins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

CID has arrested two people on charge of producing sanitary napkins with sub-standard materials and selling those under name of a foreign brand.

The arrestees are: Azim Uddin (35), and Golam Rahman (32). Based on a complaint, a team of CID carried out a raid at Mirpur-2 area in the capital on Monday and arrested the duo. Law enforcers also seized 2,200 packs of fake "Whisper" sanitary napkin in 40 cartons from their factory, said a press release. The sub-standard pads can lead to cervical cancer, the press release said, citing experts.

## BNPS extends

FROM PAGE 3

executive officer of DSCC was present as chief guest at the event.

"Women are powerful but they are oppressed due to the archaic mentality of our society. We have to create opportunities for their equal participation at the familial, social and state levels," he said.

Ward Councillor Akbar Hossain; Assistant Health Officer of DSCC Abu Sadat Mohammad Saleh and Project Coordinator of BNPS Kazi Rabiul Alam were present as special guests at the event.

## 3.26 lakh

FROM PAGE 3

They faced job loss and food crisis while they were detained and deported forcibly, she further said.

Responding to a query, Prof Tasneem said many returnees interviewed by RMMRU have been subject to "wage theft" of Tk 1.75 lakh on an average in the host countries.

The report said about 1.81 lakh overseas employment in this year's first quarter had a projection of 3.52 percent growth in annual employment.

However, annual overseas employment is likely to drop by 71.45 percent this year amid the pandemic, it added.

This year, 18,813 female migrant workers have employment compared to 1.04 lakh last year. About 39,274 female migrants returned home until November 30.

Migrant workers remitted about \$19.69 billion as of November. If such inflow continues, the annual inward remittance is likely to increase by 17.05 percent, the report said.

Migrant workers remitted highest \$4.1 billion from Saudi Arabia, followed by USA (\$2.6 billion), United Arab Emirates (\$1.24 billion), and Malaysia (\$1.38 billion).

As of July, about 70,000 Bangladeshi expatriates tested Covid-19 positive. Besides, 2,330 Bangladeshis died abroad from the virus infection as of December 27. Of them, 989 Bangladeshis died in Saudi Arabia.

RMMRU in a survey found only 46

percent of workers sent back forcibly underwent Covid-19 tests in the host countries, said the report.

Also, a joint survey of Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants and RMMRU this year found remittance was the only source of income for 57 percent households surveyed.

On government steps, the report mentioned that the government created separate funds of Tk 200 crore and Tk 500 crore as loan support for returnee migrants. Besides, Bangladesh Bank announced a separate scheme for the returnees.

Also, the government this year has taken an initiative to regularise "middlemen" while host countries -- Saudi Arabia and Qatar -- announced labour reform initiatives.

The report said despite the pandemic situation, irregular migration on different routes to reach European countries continued.

Addressing the press conference, Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam said migrant workers were unfairly blamed for Covid-19 transmission in some host countries although such transmission occurred due to mismanagement.

Eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said it is needless to say there have been huge ups and downs in the livelihood of Bangladeshi migrant workers this year amid the pandemic.



The newly elected committee of Bangladesh Photojournalists' Association paid their respects to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by laying floral wreaths on his memorial at the capital's Dhanmondi 32 yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Trader killed as truck hits van in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A chicken trader died after a truck hit their van in Dhaka's Gulshan area early yesterday.

The victim was identified as Maznu Mia (45). Deceased's brother-in-law Nayan Mia said Maznu brought some chicken to Dhaka from Sherpur on top of a truck late at night.

As he along with another person was taking the chicken to a shop around 4am on a van, a truck hit their vehicle, leaving Maznu dead.

His associate and the van driver sustained minor injuries.

Police sent the body to Dhaka Medical College morgue and were trying to identify the truck, said Sub-inspector Miraj Akond of Gulshan Police Station.

## Probe report

FROM PAGE 3

11, 2012 in their rented flat in the capital's West Razabazar. After Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police and the Detective Branch of police, Rab was tasked with the probe on April 18, 2012.

At least eight people, including suspects Rafiqul Islam, Bakul Miah, Masum Mintu, Kamrul Hasan alias Arun, Abu Sayeed, and two security guards of the couple's house Palash Rudra Paul and Enamul Hoque, and the couple's "family friend" Tanveer Rahman had been arrested in connection with the murder.

Later, Tanveer and Palash got out of jail on bail. The others are now behind bars.

## Students under

FROM PAGE 3

The HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam came up with the order following a petition filed by Mohammad Mijanur Rahman, guardian of a student, Ayesha Khanam, seeking necessary directives on this issue.

Ayesha's application was not accepted for admission as her age was below 11 years.

Petitioner's lawyer Aynun Nahar Siddiqua told The Daily Star that the education ministry issued a circular in 2017 that the students who were born after January 1, 2010 cannot apply for admission to class six in government high schools.

According to two other circulars issued by the education ministry, minimum ages for admission to classes eight and ten are 12 and 14 years respectively.

Therefore, age of students, who will get admission to class six after attaining 11 years, will be much higher when they will get admission to class eight and ten according to the 2017 circular and a discrimination involving age will take place, the lawyer said.

Lawyers Aneek R Haque and Manjur Elahi Parag also appeared for the petitioner while Deputy Attorney General Tushar Kanti Roy represented the state.

**ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন, ঢাকা**  
সম্পত্তি বিভাগ  
আপনার পরিবেশ সুন্দর ও পরিচ্ছন্ন রাখুন  
আপনার শিশুকে টিকা দিন

উন্নয়নের গণতন্ত্র  
শেখ হাসিনার মূলমন্ত্র  
তারিখ: ২৮/১২/২০২০খ্রিঃ

**কার পার্কিং ইজারা বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

১।	মন্ত্রণালয় ও বিভাগ	ঃ	স্থানীয় সরকার পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় মন্ত্রণালয়, স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ।
২।	সংস্থার নাম	ঃ	ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন।
৩।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী বিভাগ	ঃ	সম্পত্তি বিভাগ, ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন।
৪।	ক্রম পদ্ধতি	ঃ	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM), সিলগালা যুক্ত দরপত্র আহ্বান।
৫।	কার পার্কিং ইজারার মেয়াদ	ঃ	কার্যসম্পন্নতার তারিখ থেকে পরবর্তী ০১ (এক) বছর।
৬।	দরপত্রের যোগ্যতা	ঃ	(ক) হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স এর সত্যায়িত কপি। (খ) হালনাগাদ টি.আই.এন সনদের সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি। (গ) সদ্য তোলা ০২ (দুই) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবি। (ঘ) জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি। (ঙ) বর্তমান ও স্থায়ী ঠিকানা সম্বলিত স্থানীয় ওয়ার্ড কাউন্সিলর/১ম শ্রেণীর পোজিটেভ অফিসার কর্তৃক গৃহীত সনদপত্রের সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি।
৭।	সিডিউলের টাকা জমা দেয়ার খাত	ঃ	মেয়র, ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন, চলতি হিসাব নং-২০০১৭৮৩৬ (বিবিধ), সোনালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড, নগর ভবন শাখা।
৮।	দরপত্র বিক্রির স্থান	ঃ	বিভাগীয় কমিশনারের কার্যালয়; ঢাকা বিভাগ, ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের সম্পত্তি বিভাগ, হিসাব বিভাগ ও সকল আঞ্চলিক নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়।
৯।	দরপত্র জমা দেয়ার স্থান	ঃ	বিভাগীয় কমিশনারের কার্যালয়; ঢাকা বিভাগ, ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের সম্পত্তি বিভাগ ও সকল আঞ্চলিক নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়।
১০।	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	ঃ	প্রধান সম্পত্তি কর্মকর্তার দপ্তর, সম্পত্তি বিভাগ, ৪র্থ তলা, রুম নং-৩২৫, ডিএসসি।

১১। সিডিউল ক্রয়ের তারিখ, দরপত্র জমা দেওয়ার তারিখ ও খোলার সময় নিম্নরূপঃ

দরপত্র আহ্বানের পর্যায়	সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র বাস্তব ও খাম খোলার তারিখ ও সময় (দরদার উপস্থিতিতে)
১ম পর্যায়	১২/০১/২০২১ তারিখ	১৩/০১/২০২১ তাং- সকাল ৯টা হতে দুপুর ১২.৩০টা পর্যন্ত	১৩/০১/২০২১ তাং- দুপুর ২.৩০টা
২য় পর্যায়	২৬/০১/২০২১ তারিখ	২৭/০১/২০২১ তাং- সকাল ৯টা হতে দুপুর ১২.৩০টা পর্যন্ত	২৭/০১/২০২১ তাং- দুপুর ২.৩০টা
৩য় পর্যায়	০৯/০২/২০২১ তারিখ	১০/০২/২০২১ তাং- সকাল ৯টা হতে দুপুর ১২.৩০টা পর্যন্ত	১০/০২/২০২১ তাং- দুপুর ২.৩০টা

১২। কাজের বিবরণঃ

ক্র/নং	কার পার্কিং স্থানের নাম	সরকারি মূল্য	সিডিউল মূল্য	জামানত	মন্তব্য
০১	ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের অঞ্চল-৩ এর আওতাধীন ৫৫নং ওয়ার্ডস্থিত বন্যা নিয়ন্ত্রণ বেড়াবো শহীদ বেগম ফজিলাতুন নেছা মুজিব সরকারি মহাবিদ্যালয়ের দক্ষিণ পার্শ্বের জায়গা (পার্কিং সংখ্যা- ১০৫টি)	১৬,৭৮,৯৫০/-	৪,০০০/-	ইজারা দরের ৩০% (শতকরা ৩০ ভাগ) পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট দরপত্রের সাথে জমা দিতে হইবে। ২৫% অর্থ ইজারা মূল্যের সাথে সমন্বয় করা হবে। বাকী ৫% অর্থ জামানত হিসেবে সংরক্ষিত থাকবে।	পার্কিং বিষয়ে যাবতীয় শর্ত ও নিয়মাবলী সম্পত্তি বিভাগ হতে (অফিস চাকরালীন সময়ে) জানা যাবে।
১৩।	বিশেষ নির্দেশাবলীঃ সরকারি ছাউনি/নির্বাধ কারণবশতঃ নির্ধারিত দিনে দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলা সম্ভব না হলে পরবর্তী কার্যদিবসে ও একই সময়ে দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলা হবে। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকেই যেকোন দরপত্র/সমুদয় দরপত্র বাতিল বা গ্রহণ করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ রাখেন। টেন্ডার সংক্রান্ত বিস্তারিত তথ্য টেন্ডার সিডিউলে বর্ণিত থাকবে।				

শ্রী  
মোঃ রাশেদ সাব্বিন  
(উপ-সচিব)  
প্রধান সম্পত্তি কর্মকর্তা  
ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন  
ফোনঃ ৯৫৬৫৯৮৬

DSCC/PRD/61/20-21  
GD-2092

## RU teachers

FROM PAGE 3

On December 13, the government in an order directed the VC to take necessary steps to relieve Registrar Prof MA Bari from his post for not properly assisting the UGC committee in probing allegations of irregularities at the university. The VC was also asked to deposit Tk 5.61 lakh as rent into the public exchequer, as he occupied a duplex of the university showing various excuses.

The ministry also asked the VC to explain within seven working days why the appointments of his daughter and son-in-

law to the university as teachers should not be cancelled.

The education ministry issued separate orders asking Pro-VC Prof Choudhury M Zakaria, the registrar MA Bari, three teachers and a deputy registrar to explain within seven working days why legal action should not be taken against them for relaxing the required educational qualifications for recruitment to the university.

Earlier in an investigation, the UGC found evidence of 25 kinds of irregularities and corruption committed by top members of the university administration.

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

The World Health Organization in Bangladesh invites proposals/bids using "Two-envelope system" from the interested individuals/companies in Bangladesh for the following services:

1. RFP/BAN/2020/011: Professional Photography Services for WHO activities in Bangladesh.
2. RFP/BAN/2020/012: Professional Videography Services for WHO activities in Bangladesh.

Deadline for the submission of RFPs: 14:00hrs, 13 January 2021.

Interested Companies/Individual can view and download the relevant RFP documents from:

<https://www.who.int/bangladesh/about-us/procurement-notice>

Interested bidders are requested to submit their financial and technical proposals in two separate sealed envelopes as per the instructions provided in the RFP documents at the Reception of WHO- Country Office for Bangladesh, United House, 10 Gulshan Avenue, Gulshan-1, Dhaka.



# Country's 'lone' woollen blanket weaver looks for successor

RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

The only known artisan who still makes hand-woven blankets with pure sheep wool in the country is Abdul Khaleq from Nayagola area of Chapainawabganj town.

Khaleq inherited the craft from his parents, with origins in India's Bihar. His grandfather Fazlur Rahman's family, along with about 25 other families, emigrated from Bihar during the partition of the subcontinent in the late forties.

The blankets Khaleq, now 63, makes are really warm and comfortable, but not as heavy or thick as one would expect. The natural woollen blankets woven in Khaleq's handloom are safe for the environment and being sold in prominent stores not just in the country, but also across the globe.

Khaleq collects wool for each and every blanket from household sheep raised all over the district and he processes the wool in his own workshop by himself.

Orders had always been abundant since he started to learn the craft from his father at the young age of ten. But lately, the orders for new blankets have started to exceed his capacity due to his old age, Khaleq said.

His daughter is married off and the two sons took on different professions for a living.

Since he does not have any of his successors to pass on the craft to, he

would gladly train someone outside the family on how to extract wool from sheep, the techniques to process the wool with natural colouring and weave blankets on handloom with the wool, Khaleq also said.

The work is quite demanding physically, but it literally pays off travelling to different places to trim sheep for wool as the owners

Khaleq collects wool for each and every blanket from household sheep raised all over the district and he processes the wool in his own workshop by himself.

pay more or less Tk 50 to trim each sheep.

From extraction of wool to the completion of the weaving on handloom, it takes him about eight to nine days to finish a blanket and each blanket usually sells for a price range of around Tk 2,500 to Tk 4,000, depending on size, type and pattern.

After buying from him, many people are also exporting the blankets overseas, Khaleq said proudly.



Abdul Khaleq displays an intricately crafted blanket that he made from pure wool on handloom at his workshop in Nayagola area of Chapainawabganj town.

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN DOLLAR

# Success in Darjeeling variety orange, malta cultivation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Abdul Karim in Jashore's Monirampur upazila has achieved success by growing and selling oranges and maltas of Darjeeling variety.

Initially, Karim, 52, brought one bigha of land under orange and malta cultivation. After getting bumper yield and fair prices, he has cultivated the fruits on 15 bighas of land.

Seeing his success in the fruit farming, many people have started cultivating oranges and maltas of the varieties, said locals.

Karim of Mujgunni village said he cultivated the fruits on one bigha of land on experimental basis and found success in growing the delicious oranges and maltas a few years ago.

"Five and half years ago, I bought 125 saplings of maltas and 25 saplings of orange of the Darjeeling varieties from Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation in Jashore. Over a year after plantation, it was found that it had been good yield," he said.

Karim added that in the first phase, total income and costs were equal. The following year, he earned around Tk 2.50 lakh while the next two years, Tk 4 lakh was earned from selling the fruits of the foreign varieties.

"This time, I have earned Tk six lakh from selling the oranges and maltas," he said, adding that the taste of the varieties is much better than any other oranges and maltas in the markets. The fruits are quite large in size.

Every day people from different places are flocking to see his garden and take saplings from there.

Zakir Hossain from Patkelghata in Satkhira said "I mainly cultivate kulboroi. I heard about Karim, who found success in cultivating oranges and maltas of Darjeeling varieties. I



Abdul Karim at his orange garden in Mujgunni village of Jashore's Monirampur upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

have recently come to see his garden and taken 400 saplings of oranges and maltas from there."

Karim said educated youths in the country are now looking for jobs. By cultivating these fruits, they can be self-sufficient.

He is now cultivating the fruits on 15 bighas of land.

Karim said he regularly sprays pesticides in the fruit land. Large size oranges and maltas have been sold at Tk 130 per kg.

Karim added that "I invested Tk

25 lakh in the venture in the last few years. I hope I will be able to sell fruits worth Tk 50 to Tk 60 lakh in the coming year."




Apart from fruits, Karim sold saplings of oranges and maltas. Around 20,000 saplings are sold from his land every year.

Monirampur upazila agriculture officer Hiralak Kumar Sarkar said, after seeing the success of Abdul Karim, about 150 bighas of land in the upazila have been brought under the Darjeeling variety fruit cultivation.



Members of village police under the banner of 'Barguna Village Police Employees Union' form an hour-long human chain in front of Barguna Sadar Police Station yesterday morning, demanding implementation of the National Wage Scale.

PHOTO: STAR

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)  
 Population & Housing Census 2021 Project  
 Parishankhyan Bhaban (Block-B, 1st Floor)  
 E-27/A, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207  
[www.bbs.gov.bd](http://www.bbs.gov.bd)

### Re-Advertisement of Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)

1. Ministry	Ministry of Planning.	
2. Division	Statistics and Informatics Division (SID).	
3. Procuring entity name	Project Director, Population & Housing Census 2021 Project, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).	
4. Expression of Interest for	Senior Data Processing Consultant (intermittently).	
5. Eoi Ref. No. (Re-Advertisement)	52.01.0000.409.39.197.20.495	
6. Date	28.12.2020	
7. Procurement method	Selection of Individual Consultant (SIC).	
8. Budget and source of fund	GOB.	
9. Project code	224295100	
10. EOI closing date and time	3.00pm of 12.01.2021 and be marked on Envelope "Expression of Interest for Senior Data Processing Consultant" (Re-Advertisement). Submitted EOI(s) will be opened by the Tender/Proposal Opening Committee at 3.30pm of 12/01/2021 at the project office.	
11. The consultant will work closely with the Project Director (PD) to develop database & application related technical guidance and to facilitate smooth implementation of database aspects of the aforementioned census.		
1) Qualification criteria	a) Education:	At least 04 (four) years Bachelor degree with specialization in IT/CS/CE/CST/EEE/ECE etc. or Statistics/Applied Statistics/Mathematics from any reputed universities. Advanced academic/professional qualifications in relevant field from recognized institutes will be added preference.
	b) Experience:	i) Minimum 10 (ten) year's work experience in the related field in any government/semi-government/autonomous organization/reputed private sector organization and progressive experience handling large database. ii) Programming skills in PHP/Java/net framework and Android as back end. iii) Should have advanced understanding on RDBMS. iv) Should be capable of Data migration across various databases. v) Knowledge on Oracle Forms development. vi) Certification on Oracle Database Administration. vii) Sound understanding on data management, analysis & reporting using various tools. viii) Strong communication skills in Bangla and English.
2) Scope of services	Key responsibilities include, but are not limited to: a) Design and development of Geo-Spatial and GIS-Database, Census Databases and Other Databases; b) Install, upgrade, configure, scale, maintain database and applications related processes and servers; c) Ensure high levels of performance, availability, sustainability and security; d) Analyze and handle database network connectivity issues in real time; e) Monitor system's health and performance of Census Database; f) Ensure optimum use of network, monitoring application and databases; g) Develop DFD, ERD and other data models; h) RAC, Cluster, storage configuration; i) Database, Data Guard Installation, Develop processes for optimizing database security; j) Set and maintain database standards, SQL optimization, performance tuning of database systems; k) Diagnose and troubleshoot database and application errors; l) Create and manage database reports, visualizations, and dashboards; m) Create automation for repeating database tasks; n) Build database systems of high availability and quality depending on each end user's specialized role; o) Define users and enable data distribution to the right user, in appropriate format and in a timely manner; p) Minimized database downtime and manage parameters to provide fast query responses; q) Perform tests and evaluations regularly to ensure data security, privacy and integrity; r) Monitor database performance, implement changes and apply new patches and versions when required; s) Database Backup Policy and Manage Historical Backup; t) Maintain all liaisons with concern data processing firm of the project and give feedback to the Project Director. u) Develop proper disaster recovery plan & recover all databases within shortest time on demand. v) Any other task assigned by Project Authority.	
3) Remuneration	A contract will be signed for 24 man months (intermittently) with the selected candidate as per PPA 2006 and PPR 2008. Remuneration will be paid in local currency (BDT). Payments will be made at the end of every month from the commencement with the condition of satisfactory performance report.	
4) Duration of the contract	Tenure of employment will be initially for 24 man months (intermittently) or till the end of June, 2024, which one ends earlier. The duration may be extended subject to the approval of the competent authority.	
12. Number of individual consultant	01 (one).	
13. Name of the official inviting EOI	Mr. Kabir Uddin Ahmed.	
14. Designation of the official inviting EOI	Project Director, Population & Housing Census 2021 Project, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).	
15. Address of official inviting EOI	Project Director, Population & Housing Census 2021 Project, Parishankhyan Bhaban (Block-B, 1st Floor), E-27/A, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.	
16. Contact of the official inviting EOI	Phone: 02-55007008; Email: pd_phc21@bbs.gov.bd	
17. Information is available at	Website: www.bbs.gov.bd and www.sid.gov.bd	
Interested candidates are invited to submit their EOI indicating that they are qualified to perform the services, details of experiences and required qualifications stated above. Interested candidates are also requested to submit the photocopy of all academic certificates, proof of experience. The candidate must mention his/her educational qualifications and required experiences according to 11.1) a) 11.1)b) of this Eoi in the Curriculum Vitae (CV) along with the filled in Eoi/application. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs.		

Sd/  
**Kabir Uddin Ahmed**  
 Project Director  
 Phone: 02-55007008  
 Email: pd\_phc21@bbs.gov.bd

GD-2093



## New approach, old disparity

FROM PAGE 1

But they stressed the need for minimising the disparity between rural and urban students in accessing online learning facilities.

"Prolonged school closure not only causes learning loss, it will also increase dropouts, child labour and child marriage. Therefore, special measures should be taken," Brac University Prof Emeritus Manzoor Ahmed.

One of the measures, he said, could be the blended learning.

Prof Siddiqui Rahman, a former director of the Institute of Education and Research at Dhaka University, said interim arrangements can hardly bridge the gap as many students from rural and poor families are not being able to access distance learning due to lack of devices like smartphones and computers.

### UNPRECEDENTED CLOSURES

With the first Covid-19 cases detected in the country on March 8, the government on March 17 closed educational institutions; the shutdown was extended in several phases till January 6 next year.

The coronavirus crisis exposed the fact that a majority of schools, colleges and universities were not equipped to take online classes -- a new reality for the country's educational system.

Private schools were quick to adopt online learning methods, offering lectures delivered via video conferencing apps like Zoom and social media platforms like Facebook.

However, a lack of infrastructure and uneven access to internet and devices such as a desktop computer, laptop, or smartphone for students in poor urban areas are vital obstacles to virtual learning.

To address the disruption, the government started broadcasting live and recorded lectures through Sangsad TV for secondary and primary students, and directed all schools, colleges and universities to hold online classes.

The shutdown led to the cancellation of major public examinations -- Higher Secondary Certificate, Primary Education Completion, Junior School Certificate and their equivalent tests. The examinees are evaluated based on their results in preceding classes.

Now, the government is planning to hold next year's Secondary School Certificate and equivalent examinations in June and the same year's HSC exams in July-August.

"We will hold the exams if the Covid-19 situation is favourable," Education Minister Dipu Moni said yesterday at a virtual press briefing.

More than one crore students of class 6 to 10 have been promoted to

the next class this year and there were no annual examinations. Instead, the school authorities are giving assignments to students, to identify their learning shortcomings.

The government moved to enrol students at schools for all classes for the next academic session on the basis of the lottery.

It had to put on hold the "Textbook Festival" on January 1 when textbooks are handed to primary and secondary students for free. This time, students of a certain class will come to school to collect books on three days, divided in three groups.

The pandemic-induced closure also brought a drastic change in the daily lives of thousands of students. Apart from putting considerable psychological pressure on them, it made parents worried about the impact of this unprecedented length of school closure.

"We are waiting for the day when our children will go back to classes again. Because school is more than a centre of learning; it is a source of social activities and human interaction," said Mizanur Rahman, father of a school-going child.

### BRIDGE THE GAP

Both Prof Manzoor and Prof Siddiqui said the government needs to ensure digital devices and accessibility to all in order to cope with the new reality as well as to reduce the digital divide.

"During the pandemic, students from affluent quarters have had better access to online classes than their peers in poor households," said Prof Manzoor, also the founder-director of Institute of Educational Development of Brac University.

"As a result, the gap between students from affluent and disadvantaged groups is being widened further," he added.

Prof Siddiqui said the government must learn lessons from the pandemic.

One of the lessons is to enhance teachers' capacity, properly equipping them so that they can impart education effectively using distance learning methods including online education, he said.

Prof Syed Md Golam Faruk, director general of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, said they will take steps to change the classroom instruction process.

"We will continue online classes alongside the traditional classroom teaching," he said.

It is true that many students do not have digital devices, he said. "We would need a lot of money if we want to give digital devices to all. We will look into the matter in future planning."

He said the government will continue to give assignments to school students even after the Covid situation gets normal as it will also lessen dependence on digital devices.

As per the government's directive, assignments are given to the students on the first day of the week and they submit handwritten copies at the end of the week. The students can submit and take the assignment in person or via a guardian from the school, or online.

The assignments include explanatory questions, short question-answers and creative questions. Once these are submitted, the teachers are directed to receive the assignments, evaluate, put their comments and show that to the students.

The process of giving assignments began on November 1.

Education Minister Dipu Moni said they would give more importance to online education in the coming days.

### HIGHER EDUCATION

On-campus classes at universities have been closed since mid-March, creating worries about session jams.

The University Grants Commission (UGC), on several occasions, asked universities to begin online classes, but many universities were not ready institutionally for such a transition.

Both private and public universities, however, took some time to adopt online classes amid fears that students from disadvantaged backgrounds would be left behind due to the digital divide.

In such a situation, the UGC in August asked the public universities to prepare lists of students who could not access online classes due to not having smartphones.

Thirty-nine public universities sent lists of 41,501 students who needed assistance. The UGC decided to provide these students with an interest-free Tk 8,000 loan each so that they can buy smartphones to attend online classes.

In mid-December, the UGC announced that public universities can hold honours and master's final examinations following proper health safety measures if the respective academic councils approve.

Meanwhile, in a major development, 19 public universities announced that they would hold a uniform admission exam titled "Central Admission Test" to reduce the hassles faced by admission seekers.

Prof Muhammed Alamgir, a member of UGC, said a significant lesson of the pandemic was that universities need to develop a strong and vibrant platform for holding online classes.



## New home

FROM PAGE 1

Saiful had a difficult time moving about as it was risky and had to sit alone and idle in his cramped tarpaulin makeshift home.

"Here, the land is plain and open. I can walk about easily," the 7-year-old said.

Other children like Saiful were also happy after arriving at the char expressed their joy when they arrived at the island.

1,804 Rohingyas arrived at Bhashan Char yesterday, of whom 848 were children.

They said they were motivated by the first batch, consisting 1,642 Rohingyas, who arrived at the island on December 4. They heard that the housing arrangement is good on Bhashan Char and there is scope of earning a livelihood too.

"My cousins went there with the first batch. They told us about Bhashan Char. And now we are going there," Abul Kalam, father of two daughters, told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that many of his neighbours in the Cox's Bazar camps told him to inform them of what it's like at the char and they will join too.

Mariam Khatun, another Rohingya to arrive at the island yesterday said she would rather call it "Shantir Char (island of peace)".

"I am going there for peace. I am moving from unrest to peace.

Mariam is among the several lakh Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh and took refuge in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar following the brutal military crackdown.

Almost all the Rohingyas confirmed moving to Bhashan Char after seeing pictures and videos of the facilities being built under the Tk 3,100-crore housing project by the Bangladesh Navy.

The first batch of Rohingyas is basically working as an ambassador of Bhashan Char. They are motivating people to come here," said Commodore AA Mamun Chowdhury, director of the Ashrayan-3 Project (the official name of the Bhashan Char project).

He said that initially it was between 500-700 people, but with time, the number reached 1,772. After some people joined the last minute, 1,804 Rohingyas were relocated yesterday.

Another refugee Shafi Alam said he spoke to those from the first batch who told him the government was arranging work for them and education for their children, along with places to practice religion.

"The Bangladesh government has given us shelter and now it wants to relocate us. The government has arranged everything for us. So why shouldn't we go there?"

He believes in the coming days more and more Rohingyas will come to Bhashan Char as their security is ensured here.

The department of forest, ministry of agriculture, ministry of education and some other ministries have already visited the island to provide services to the Rohingyas.

The project director said the education ministry will give a report on what sort of education can be offered here.

Ikram Aktar Sweety, 14, said that the Cox's Bazar camp had become unsafe for girls, especially at night.

"I hope I can go to school here without being disturbed," she said.

Abu Bakar Siddik, who came here with his wife and four sons, embraced his cousin who came Bhashan Char in the first phase.

"I am feeling good. This is the kind of land [plain] we are used to living on. It was difficult for us in the hilly area. We were not used to live in hilly area. It's a relief," he said.

After arriving at the char, they were taken to a warehouse where they offered a mass prayer expressing gratitude to the almighty.

From there they were taken to their houses. Meanwhile, the United Nations and other development partners expressed concerns and had demanded independent assessments of the housing project before relocation began. A UN team has still not been allowed to visit the island.

The UN and rights groups have been questioning the relocation plan, saying the island was prone to floods and could be submerged during high tides.

## Former Jubo League leader, 'robber' held in Bogura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Lutfar Sheikh, the former president of Chaluabari union Jubo League in Sariakandi upazila and also known to be a notorious robber, was arrested on Monday in Bogura.

A team of Bogura Detective Branch (DB) with the help of Sariakandi police arrested Lutfar Sheikh alias Lutfar Pagla in Sujauler Para Char on the Jamuna around 1:30pm.

Police recovered a gun and two bullets from him during the raid. A case has been filed against him with the Sariakandi Police Station for illegal possession of the firearms and ammunition.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Omar Farooq yesterday placed Lutfar in a seven-day remand after police asked for a 10-day remand. Lutfar refuted all allegations, said Emran Mahmud Tuhin, inspector of Bogura DB.

According to the police, there are 15 cases against him, including four murders, filed with police stations in Rangpur, Joypurhat, Gaibandha, Jamalpur and Bogura. Lutfar was the leader of an inter-district gang of robbers in this region, claimed police.

He had 11 warrants pending with Sariakandi Police Station, said Additional Superintendent of Police (Administration) Ali Haider Chowdhury, who led the operation with the DB team.

Ayub Tarafdar, president of the Sariakandi upazila Jubo League unit and also a vice-chairman of the Sariakandi upazila parishad, told The Daily Star, "We suspended Lutfar from his post [of Chaluabari union Jubo League unit president] a year ago after

receiving many robbery complaints against him."

After staying under cover in remote char areas for 12 days, the law enforcers were able to arrest Lutfar "Dakat", said Bogura DB inspector Tuhin.

"Police have long been trying to apprehend Lutfar but he escaped by taking advantage of the char areas to his advantage," Ali Haider told The Daily Star.

The ASP said Lutfar used to spend nights in boats and robbed in remote char areas of Bogura, Jamalpur, and Gaibandha.

There are many rumours about Lutfar's robbery in the char areas. When visiting the areas, locals told this correspondent that Lutfar is a feared robber. Many local news outlets have reported that Lutfar terrorised the Jamuna char areas while living in a luxury, air-conditioned boat and he has many properties and a house worth Tk 1.5 crore.

Lutfar Sheikh, however, denied everything while speaking to The Daily Star at the Bogura DB office, before being taken to court yesterday.

"People have filed these cases against me out of enmity. I have never even slapped anyone in my entire life. I have a farm of 45 buffalos in the char area which is looked after by the 20 other members of my family. I never robbed anyone, never killed anyone," said Lutfar.

"I don't have a house worth Tk 1.5-2 crore or a boat with AC. The locals and some local newspapers have spread false rumours about me. If there is a robbery incident in the char areas, people file cases against me," Lutfar said.

## 30 more die, 1,181 get Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty more people died from Covid-19 in the country in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, while India's health ministry reported the first eight cases of the mutated coronavirus strain among United Kingdom returnees.

To keep at bay the new faster-spreading strain of novel coronavirus found in the UK two weeks ago, the Bangladesh government on Monday announced that every UK returnee would have to stay in institutional quarantine for 14 days, but decided to continue air communications with the country.

The Indian administration, however, suspended all flights from the UK with effect from midnight of December 23 till December 31, 2020.

Quoting the Indian health ministry, the India Times newspaper reported that the mutated UK strain was detected in samples tested in the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru, in the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, in National Institute of Virology, Pune, and King Institute of Preventive Medicine and Research in Chennai.

All these people have been kept in single-room isolation in designated health care facilities. Their close contacts have also been put under quarantine.

Comprehensive contact tracing has been initiated for co-travellers, family members and others, India's health ministry said in a press release.

The presence of the new UK variant has so far been reported in Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy, Sweden, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Japan, Lebanon and

Singapore.

The list of all the UK returnees has been shared by the Bureau of Immigration with states and all passengers who arrived between November 25 and December 20 are being tracked by the IDSP State Surveillance Units and District Surveillance Units.

Meanwhile, the number of Covid-19 cases in Bangladesh rose to 5,11,261 as the Directorate General of Health Services reported 1,181 new cases in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

With them, the death toll reached 7,509 and the death rate was 1.47 percent.

Against yesterday's 14,588 tests, the positivity rate was 8.1 percent and the total positivity rate was 15.98 percent.

A total of 1,245 Covid-19 patients recovered in the 24 hours.

The number of recoveries rose to 4,54,563 and the recovery rate stood at 88.91 percent.

Among the 30 deceased, 19 were male.

One was aged under 10, three were aged between 41 and 50, five between 51 and 60, and 21 were above 60 years, added the release.

The mutated coronavirus strain spreading in the UK is on average 56 percent more contagious, scientists have warned in a study. They have urged a fast vaccine rollout to help prevent more deaths.

The new variant, which emerged in southeast England in November, is likely to boost hospitalisations and deaths from Covid-19 next year, according to the Centre for Mathematical Modelling of Infectious Diseases at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

## Tk 89,500cr

FROM PAGE 1

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Planning Minister MA Manna said the five-year plan is focused on how to cope with coronavirus-related problems.

Shamsul said there are 244 strategies in the five-year plan to recover the socio-economic losses caused by the pandemic. Of those, five would be focused directly on the impact of Covid-19, he said.

Asked about the strategies, he said

one of the five strategies would be to increase the expenditure on the health sector efficiently.

Besides, a data centre would be created on the beneficiaries of the social safety net programmes in the country, said Shamsul.

The five-year plan proposed introducing a universal healthcare system to tackle the pandemic and other challenges the health ministry is facing.

## Ex-DSCC mayor Khokon sued for embezzlement

FROM PAGE 1

The magistrate took the case into cognisance and recorded the statement of the complainant yesterday. The court will pass an order over the issue today, said bench assistant Atiqur.

According to the case document, Khokon and six others conspired with one another and built shops, violating the main design of Fulbaria City Supermarket-2. The accused then announced allotment of the shops.

When the traders approached the DSCC, former mayor Khokon contacted the other accused and asked them to allot the shops, the case statement said.

The traders then communicated with accused Kamrul, Helena, Swapan and Walid for getting the allotment of shops.

In the case statement, the complainant mentioned that the accused took around Tk 34.89 crore from the complainant and 26 other traders in the name of "allocating shops at the market's 'blocks -- A, B & C' between June 21, 2015, and September 29 last year. But now, the shops are being demolished for violating the original design of the market.

The plaintiff also appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants against the accused.

On December 8, the DSCC knocked down several hundred illegal shops at the Fulbaria Supermarket-2, which were built violating the main design of the supermarket.

Traders and shop owners protested the DSCC move that day.

DSCC officials initially faced

obstruction from shopkeepers when they went to demolish the illegal parts of the supermarket. Shopkeepers threw brick chunks from inside the market at the DSCC team. Police fired teargas canisters to bring the situation under control.

On the same day, DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh after a programme at the Nagar Bhaban said many shops were constructed violating the main design of the DSCC supermarket.

People on different occasions built the shops in the open and parking spaces, he added.

Some 911 shops were erected illegally in the open and parking spaces of the market's A, B, and C blocks (City Plaza, Nagar Plaza and Zaker Plaza) over the years, say DSCC officials.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms

1, Kawran Bazar, TCB Bhabhan (6<sup>th</sup> Floor)

Dhaka-1215

www.roc.gov.bd



Memo No. 26.06.0000.029.07.003-20/1593

Date: 29.12.2020

### e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concern that the following tender have published through e-GP portal.

Tender ID & Package No.	Name of Goods	Publication Date	Last Selling and Closing Date & Time
530047 RJSC-G-2020_21-PKG-1	Supply Installation, Configuration, Testing, Commissioning & Maintenance of Servers etc.	30.12.2020; 10.00 A.M;	19.01.2021; 12:00 P.M & 19.01.2020; 15:00 P.M

The interested persons/firms may visit the website [www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) to get the details of the tender. This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hardcopies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

(Md. Mokbul Hossain)

Registrar

Joint Stock Companies and Firms

GD-2096

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার	
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সওজ	
চট্টগ্রাম সড়ক বিভাগ, রহমতগঞ্জ, চট্টগ্রাম	
ফোনঃ ০৩১-২৮৬৩২৩২	
E-mail: <a href="mailto:eechi@rhd.gov.bd">eechi@rhd.gov.bd</a>	
e-GP দরপত্র বাতিল করণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি	
এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, অত্র দপ্তরের স্মারক নং-৫১৭৪/৩, তারিখঃ ২৮/১২/২০২০খ্রিঃ মূলে প্রকাশিত দরপত্র নং- e-GP/64/EE/CRD/RHD/2020-21 (ID-529460) অনিবার্য কারণবশতঃ বাতিল (Cancelled) করা হলো।	
Tender/Proposal ID	Name of work
ID-529460 e-GP/64/EE/CRD/RHD/2020-21	Construction of 1 (one) No. Foot Over Bridge (Teria) at 196th(P) Km (Ch: 195+200m) on Dhaka (Jatrabari)-Comilla (Moyanamati)-Chattogram-Cox's Bazaar Teknaf National Highways (N-1) under Chattogram Road Division during the year 2020-2021.
মোঃ মহিনুল ইসলাম পরিচিতি নং-৭০০২৪৪ উপ-সহকারী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ চট্টগ্রাম সড়ক বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম	সেগুন প্রসাদ বড়ুয়া পরিচিতি নং-৬০২০৭০ সহকারী প্রকৌশলী (চপদাঃ), সওজ চট্টগ্রাম সড়ক বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম
জিডি-২০৯৮	জুলফিকার আহমেদ পরিচিতি নং-৬০২১৩৮ নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ চট্টগ্রাম সড়ক বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম



# \$740 BILLION DEFENSE POLICY BILL House overrides Trump's veto

## 109 Republicans join Democrats

REUTERS, Washington

Democratic-led US House of Representatives voted on Monday to override President Donald Trump's veto of a \$740 billion defense policy bill, a rebuke that underscored divisions in the Republican Party during Trump's final weeks in office.

The 322-87 House vote, in which 109 Republicans joined Democrats to override Trump's veto, leaves the bill's fate to the Republican-led Senate, where a final vote is expected this week. If the Senate seconds the House action, the bill becomes law. It would be the first veto override of Trump's presidency.

Trump, who is angry that some Republicans have acknowledged his loss to Democratic President-elect Joe Biden in the Nov. 3 election, vetoed the defense bill last Wednesday. Biden will be sworn in as president on Jan. 20.

Trump said he blocked the legislation because he wanted it to overturn liability protections for social media companies unrelated to national security, and he opposed a provision to rename military bases named after generals who fought for the pro-slavery Confederacy during the Civil War.

The legislation, which addresses a host of defense policy issues and includes a pay raise for US troops, has been passed by Congress every year since 1961.

The bill had earlier passed both chambers of Congress with margins greater than the two-thirds majorities needed to override president's veto. But Trump vetoed it anyway and the bill went back to Congress for a possible override.



The wreckage of a car and damaged buildings are seen in Petrinja, some 50kms from Zagreb, after the town was hit by an earthquake of the magnitude of 6.4.

PHOTO: AFP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Defying US, Russia says military ties with Turkey to continue

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov yesterday said that Moscow and Ankara's military cooperation would not be deterred by US sanctions on Turkey for acquiring a Russian missile defence system. Washington this month punished Turkey for buying Russia's S-400 air defence system, imposing rare sanctions against a Nato ally. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at the time told Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu that the American sanctions were intended to prevent Russia from receiving substantial revenues from the sale. On Tuesday, Cavusoglu visited Moscow for talks with his Russia's top diplomat Lavrov, who told reporters that, "we have confirmed our mutual intention to develop military ties with Turkey". Cavusoglu said the US sanctions against Turkey were "an act of aggression against our country's sovereign rights," adding that Ankara would not give in to pressure.

#### Rajinikanth ends political bid after 'warning from god'

Indian movie superstar Rajinikanth yesterday cancelled his plans to enter politics, saying a health scare had been "a warning from god". The announcement came a day after the 70-year-old Tamil action hero left hospital where he was treated for high blood pressure. Rajinikanth, one of Asia's best paid actors, set off celebrations by his fans when he announced early in December that he would be launching a political party in a bid to bring "corruption free" government to his home state of Tamil Nadu. But the bus conductor-turned-actor said he could not go ahead in a long letter released on his Twitter account. Rajinikanth apologising to his fans said his recent worries had been a "warning from god".

#### Russia tells Navalny to return immediately or face jail



Russia's prison service on Monday gave Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny a last minute ultimatum: Fly back from Germany at once and report at a Moscow office immediately, or be jailed if you return after that deadline. Navalny, one of President Vladimir Putin's leading critics, was airlifted to Germany for treatment in August after collapsing on a plane in what Germany and other Western nations say was an attempt to murder him with a Novichok nerve agent. Russia denied any involvement in the incident. The Federal Prison Service (FSIN) on Monday accused Navalny of violating the terms of a suspended prison sentence he is still serving out over a conviction dating from 2014, and of evading the supervision of Russia's criminal inspection authority. Navalny has been discharged from hospital in Berlin on Sept. 20.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

# India finds cases of new strain

## May extend UK flight ban; study says Britain must vaccinate two million people a week to prevent third Covid-19 wave

REUTERS, Mumbai

India has found six cases of a more infectious strain of the coronavirus, which has prompted border closures around the world, in people arriving from Britain and will likely extend a flight ban to guard against it, officials said yesterday.

All six of the infected people had been kept in isolation, the health ministry said in a statement, adding that their fellow travellers were being traced.

At least three cases were detected in travellers from the UK who arrived in Pakistan.

And Germany health officials in Germany yesterday said the new coronavirus strain had been traced in the country since November. Researchers were "able to sequence the variant of the B.1.1.7 virus in a person infected in November this year", the health ministry of Lower Saxony said in a statement referring to the new strain. India had suspended all flights from



Britain until the end of the month over worry about the infectious variant of the virus but about 33,000 passengers had flown in from late November, before the ban was enforced, the ministry said.

Of those arrivals, 114 people were found positive for the coronavirus and their samples were being checked for the new variant, which has been detected across parts of Europe and Asia, it said.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said the ban on flights from Britain would probably remain

in force into the New Year.

Meanwhile, a study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) has concluded that Britain must vaccinate two million people a week to avoid a third wave of the coronavirus outbreak.

The UK has had more than 71,000 deaths from the coronavirus and over 2.3 million cases of Covid-19 infections as of late Monday, according to a Reuters tally.

"The most stringent intervention scenario with tier 4 (restrictions) England-wide and schools closed during January and 2 million individuals vaccinated per week, is the only scenario we considered which reduces peak ICU (intensive care) burden below the levels seen during the first wave," the study said.

"In the absence of substantial vaccine roll-out, cases, hospitalisations, ICU admissions and deaths in 2021 may exceed those in 2020."

# Girl killed, many injured as 6.4 quake hits Croatia

## Slovenia shuts nuclear power plant

REUTERS, Zagreb

An earthquake of magnitude 6.4 struck a town in central Croatia yesterday, killing a child, injuring many people and wrecking houses, officials said.

Rescuers tried to pull people from the rubble of collapsed buildings, television footage showed, and army troops were sent into the area to help.

The GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences said the quake hit at a depth of 10 km (6 miles). The epicentre was in the town of Petrinja, 50 km south of the Croatian capital Zagreb.

Tomislav Fabijanic, head of emergency medical services in nearby Sisak, said many people had been injured in Petrinja and in Sisak.

N1 news channel quoted a Petrinja town official as saying that a 12-year old child had been killed, but gave no details.

Piles of stone, bricks and tiles littered the streets in the aftermath of the quake, and cars parked in the road were also damaged by falling debris. Patients were evacuated from the Sisak hospital because buildings were damaged.

A worker who had been fixing a roof in a village outside Petrinja told N1 that the quake threw him on the ground. Nine of the 10 houses in the village were destroyed, he said.

The quake was felt in Zagreb, where people rushed onto the streets, some of which were strewn with broken roof tiles and other debris. It also shook parts of neighbouring Bosnia and Serbia.

In Slovenia, the STA news agency said the country's sole nuclear power plant, which is 100 km (60 miles) from the epicentre, was shut down as a precaution.



Protesters take part in a demonstration against the dissolution of the country's parliament in Kathmandu, yesterday. Daily protests are being held in Nepal since PM KP Sharma Oli dissolved the parliament after losing support.

PHOTO: AFP

# Gaza groups stage military drills to mark 2008 conflict

AFP, Gaza City

Palestinian armed groups staged military exercises in Gaza yesterday, including firing rockets into the sea, to mark the anniversary of the start of the 2008 conflict with Israel.

The demonstrations were scheduled to last several hours and involve about 10 groups in the Israeli-blockaded Palestinian enclave, said a spokesman for the Al-Quds Brigade forces, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad.

The goal of the exercise, the first of its kind, is to "strengthen the skills of combatants" and demonstrate the "unity" of armed groups in Gaza, added the spokesman, whose face was almost entirely covered by a traditional headscarf.

Hamas, the Islamist group that has controlled Gaza since 2007, was also taking part. Hamas's Al-Aqsa TV showed rockets being fired from the strip on Tuesday into

the Mediterranean Sea.

Israel's army said a projectile device was launched from Gaza overnight Monday to Tuesday, but that it did not cross into Israeli territory. Israel did not immediately retaliate to that launch with airstrikes, as it typically does when rockets fired from Gaza enter Israel.

The drills also come days after Hamas accused Israel of launching strikes that damaged a children's hospital.

Israel, which said it carried out the weekend airstrikes in response to rocket fire from Gaza, denied that its missiles hit the hospital.

In December 2008, Israel launched "Operation Cast Lead" to stop Palestinian rocket fire into Israel.

It ended with a ceasefire in January 2009, after 1,440 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed. Hamas and Israel fought two further conflicts, in 2012 and 2014.

"Let my thoughts come to you, when I am gone like the afterglow of sunset at the margin of stary silence" - Tagore.

In commemoration of the 10th death anniversary of  
**Dr Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury [1941 – 2010]**  
Founder Vice Chancellor of  
Independent University, Bangladesh

# The king and the cloud

## The story behind the Royal Rainmaking Project in Thailand

SUVAT CHIRAPANT

In the drought-prone plateau of Isan in the northeastern region of Thailand, farming is the way of life for almost half of the population. Dependent on rainfall to sustain their crops, farmers would traditionally gather at the beginning of the wet season to shoot homemade Bang Fai rockets to the sky to ask the weather god to release the monsoon. According to folklore, the higher and louder the rockets blast into the sky, the better. The deity will likely be more pleased with the offering and allow plentiful rainfall for the season's harvest.

On 14 November 1955, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great travelled through the dried-up Isan region during a royal visit. The then 28-year-old monarch noted the effects of water deficiency in the area, which caused low crop yields and subsequently, the people to suffer from chronic poverty and malnutrition. When the young king looked up to the sky in hope of finding a solution, he noticed that the weather was cloudy, yet it did not result into precipitation. As every cloud has a silver lining, literally, King Bhumibol found one while watching the clouds - an idea of how to draw droplets from the clouds onto the farmlands.

Having shown keen interest in science from a young age, the King was equipped with knowledge on technological research from his enrolment at the Faculty of Science at the University of Lausanne. After 14 years of research on meteorology and weather modification, the first experiment in making artificial rain was attempted on 1 July 1969. It was quite a remarkable success. After the fleet of aircraft had distributed dry-ice flakes over the top of the clouds, it started to rain within 15 minutes. This operation marked the dawn of

what is now acknowledged by Thais as "The Royal Rainmaking Project".

Since then, the project has gone through a series of transformations to perfect the artificial rainmaking process.

The rainmaking technique, however, is exclusive to Thailand. In 2001, King Bhumibol received recognition for the Royal Rainmaking Project from the EUREKA organization "for an invention that is beneficial to the world." In 2003, King Bhumibol was granted a patent for weather



modification from the European Patent Office. Ever since the invention caught the attention of the international community, many countries have sought cooperation with Thailand to apply this know-how in addressing their own drought problems. Jordan, for instance, was granted the use of the rainmaking technique in 2009, through an MOU for training and technology transfer. Other countries who have sought cooperation include Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Australia, and the Philippines.

Today, there is no need to rely on weather gods, when citizens can submit a request for rain where needed, and rain shall be granted. The

project enables Thai farmers to harvest without disruption, and to fill hydroelectric dams to help fulfill the increasing demand for electricity.

The project has been upgraded to a Bureau in 1992 and in 2013 it became the Department of Royal Rainmaking and Agricultural Aviation. In Thailand, 14 November is now celebrated as "Father of Royal Rainmaking Day".

In 2019, the Department conducted 1,673 rainmaking operations across the country. Almost 89 percent of the flights were successful, producing rainfall over 63 million hectares of forest, agricultural area, and reservoirs. The downpour of rain has increased the amount of water reserves by 2,595 million cubic metres. Still, the demand of artificial rain is expected to rise due to air pollution problems and the effects of global warming, and the department is now exploring the use of rockets to help scatter the rainmaking substance over the cloud.

Today, under the guidance of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn, the legacy of the Royal Rainmaking Project continues to live on. Following in his father's footsteps, King Vajiralongkorn has also initiated various irrigation projects to address drought, such as the construction of six reservoirs in the western province of Ratchaburi, and the development of canal systems, check dams, and levees to assist farmers in the deep south of Thailand. This is one of the many testimonies of the vision, continued dedication, perseverance, and ingenuity of the monarchs in the Chakri Dynasty watching over the Thai people and the country.

Suvat Chirapant is currently the Deputy Secretary General and Advisor on Foreign Affairs of the Office of Chaipattana Foundation. He had been a career diplomat until 2017.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
College Education Development Project (CEDP)  
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College Address: Noorjahan Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207  
e-mail: mkc\_1972@yahoo.com  
Website: www.mkc.edu.bd

Memo No. 350/mkc/2020 Date: 30/12/2020

### e-Tender Notice 01/2020-2021

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of works	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	531374	Renovation of Office Room Classroom, Lab, Library and Auditorium of Mohammadpur Kendriya College, Dhaka	18-Jan-2021 01:00pm	18-Jan-2021 02:00pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.  
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.  
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks' branches up to 17 January 2021.  
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

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GD-2095



# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 30, 2020, POUISH 15, 1427 BS

## Ancient Buddhist temple remains occupied

*Why has no one attempted to return it to the original owners?*

It is deeply concerning that a 200-year-old Buddhist temple in Teknaf remains occupied even after 10 years have passed since it was vandalised and encroached upon. According to a report by *The Daily Star*, the temple came under attack in 2010 when a group of thugs led by two local Awami League leaders seized 11 acres of land belonging to it, before assaulting the monks there and desecrating and plundering around 18 ancient Buddha statues. Since then, the partly demolished temple and surrounding areas have been under the possession of the two accused—the current chairman of the Hnila union and also president of the local AL unit, and his brother.

Dakshin Hnila Boro Boudha Bihar is the first Buddhist temple built in Teknaf. It now lies unprotected, uncared-for, and its original owners—Buddhist monks and worshippers—dispossessed of their sacred ground. Through their acts and continued occupation, the perpetrators have set not just another example of what happens where unchecked greed meets unchecked power. It is a testament to the vulnerabilities faced by minorities in general, and also exemplifies the threat and negligence facing many historic/cultural sites in the country. In recent years, we have come across many such stories where members of a certain minority community were either driven away from their ancestral land, or faced violence by reactionary forces, or saw their sacred places razed to the ground. Often, these incidents are met with lukewarm response from the authorities, and attempts are also made to discredit the victims. It is all the more unfortunate when members of the ruling party, which has a mandate to protect all citizens irrespective of religion, are found to be involved in these heinous crimes.

We urge the authorities to take immediate steps to reclaim the Teknaf temple and its land and hand them over to their original owners. It's really troubling to see that such a brazen act of aggression has been tolerated for so long. The government must bring those responsible for the demolition and occupation of the temple to justice, and send a clear message to the communal forces that no one can get away with committing such crimes.

## The watchdog on health should be up and doing

*More so in the time of the pandemic*

If there was a more opportune time to bring the health ministry under an exhaustive scrutiny, it was during the peak period of the pandemic. We believe that with an impending second wave of the pandemic, the health ministry's preparedness, its operational plans to deal with the second wave, which even the prime minister has cautioned the country about, should be put through the sieve in the parliamentary standing committee on health. She has alerted the other relevant agencies to take preparatory measures, and it is the ministry of health that will be at the frontline in combatting the pandemic.

Although, the shock and awe of the pandemic was overwhelming, one needs hardly recount the shoddy work of the health ministry, in spite of the World Health Organization's detailed instructions on dealing with the pandemic. And in spite of the task force set up by the administration, the lack of coordination between various ministries had blunted our response to the pandemic in many respects. We feel that the parliamentary standing committee can play an important part in not only ensuring that mistakes are corrected but also, through regular oversight, ensure that every agency is working as per standard procedures and that the task force can perform according to its terms of reference. More importantly, and it has nothing to do with the pandemic alone, it is important for the committee to wield its stick to remove the virus of corruption that has itself taken an endemic form in the ministry of health.

It is thus surprising that since March of this year, the parliamentary standing committee on health ministry has not felt it necessary to meet even once, given the mismanagement that one witnessed in the health sector during the height of the pandemic. In fact, it has held only six meetings since it was formed in January 2019. We understand that the Covid-19 pandemic prevented normal functionings of the administration, but there were IT facilities, and even the courts had functioned online.

We believe that the health of the health ministry is not in a good state. The standing committee can do a lot to cure its ailments by regular oversight and holding the persons running the ministry and its various departments to account. It should meet at least once a month as per the terms of reference.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

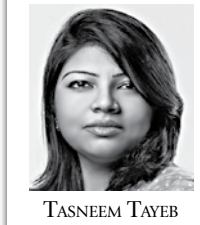
### Separate lanes for cyclists

There has been a growing popularity of cycling as a means of commuting, exercise and recreation for some time now. However, our capital wasn't cyclist-friendly until recently, when the city corporations started making separate lanes for the safety of cyclists on our roads. DNCC recently conducted a drive against illegal food stands, installations and parking on Manik Mia Avenue to make space for a bicycle lane. It is indeed laudable what the city corporations are doing in this case. Not only is cycling considered as good physical exercise; it is also a green vehicle, meaning it doesn't generate any harmful emissions that pollute the environment. I urge the authorities concerned to arrange more such separate bicycle lanes to promote cycling which will surely help in sustaining a greener environment with healthy citizens.

Md Zillur Rahaman, Dhaka

# Money without a trail

A CLOSER LOOK



TASNEEM TAYEB

WHILE Bangladesh's economy has grown, the Swiss coffers of the super wealthy have easily outpaced and inevitably outgrown that growth. Between 2004 and 2019, the compounded annual growth rate of Bangladesh's real GDP was 10.78 percent (current USD rate). During the corresponding period, deposits to Swiss bank accounts from Bangladesh increased from Tk 3.65 billion in 2004 to Tk 53.67 billion during 2019. Given the constant reports of the financial shenanigans of the influence-mongers, one can't help but wonder how much of it has gone through legal channels.

And people from every sphere of the sociopolitical spectrum seem to have a hand in it: from politicians and government officials to prominent industrialists and small scale operators—all have significant involvement in one of the most widespread financial crimes that is money laundering. And of course, there are the more recognised criminals: drug traffickers, human traffickers, terrorists and the likes thereof.

In 2020 itself, two prominent money laundering scams did the rounds on the media. First, the curious case of PK Halder, whose ingenious laundering of Tk 10,200 crore to countries such as Canada and Singapore would tempt any film scriptwriter and second, the criminal activities of a lawmaker, who along with his lawmaker wife and relatives, was not only involved in money laundering, but also in the more sinister crime of human trafficking.

According to media reports, between 2016 and 2020, Tk 355 crore was transacted from around 500 bank accounts of the independent lawmaker for Laksmipur 2 Mohammad Shahid Islam Papul and his associates. Papul's wife, reserved-seat independent lawmaker Selina Islam, their daughter and close relatives were all allegedly involved in this. They made their fortunes through human trafficking.

These figures seem incredible, but they are only two of the many money laundering incidents that have taken

every year. A 2018 IMF study reported that underground economic activities in Bangladesh accounts for about 30 percent of its GDP. Most of the black money invariably, and understandably, fly abroad.

In the Basel Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Index 2020, Bangladesh fell to 38th position from 45th in 2019 among 141 countries. This means the country is more vulnerable to the crime of capital flight. And trade based capital flight remains a major headache for Bangladesh. According to the Global Financial Integrity report ranking, Bangladesh is one of the top countries facing trade-based money laundering (TBML).

Given the stats, one might easily wonder why the regulators are not able to rein in the situation. "This is the failure of the government agencies responsible for combating money laundering. However, it is difficult to tell from the outside if this is due to their incapability

relevant agencies. For instance, if the crime is related to corruption and bribery, the report is sent to the Anti-Corruption Commission. For forgery and related crimes, intel goes to the Criminal Investigation Department; for trade based money laundering, including over-invoicing, under-invoicing, tax evasion and related financial crimes, information is shared with the National Board of Revenue. For financial crimes related to drugs, the Narcotics Control Department is alerted. In case of financial crimes related to stock exchanges, intel is shared with the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission "for further investigation and taking it to prosecution", added Abu Hena Mohd Razee Hassan.

Once intelligence is shared with the agencies, it is up to them to carry forward the investigation and take subsequent action to bring the culprits to book. With regard to combating trade-based money



*A Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) report from earlier this year suggested that around USD 3.1 billion (Tk 26,400 crore) is laundered out of the country every year. A 2018 IMF study reported that underground economic activities in Bangladesh accounts for about 30 percent of its GDP. Most of the black money invariably, and understandably, fly abroad.*

place this year. In fact, it took the authorities years to even detect them. From the more all-pervasive "hundi" to the more sophisticated trade-based mechanisms, capital flight takes place every day and in many forms. While most are deprived of their fair share of media exposure, some, such as PK Halder or MP Papul, do get their 15 minutes of fame.

A Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) report from earlier this year suggested that around USD 3.1 billion (Tk 26,400 crore) is laundered out of the country

or involvement in capital flight. The cases of PK Halder or Shahid Islam (Papul) are just the tip of the iceberg," suggested prominent banker, economist and former deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank Khondkar Ibrahim Khaleed.

He further added that addressing the problem of capital flight is one of the direct responsibilities of the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU). "If the agencies are not being able to do their jobs, then the government, the cabinet, should make them accountable for their failures. The existing rules are sufficient to tackle the problem of money laundering; we need the right enforcement."

BFIU, however, seems have its own limitations. "Our core task is to collect suspicious transaction reports, analyse the information and share them in intelligence format with law enforcement units so that they can investigate," said Abu Hena Mohd Razee Hassan, head of the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit.

BFIU was formed as part of compliance with recommendation 29 of the Financial Action Task Force, that says, "Countries should establish a financial intelligence unit (FIU) that serves as a national centre for the receipt and analysis of: (a) suspicious transaction reports; and (b) other information relevant to money laundering, associated predicate offences and terrorist financing, and for the dissemination of the results of that analysis. The FIU should be able to obtain additional information from reporting entities, and should have access on a timely basis to the financial, administrative and law enforcement information that it requires to undertake its functions properly."

Under the Money Laundering Prevention Act, there are 27 categories of financial crimes. Based on the nature of the crimes, BFIU sends intelligence reports to different

laundry, BFIU has issued the Guidelines for Prevention of Trade Based Money Laundering in 2019. Abu Hena Mohd Razee Hassan believes that if these guidelines are strongly implemented by all relevant authorities, it would play a major role in curbing trade-based capital flight. But BFIU can only do so much. The investigative and enforcement authorities need to be more prompt, efficient and honest in taking immediate action on the intel shared by the BFIU. Any delay in this is only going to aggravate the condition, despite the formation of new units or issuance of new guidelines.

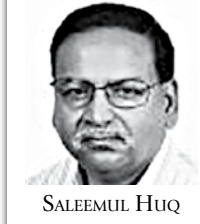
To sum it up, Bangladesh's turbulent tussle with capital flight is not going to end anytime soon. While the country has made some progress in addressing the various forms and mechanisms of money laundering, rooting it out is a long journey ahead, and the reason is simple: the country needs more proactive coordination between intelligence units and enforcement agencies, and a strong political will to end this problem once and for all.

The enforcement agencies need to address this problem with an iron fist, and for this they would need strong backing from the government, since a lot of the money launderers flaunt financial and political muscle. If the influential money launderers—irrespective of their political affiliations—are brought to book, it will send a strong and clear message to not only the financial criminals but also the enforcement agencies. As the new year approaches, one can only hope despite the many challenges, the government and the enforcement agencies would be more active in eliminating the ailment of capital flight.

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for *The Daily Star*. Her Twitter handle is: @TayebTasneem

# Can Bangladesh become a knowledge economy?

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

AS we say goodbye to the terrible year of 2020 and enter not just a new year in 2021 but a new decade to 2030, it is time to look ahead with some sense of optimism for our country over the coming decade.

Bangladesh has the opportunity and potential for becoming a significant knowledge-based economy by 2030 if we make the right decisions and investments going forward. Unfortunately, at the moment we are in a poor position, as was demonstrated by the publication of this year's Global Knowledge Index by UNDP, in which Bangladesh ranked 112th out of 138 countries—we were the lowest ranked in South Asia, with India ranking highest in our region. We need to make a conscious decision to enhance our rank every year over the next 10 years and make the requisite investments to achieve that as a matter of high national priority.

What steps could be taken in this regard? The first point to make is that what I am advocating for will not cost any more money, so finance is not a significant constraint. Rather, the major decision we need to collectively take as a country is to acknowledge that we are not headed in the right direction, and hence, we need a major paradigm shift to change our direction of travel. This needs to be a collective decision not only by our political leaders but by every parent and young person who wants to be better educated, in a manner befitting the new paradigm rather than business-as-usual.

We need to start with the tertiary education system, where Bangladesh now has over a hundred universities, counting both public as well as private universities.

While this is indeed a significant achievement in terms of quantity, most are very poor in terms of quality. Indeed, in global rankings of the world's top most universities, even Bangladesh's foremost University of Dhaka has been dropping down the ranking over the last few years.

Hence, we need to focus on changing the universities from being simple certificate-issuing factories to actual places of learning with an emphasis on teaching skills, and the ability to think

genuine knowledge generation, at least two or even three percent of the national budget should be allocated to supporting nationally useful research that addresses the problems and opportunities of Bangladesh. This will be a major indicator of whether we genuinely graduate out of Least Developed Country (LDC) status over the next few years. We cannot graduate as long as we remain dependent on international consultants to fly in and give us knowledge. We must generate our own knowledge or we will

labourers returning home while at the same time, the world economy and education has shifted online, so that we don't have to travel to another country to engage in providing services globally. The biggest raw material for making the most of this opportunity is young people, both girls as well as boys, of which we have many millions. However, we can only gain the benefits if we invest in educating our bright and eager youth to learn the capacity to use the internet to connect to the global economy on a major scale.

The third major step we will need to take is to enable the Bangladesh economy to link more effectively and efficiently with the global economy, and one way this could be done would be to make the Bangladesh Taka into a freely convertible currency. The time has indeed come for Bangladesh to allow this step to be planned and implemented in the next few years. It will be a huge step forward for our economy.

Finally, we will have to change the pattern of our education, including more effective vocational training as well as better quality secondary education, and indeed even primary education, for our children. None of this will require new funding, but it will require us to change the way we do things and how we incentivise teachers at all levels. If these policy steps are taken and implemented sincerely, we could indeed change the face of our country by the end of the coming decade.

I believe that our single greatest national asset are our young girls and boys, and if we are able to invest in educating them better, we can indeed transition to a significant knowledge-based economy within a decade. However, it will require a national consensus for us to make the necessary paradigm shift needed.

Dr Saleemul Huq is Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development at the Independent University Bangladesh.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

and solve problems, rather than simply pass exams through rote memorisation of information and regurgitation.

This will need a major shift in giving incentives to our teachers, who have the ability to change if the reward system for them was changed. One way this could be done is for the university authorities to reward research and innovation from faculty, and also for the national government to provide rewards, including funding for research. For

remain dependent forever.

The second major change in investment opportunities should be in making funding from the banking sector available for young entrepreneurs, with a focus on green business opportunities. While this has indeed started, it needs to be scaled up very rapidly as part of the global economy and not only confined to the Bangladesh economy alone. The Covid-19 pandemic has already led to many thousands of Bangladeshi



# A lifetime of dedication to his people and country

## Remembering Syed Muazzem Ali

INTISHAM KABIR

**T**ODAY is the first death anniversary of Ambassador Syed Muazzem Ali. He was born in Sylhet in 1944 to an enlightened and accomplished family. His father Syed Mustafa Ali was a well-known writer and his elder brother SM Ali was the founding editor of this newspaper. Eminent writer Syed Mujtaba Ali was his *Chhoto Chacha*. Syed Muazzem Ali obtained his Masters degree from Dhaka University in 1966 and was placed in the First Class. He appeared in the Pakistan Central Superior Services Exam and joined the Pakistan Foreign Service in 1968. He was serving in the Pakistan Embassy in Washington DC when the Bangladesh Liberation War broke out. Dissociating himself from the Pakistan government, along with 12 other Bengali diplomats and officials of the Embassy, and the youngest diplomat to do so, Ali was a founding member of the Bangladesh Mission in DC. Ali became active in efforts to support Bangladesh during the war, raising public awareness of the genocide in Bangladesh, raising funds to support activities for Bangladesh, and liaising with the Congress and State Department. Following the war, Ali served a long and distinguished tenure in the Bangladesh Foreign Service. He was Ambassador of Bangladesh to Bhutan, Iran, Turkmenistan, France, Lebanon, Syria and Portugal. While Ambassador to France, he was also Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to UNESCO. It was in that capacity that Ambassador Muazzem Ali tabled the draft resolution, on behalf of Bangladesh,



PHOTO: COURTESY

for the proclamation of February 21 (Bengali Language Martyr's Day) as International Mother Language Day. He spearheaded the diplomatic efforts leading to its unanimous adoption by the UNESCO General Assembly in 1999. Syed Muazzem Ali was Foreign Secretary in the Bangladesh government in 2001 and

retired from active government service at the end of 2001. In 2014, he was called back from retirement to serve at the High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India, a position he served with great distinction and diplomatic acumen until December 2019.

Syed Muazzem Ali was dedicated not only to Bangladesh as a whole, but really to the poorest Bangladeshis, the farmers and villagers. He believed he worked for them. Diplomacy was a way for him to bring nations closer and to make Bangladesh better understood by the world at large. To him, professionalism, diplomatic etiquette and protocol, and love for one's country, were important tools to reach that goal.

While he is well-known as a diplomat, he was also my maternal uncle. In the 1990s when my grandmother (*Nanu*), along with her sister, both in their eighties, went to perform the Hajj, it was *Khokon Mama* who took extraordinary pains to ease the hardship of the pilgrimage.

I got to know *Mama* and his family better when they came to live in California where we lived. They were living in Alameda, a town across the San Francisco Bay, about 50 miles from us, and we met several times.

His sudden, unexpected death last year deprived us of a talented diplomat. He left behind his wife, two sons, two daughters-in-law and three grandchildren. Most of all, he gave us that rare gift: a lifetime of dedication to his people and country.

Intisham Kabir writes the weekly Tangents column every Saturday in this newspaper.

# Memories of SYED MUAZZEM ALI

SHAMIM SINNAR

**A**T the first death anniversary of Syed Muazzem Ali, former Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, on December 30, many of his colleagues remember him as the highly accomplished and charismatic diplomat who helped to turn International Mother Language Day into a reality, and who tirelessly advanced Bangladeshi priorities on the world stage. They remember his warmth, humour and charm.

I too remember his warmth, humour and charm—not as a diplomat, but as Abbu, my father-in-law. Whenever I think about him, I think of mangoes. Abbu loved mangoes, and would always insist on buying and cutting them for his daughters-in-law and then later, for his grandchildren. Every time he visited, he, without fail, made a trip to the *deshi* grocery store in search of the best mangoes for us. Indeed, though we all loved mangoes, somehow we would only eat them when he cut them specially for us. Every time I now cut mangoes myself, I feel his presence.

He also loved music, and would often break out in Hindi or Bangla songs while relaxing with a newspaper on our recliner. He arranged the musical portion of my *Mehendi* (wedding event), and surprised me with secretly requesting the musicians to play "*Tujhe dehka to ye jana sanam*," my

favourite Bollywood tune. I still remember Abbu and myself smiling and singing that song to each other along with the musicians.

Abbu was an immaculate dresser with an impeccable sense of fashion. I was not a fan of clothes shopping, and would spend a long time finding one or two outfits that I liked. Abbu would take those to Dhaka and have his tailor make five or six replicas for me in beautiful patterns. He chose the materials himself—I trusted his sense of taste wholeheartedly.

One of Abbu's most precious loves were his grandchildren. Some of my favourite memories are of him holding my daughters or nephew on his shoulders or taking them for walks. Indeed, his love for his grandchildren was the strongest force leading him to retire and return to the United States. He requested the Prime Minister to release him because, as he told us, "The Prime Minister will be able to find another diplomat for my position. But my grandchildren will not be able to find another grandfather." It is our collective sorrow that he passed away before he was able to see us again, to retire and spend the rest of his life with those grandchildren whom he so adored.

Shamim Sinnar, MD, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Medicine at Pennsylvania State University.

# Who had the best and worst year in Asia?

CURTIS S CHIN and JOSE B COLLAZO

**F**OR all of South Asia, 2020 has been a year that cannot be over fast enough. This has been true for Bangladesh too, even as the International Monetary Fund's latest Economic Outlook reported that the nation has overtaken India in GDP per capita. By year-end though, Bangladesh had also reported some 511,000 Covid-19 cases, with reported deaths of about 7,500.

Elsewhere, the ongoing economic and health catastrophe has encompassed more than 1.7 million dead globally—including more than 343,000 deaths in the United States, more than 191,000 in Brazil and more than 148,000 in India. Year-to-date deaths from Covid-19 surpassed 9,990 in Pakistan.

Yet, less than 12 months since the novel coronavirus SARS-Cov2, first identified in China, spread with deadly effect to the world, there lies hope for a better year ahead amidst unprecedented progress on vaccines and treatments. So,

of the coronavirus' economic impact has ranged from seafood workers from Myanmar in Thailand's seafood industry, to medical glove factory workers from Nepal and Bangladesh in Malaysia.

The World Bank reports that Asia's most vulnerable have borne the brunt of a "triple shock"—the pandemic itself, the economic fallout from the containment measures, and the ensuing global recession. Amidst collapsing tourism and weakened exports, hunger grows, and access to jobs, technology and education shrinks. The Asian Development Bank now projects that the coronavirus could push 160 million more into poverty across Asia. The region's poverty rate will increase for the first time in 20 years, adds the World Bank.

And so sadly, it is Asia's rapidly growing class of the "new Covid poor" who receive the depressing distinction of having the worst year in Asia.

**Bad year: WHO and Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**

It should have been a year for the World Health Organization (WHO) to shine. Instead, the specialised UN health agency and its beleaguered director general, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus of Ethiopia, found themselves in a no-win situation, facing accusations of not holding China accountable for its less than transparent handling of the coronavirus.

Hidebound by the rules of bureaucracy and diplomacy, the WHO could say little as China delayed release of information, allowed millions to travel from Wuhan during the Chinese New Year period, and cracked down on citizen journalists and whistleblowers. In February, Chinese doctor Li Wenliang himself died from Covid-19 after seeking to warn others of a mysterious SARS-like virus early on.

President Trump said the US—the WHO's largest donor—would leave the organisation, alleging that Ghebreyesus and the WHO were beholden to China. A turnaround could be at hand with a new US administration, but it's been a decidedly bad year for WHO and Ghebreyesus.



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (left) and Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.



PHOTOS: AFP, REUTERS

**Mixed-year: Xi Jinping and the Belt and Road Initiative**

China President Xi Jinping's successes at home so far in crushing Covid-19 and dissent in Hong Kong were tempered by growing pushback abroad in 2020 against his much touted Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

This grand "One Belt One Road" infrastructure scheme—launched in 2013 to connect some 70 countries, including Bangladesh, with a "new Silk Road" of Chinese-financed ports, railways and highways, and other projects—ran into growing pushback amidst Covid-19 slowdowns and worries about debt owed to China. This was underscored at year-end as Australia approved new laws that would give Prime Minister Scott Morrison powers to veto or scrap agreements that state governments reach with foreign countries, including a BRI project in the state of Victoria.

A 2020 Pew Research survey fielded in 14 countries including Australia, the US and several Asian and European nations revealed that attitudes toward Xi and China have now reached

new lows. Seventy-eight percent of respondents stated that they had little or no confidence Xi would do the right thing in global affairs, up from 61 percent in 2019. The year 2020 was a decidedly mixed year for Xi despite, or perhaps because of, the reality of China's engagement abroad—from conflict on the Himalayan border with India to trade tensions and disputes over the Mekong River and the South China Sea.

**Good year: Asia's e-commerce giants**

The United States might have Amazon and eBay. And Bangladesh's consumers know Alibaba platforms, but a diversity of Asia's e-commerce giants also found 2020 to be an emphatically good year.

E-commerce in Asia was already on the rise well before Covid-19. Golek of Indonesia and Grab of Singapore have long had well established digital payment platforms. And with the pandemic, the pace of adoption has quickened as lockdowns drove more consumers online. Statista, a Germany-based provider of market and consumer data, projected e-commerce revenues to reach two billion dollars this year in

Bangladesh, and three billion dollars by 2023.

And a report from Google, Temasek Holdings and Bain and Company projects e-commerce in Southeast Asia to exceed USD 100 billion by 2025, up from USD 38 billion in 2019. All this is good news across Asia for e-commerce platforms such as Lazada, Taobao, Shopee, Shopify, Bukalapak and Sendo. Importantly, 2020 might also herald many a good year ahead as consumers build on new digital habits, from fintech to telemedicine.

**Great year: Tsai Ing-wen and Jacinda Ardern**

Both women won landslide reelections this year, but that's not all that Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern have in common. These two leaders led charges against Covid-19, instituting strict lockdown measures that prevented community transmission in their countries while also avoiding the draconian practices adopted by China.

In late-December, Taiwan with a population of about 24 million had reported just 780 cases and seven deaths. New Zealand with a population of about five million had recorded about 2,125 cases and 25 deaths. Ardern has also remained unruffled during a live telecast in the midst of an earthquake, and continues to lead her nation forward amidst enduring climate change and terrorism worries.

And when it comes to economic numbers, Tsai and the people and businesses of Taiwan may well be a role model for all. By mid-December, Taiwan's 2020 economic growth looked to outpace much of Asia's, including that of mainland China—the world's second largest economy—for the first time in decades.

So, in this most difficult of years, the "Best Year in Asia" goes to a dynamic duo of decisive female leaders who are showing the way to a better year ahead.

Curtis S Chin, a former US ambassador to the Asian Development Bank, is managing director of advisory firm RiverPeak Group, LLC. Jose B Collazo is a Southeast Asia analyst and project consultant at RiverPeak Group. Their Twitter handles are @curtisschin and @josebcollazo.

*The diversity of victims of the coronavirus' economic impact has ranged from seafood workers from Myanmar in Thailand's seafood industry, to medical glove factory workers from Nepal and Bangladesh in Malaysia. The World Bank reports that Asia's most vulnerable have borne the brunt of a "triple shock"—the pandemic itself, the economic fallout from the containment measures, and the ensuing global recession.*

who was up and who was down in Asia in 2020? Here's our annual assessment.

**Worst year: Asia's poorest**

As in too many places, it is the poorest and most vulnerable in Asia who have been hit hardest by Covid-19. Across the Indo-Pacific, migrant workers in particular have suffered the consequences of economic lockdowns. The diversity of victims

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47			

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

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

**BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER**

**BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT**

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**ELIE WIESEL**  
(1928-2016)  
American author.

*There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.*

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



## Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 12

promotion and development of relations and understanding between the two countries in the spheres of culture, art, education and science and technology.

### CABINET MEETS

A cabinet meeting is held today with Bangabandhu in the chair. The cabinet discusses various pressing issues of the country, including the food situation and the post-war reconstruction effort.

**FOOD SITUATION DISCUSSED** Bangabandhu and the UNROD Chief Umbricht today have a discussion on agriculture and the food situation in Bangladesh. The UN secretary general's future appeal for help to Bangladesh in the field of food grains and various services are also discussed. The UNROD chief says Bangladesh would need help in various services such as repairing irrigation pumps for paddy fields and in fertiliser and pesticide industries. There is also scope for gearing up the shipyard, he adds.

### BHASHANI WILL LEAD

#### DEPUTATION TO BANGABANDHU

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, president of Bangladesh National Awami Party, will soon lead a delegation of the leaders of the newly-formed seven-party committee of action to Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to discuss a 15-point charter of demands of the committee.

Source: December 31, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Bangladesh Observer and Ittefaq.

## BGB shoots

FROM PAGE 12

the spot around 4:15am, the OC added.

On information, he said, police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police recovered the victim's Indian national ID card, 260 pieces of yaba tablets, 12 bottles of wine and two sharp cutters from the spot.

Lt Col Tauhid Mahmud, commanding officer of 39th BGB Battalion, Mymensingh, confirmed the incident.

Meanwhile, a flag meeting was held at No Man's Land near Gubrakura Land Port in Haluaghat upazila of Mymensingh this afternoon regarding the killing.

A 15-member delegation led by Col KN Tripathi, commandant of 55th Border Security Force (BSF) Battalion, joined the meeting while Commanding officer of BGB-39 Battalion, Mymensingh Lt Col Tauhid Mahmud led a delegation of the same for Bangladesh side, said Lt Col Tauhid Mahmud.

In 35-minute meeting, both the sides agreed to combat terrorist groups in the borders of Bangladesh and India and hoped to work in friendly atmosphere, said the official.

The body will be handed over after completing all legal procedures, the official informed.

## Mercury may

FROM PAGE 12

recorded at 7.3 degrees Celsius in Chudanga and Sreemangal.

A weather bulletin yesterday said, "Mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Khulna division and the regions of Madaripur, Gopalganj, Sreemangal, Rajshahi, Ishwardi, Badalgachhi, Dinajpur, Tentulia, Rajarhat, Barishal and Khepupara."

"It may continue at some places," said the bulletin of Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

The 24-hour weather bulletin was released at 6:00pm yesterday.

"Weather may remain dry over the country. Moderate to thick fog may occur at places over the river basins of the country and light to moderate fog may occur elsewhere over the country," the bulletin added.

"Night and day temperatures may remain nearly unchanged over the country," it said.

The weather may see little change in the next 72 hours, the bulletin added.

## AL-backed

FROM PAGE 12

Fakrul Islam Alamgir yesterday rejected the election result, saying that no election can ever be fair under this government and the Election Commission.

He was talking to reporters over the elections at his residence at Kalibari of Thakurgaon yesterday.

He alleged that if 10 voters cast their votes pressing button of the EVM, eight will automatically go for boat, the electoral symbol of the Awami League while two will go for paddy sheaves, BNP's electoral symbol.

The machine will work the way the programme will be fixed, he said, adding, "I'm not saying anything ridiculous, that's true."

He said they have only one proposal which is the formation of people's government.

"We want a neutral government during election, we want a neutral election commission. We also want to restore ballot system instead of EVM as our people are yet to understand about EVM," he added.



People remove debris outside a damaged restaurant on the waterfront of Naples, after a powerful storm hit the city overnight, in Naples, Italy yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## People reaping benefits of democracy: PM

FROM PAGE 12

enabling Bangladesh to fulfil all the criteria to emerge as a developing country. "But coronavirus stalled everything."

The PM said when the entire world got stalled completely, Bangladesh had been able to carry on its economic advancement -- at least on a limited scale. "Maybe we couldn't achieve the fixed goals."

Hasina said the GDP target for

Bangladesh was 8.2 percent for the last fiscal year, but there was a pandemic across the world and the global economy had come to a standstill. "As in the global village, Bangladesh also faced some problems."

The PM went on, saying, "Taking risks, all are working in their respective fields. As a result, we've been able to maintain the pace of advancement."

She expressed her gratitude to the people of the country for electing her

government for the third consecutive time and for that it has been able to take long-term development plans for the country.

Hasina said the government has taken up five-year plans, Vision 2021 and Vision 2041, apart from Delta Plan 2000.

"To execute these visions and plans what we need is the five-year plans. We've implemented the 6th and 7th five-year plans, we're undertaking the 8th Five-Year Plan today [yesterday],

we'll take ahead the development phase by phase for the Vision 2041," she said.

By the time, she mentioned that the government will need to implement more five-year plans.

"We'll be able to build Bangladesh as a developed and prosperous country if future governments, no matter whether we'll be there in power, formulate these five-year plans," she said.

## SSC in June, HSC in July-August

FROM PAGE 1

The SSC candidates will be informed about the curtailed syllabus by January 15 and the HSC candidates by January 31.

Talking to The Daily Star, NCTB Chairman Prof Narayan Chandra Saha said as per the directive, they will start preparing the syllabuses as soon as possible.

"We will give priority to the minimum basic competence of students for their next level of education. We will hold discussions with teachers, experts and others."

Dipu Moni said they are planning to bring the class-10 and class-12 students, who will sit for next year's exams, back to schools and colleges.

Classes for SSC candidates will be held from February to April and for HSC students from February to May.

All educational institutions have remained closed since March 17 due to the Covid pandemic. The closure has been extended till January 16.

Around 20 lakh students are expected to sit for next year's SSC and equivalent

exams and 13 lakh students for the HSC and equivalent exams.

Expressing satisfaction over the government plan, one of the SSC candidates, Rezwan Rahman from Jashore, said, "If the exams were held in February, I would not have been able to make proper preparation for the exams. But now I will get some more time and more classes."

Shariful Islam, guardian of an HSC candidate in the capital's Mirpur, said the government should prepare the syllabus in such a way that students can learn enough to do well in university admission tests and also in the next level of education.

**HSC RESULTS** This year's HSC, Primary Education Completion, Junior School Certificate and their equivalent exams were cancelled due to the pandemic.

HSC candidates will be evaluated this year based on their results in the JSC and SSC tests.

Yesterday, Dipu Moni said they have completed all preparations for

announcing the HSC results based on the evaluation.

"There is a law regarding publication of public examination results. An ordinance has to be issued to publish the results under special circumstances."

She hoped that the ordinance will be issued by the first week of next month and the results will be published immediately after that.

Prof Shahedul Khabir Chowdhury, director (admin) at the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, told this newspaper that the education boards hold public exams and publish results in line with the Intermediate and Secondary Education Ordinance, 1961.

**TEXTBOOK DISTRIBUTION** All primary and secondary students will get new textbooks free of cost by January 15, said the education minister. As in the previous years, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the textbook distribution on December 31.

But because of the pandemic, the government will not hold the Textbook

Festival on January 1 when textbooks are handed over to primary and secondary students free of cost every year, she added.

This time, new textbooks will be distributed among the secondary students at their schools in 12 days. They have to show up at the schools to collect those.

The book distribution method will be a bit different for primary students.

State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Zakir Hossain said the guardians of primary students will need to go to schools to collect the new textbooks for their children.

"We will not hand over the new textbooks to the primary students, keeping in mind the Covid situation."

He said a primary school with less than 200 students must distribute the textbooks in a day, while one with more than 200 students will get three days to distribute those.

The NCTB chairman said 34.36 crore textbooks will be distributed among 4.16 crore students across the country.

## Court orders ACC to seize PK Halder's flats, land

FROM PAGE 12

Earlier, the High Court ordered the ACC to submit the progress report of the investigation into the money laundering case against PK Halder and the steps taken for arresting him and bringing him back by January 3 next year.

PK Halder is the former managing director of NRB Global Bank and Reliance Finance.

The court also allowed Uzzal Kumar Nandi, a former colleague of PK Halder, and Halder's cousin

Amitabh Adhikary to submit their statements before this court by January 3 in connection with the allegations against them of assisting PK Halder in embezzling a huge amount of public money.

Earlier, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told the HC bench that the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka on November 25 issued an arrest warrant for PK Halder following an application from the ACC and that the court sent the order of arrest warrant to the Interpol through the home

ministry to arrest him.

The lawyer added that the authorities concerned confiscated 53 bank accounts and immovable properties worth Tk 43 crore of PK Halder.

According to Canadian media reports, PK Halder is now staying in Toronto. He is director of P&L Hal Holding Inc, a Canadian corporation.

In an investigation, the central bank found that Tk 1,596 crore was transferred from International Leasing and Financial Services (ILFSL) in

violation of the rules through 48 accounts of various organisations related to the directors and shareholders of the firm, according to Bangladesh Bank officials.

PK Halder came to the limelight during the anti-casino drives last year.

The ACC opened investigation into the involvement of 43 people, including PK Halder, in the illegal casino business.

The government issued a travel ban on him on October 3 last year. But he managed to flee the country.

## Mourning swan

FROM PAGE 12

Its companion then sat beside the body in mourning, resisting attempts by officials to lure it away and temporarily closing the line to traffic.

Firefighters with special equipment were later called in and managed to lift the dead swan and its surviving companion away from the area.

Twenty-three trains were delayed for about 50 minutes while the rescue operation took place, the police statement said.

The surviving swan was unharmed and later released onto the river Fulda, it added.

According to Britain's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, swans try to find a mate for life.

## 50 journalists

FROM PAGE 12

channel that rallied regime opponents, and who was executed in December.

His execution "confirms Iran's record as a country that has officially put the most journalists to death in the past half-century," it said.

### COVID WHISTLEBLOWERS

Ades-Mével said RSF had also noted the "developing" trend of violence against media workers covering protests, notably in the United States following the killing of George Floyd, and in France against a controversial new security law.

The total number of journalists killed in 2020 was lower than the 53 reported in 2019, although RSF said fewer journalists worked in the field this year because of the pandemic.

In the first part of the report, published this month, RSF said it was concerned that measures imposed by governments to fight the pandemic had contributed to a "significant peak in violations of press freedom".

It listed 387 jailed journalists, which it called "a historically high number".

Fourteen of those had been arrested in connection with their coverage of the coronavirus crisis, it said.

On Monday Chinese citizen journalist Zhang Zhan, who sent dispatches from Wuhan during the chaotic initial stages of the outbreak, was jailed for four years for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble".

Chinese authorities have punished eight virus whistleblowers so far as they curb criticism of the government's response to the outbreak.

## First ship docks

FROM PAGE 12

of 18-meter. The ship entered into the channel from the Bay of Bengal.

The idea of the deep-sea port in Matarbari was conceived after the government started a coal-based power plant project in the area, as a wider channel and a port would be required to bring in the fuel for the plant.

The deep-sea port project worth Tk 17,777 crore got the approval from the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) on March 10.

Export and import activities have increased significantly in recent years, so the country needs a deep-sea port to support the growing international trade and the economy, Planning Minister MA Mannan told journalists after the meeting on that day.

Officials concerned said the project is expected to be completed by 2025 to 2026.

Once it is completed, Matarbari will be the fourth port in Bangladesh. The Matarbari port will help the country handle rising volumes of exports and imports and ease the pressure on the Chattogram port, said officials concerned.

Under the project, a 26.7-kilometre approach road will be constructed. The approach road will be an elevated expressway.

Talking to journalists yesterday, Captain Ataul Siddique, assistant harbor master of Chattogram Port Authority, said, "It has now been proved that vessels can be moved through this channel and anchored in this jetty. The depth and width of this channel will be enlarged gradually. Now, maximum 320-meter long vessel can move through this channel."

## EU demands China release citizen journalist Zhang Zhan

AFP, Brussels

The European Union yesterday demanded that China release citizen journalist Zhang Zhan and several other jailed reporters, lawyers and human rights champions.

The EU statement was issued just ahead of Brussels signing a major investment pact with Beijing, despite concerns about China's labour and civil rights record.

Zhang was jailed on Monday for four years over allegations of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" during her coverage of the early stages of the Covid-19 outbreak in epicentre Wuhan, her lawyer said.

"Prior to her detention, Ms Zhang Zhan had been reporting about the coronavirus pandemic in Wuhan," EU foreign policy spokesman Peter Stano said in a statement.



A woman receives an injection during the first trial phase of a locally-made Iranian vaccine for Covid-19 coronavirus disease in Iran's capital Tehran yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



## Shakib's decade of excellence

MAZHAR UDDIN

Unlike individual sports like tennis, golf, or even racing, cricket is a team sport which requires a collective approach to win matches on most occasions, if not all.

But even in cricket, there are some players whose consistent excellence have reached such heights that they regularly help their sides win matches almost single-handedly -- or as single-handedly as possible in a team sport.

Over the last decade, Bangladesh have made big strides in international cricket, especially in the fifty-over format in which the Tigers have established themselves as a force to reckon with.

And there is one particular cricketer who has lifted himself to a world-class standard over the last 10 years or so consistently for



Bangladesh and he is none other than Shakib Al Hasan. His impact both as a cricketer and also as a global figure from Bangladesh is something no sportsman of the country has achieved.

Shakib has taken himself and Bangladesh cricket to the next level by performing brilliantly and helping win matches on bigger stages. That was no easy task for someone playing for a side that -- especially when Shakib started his journey to consistently being at the top of the all-rounders' rankings -- was inexperienced compared to other top cricketing nations.

More importantly, Shakib remained consistent with his performances with both bat and ball.

Once again, his contributions were recognised by the governing body of world cricket after the ICC announced the teams of the decade in all three formats recently. Shakib was the only Bangladeshi in the ICC's teams as the champion all-rounder was named in the Men's ODI team of the decade.

His teammates are luminaries such as MS Dhoni, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, David Warner, Ben

Stokes, or AB de Villiers. For many in the country, with memories of humiliations past still fresh in the mind, this may seem like high prestige, but it is to Shakib's immense credit that his place in rarefied company is not surprising. Such has been his impact for Bangladesh over a sustained period -- while his stats hold up to scrutiny even when seen in isolation -- that it is natural that he is rubbing shoulders with the sport's greats.

An intangible impact of his exploits is that he enabled other Bangladeshis to believe that it is possible to conquer the world if you have the focus and determination.

His rise is not a surprise for those who know Shakib well. The ace all-rounder hardly shows any emotions, regardless of whether he is at the highest or lowest point of his career, and that sets him apart.

Shakib perhaps has seen it all in his career. In the space of just six months, he put in the greatest all-rounder performance in World Cup history by scoring 606 runs and picking up 11 wickets, and then was suspended for a year after being found guilty of failing to report corrupt approaches from a bookie.

But even the darkest phase of his career was not able to overshadow the glow of his achievements over a stellar career. The latest recognition was the selection in the team of the decade, and be it for positive things or negative, Shakib remains the one Bangladeshi player at the centre of everyone's attention.



Australia players congratulate Ajinkya Rahane (C), who led India from the front to a dominant eight-wicket win in Melbourne yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## 'One of the great comebacks'

AGENCIES



India coach Ravi Shastri hailed his team's eight-wicket win over Australia on Tuesday as one of the great comebacks of all time, praising their character after a crushing loss in the first Test last week.

Despite missing superstar Virat Kohli, the Indians outplayed the hosts in Melbourne to silence their critics after being dismissed for 36 in Adelaide on their way to an eight-wicket defeat. The four-Test series is level at 1-1.

"I think this will go down in the annals of Indian cricket, world cricket, as one of the great comebacks in the history of the

game away from us in Adelaide, but we still have a lot to learn," Rahane said in the post-match presentation.

Australia captain Tim Paine said: "We are very disappointed, we played pretty poor cricket, pretty sloppy cricket, for the majority of the match." "That's to take nothing away from India; they put us under pressure and forced us into making a number of mistakes, especially with the bat, and in the field, and when you do that against good side it makes it very hard to win."

"You've got to give the Indian attack credit, they've bowled beautifully to us, there's no doubt about that," Paine told the host broadcaster after the match.

Meanwhile, Sydney will remain the

## SA complete innings victory

AGENCIES

Seam bowlers Wiaan Mulder and Lutho Sipamla took two wickets each as South Africa bowled injury-hit Sri Lanka out for 180 to complete a handsome victory by an innings and 45 runs on day four of the first Test at Centurion Park yesterday.

The tourists resumed their second innings on 65 for two on a wicket that provided plenty of assistance for the seam bowlers and when dangerous opener Kusal Perera was out for 64, their hopes of saving the Test were realistically over.

"A Test match is never easy. It's been a year since we've won one so it feels good at this moment," said South Africa captain Quinton de Kock.

Faf du Plessis was adjudged man of the match. "Personally I'm very proud of my CV, which is 199, which unfortunately one short, but it's always good to contribute in a big way to set your team up for a win... I haven't played a red-ball game in almost a year. For me it was just making sure I get back to the basics of Test cricket," said Faf.

## Saif SC, Baridhara through

SPORTS REPORTER



Title contenders Saif SC edged past Arambagh KS with a single-goal win to advance into the quarterfinals of Walton Federation Cup in their final group-stage match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

With their third successive win, Saif SC emerged champions of Group B. Meanwhile, Uttar Baridhara thrashed Brothers Union 3-0 in the day's first game to finish second in the same group, clearing group stages of any tournament for the first time.

Having won the first two matches, Saif SC's Belgian coach Paul Put rested five regular players. But despite that move, Saif SC never seemed to be in trouble against Arambagh, who had to win the contest in order to qualify. Saif SC came close to breaking the deadlock on a few occasions in the first half while Arambagh could make just one mentionable attacking move. Saif SC's altered forward line-up failed to hit the target until Arifur Rahman came from the bench to score with his first touch in the 57th minute from the left flank, thanks to a deflection off a defender inside the danger area.

And that single goal was good enough for Saif SC as well as Uttar Baridhara Club, who, despite winning their match against Brothers



Saif Sporting Club's forward Arifur Rahman (2nd from R) celebrates the all-important goal against Arambagh in yesterday's Federation Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

earlier, would not have qualified to the knockout stages had Arambagh won.

Uttar Baridhara Club started from where they had left off against Arambagh in their previous game as they took only 13 minutes to take the lead against Brothers. The Gopibagh-based outfit let three past them on the day as they crashed out of the Federation Cup, losing all three of their group-stage encounters and conceding as many as 11 goals.

Uttar Baridhara could have taken the lead sooner had national striker Suman Reza not missed a sitter from inside the six-yard box before Uzbek midfielder Evgeniy Kochnev

put them ahead in the 13th minute following a fumble from a Brothers defender.

Suman made amends later as he doubled their lead in the 26th minute, making most of a through-pass from Egyptian forward Abdel Khalek Hammad.

Suman, however, squandered another opportunity in the 32nd minute.

Egyptian defender Abdel Rahim wrapped up the victory for Uttar Baridhara in the 59th minute with a brilliant placing shot in between two defenders after he chested down a cross from Abdel Khalek Hammad from the right flank.

## John Reid passes away

AGENCIES

John Fulton Reid, one of New Zealand's finest test batsmen, has died of cancer aged 64. The left-hander scored 1296 runs at an average of 46.28 from 19 Tests between 1979 and 1986, second behind Kane Williamson among compatriots to play more than 20 innings.

The pinnacle of his playing career arguably came in November 1985 during New Zealand's innings-and-41-run victory against Australia at the pace 'Gabba. Reid and Martin Crowe combined for a then-record 224-run third-wicket stand which helped their side to 553 for seven declared. Sir Richard Hadlee did the rest with 15 wickets for 123.

Reid was technically adept at the crease, and exuded particular elegance against spin.



### SOUTHEE JOINS 300 CLUB

Swing king Tim Southee became the third New Zealander to reach 300 Test wickets as the Black Caps closed in on victory on the fourth day of the first cricket Test against Pakistan in Mount Maunganui. He sits behind only Sir Richard Hadlee (431) and Daniel Vettori (362) on New Zealand's all-time list. "It is special," Southee said. "Obviously not many people have been able to do it and the two that have are two of our greatest ever cricketers. It's nice to be in that bracket with those guys."

PHOTO: TWITTER

## 'Cavani is definitely a starter'

REUTERS

Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said striker Edinson Cavani is far too talented to be considered an impact substitute and the 33-year-old is likely to start more frequently as the Premier League season progresses.

Seven of Cavani's eight league appearances since he joined from Paris St Germain in October have come from the bench, though he has been in the starting lineup for several cup games.

"He's definitely a starter. You don't classify a player of that quality as anything else," Solskjaer told reporters. "We have plenty of starters. More than 11 and that's the thing when you're at United."

"We have good competition for places."

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## People reaping benefits of democracy: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the people of the country are now reaping the benefits of democracy as they got back their state power from the cantonment.



"Military dictators had grabbed the state power frequently in the past ... once the state power was in the cantonment ... As a result, there was no [required] pace in development," she said.

The PM said this while addressing the National Economic Council meeting virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

The meeting approved the 8th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025).

As the state power came back to the mass people, they are now enjoying their democratic rights fully, Hasina said.

"General people are getting the benefits ... rural people are getting the benefits ... that's the main thing," she said.

Hasina said she believes that the 8th Five-Year Plan will be very much effective in attaining the country's desired development.

In this connection, she mentioned that the government is implementing the UN-formulated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "But coronavirus has created a problem, this is not for us alone, it's for the whole world."

Hasina said the government has been able to reduce the poverty rate significantly, while the GDP has been great.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



The waste from homes and unauthorised and authorised factories in and around the capital pollutes the Buriganga river. The water of the river has become so dirty that it has turned black. The photo was taken from Basila Bridge around 1:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Court orders ACC to seize PK Halder's flats, land

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to confiscate two flats and six acres of immovable properties of Proshanta Kumar Halder alias PK Halder in a money laundering case.

The flats are located in the capital's Dhanmondi area and properties are at Rugganj in Narayanganj, ACC Public Prosecutor Mahmud Hossain Jahangir confirmed to The Daily Star.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after ACC Deputy Director Mohammad Salahuddin, who is also the investigation officer of the case, submitted an application.

On January 8 this year, the anti-graft body filed a case against PK Halder on charges of illegally amassing wealth worth Tk 275 crore and money laundering.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

## First ship docks in Matarbari Deep-sea Port

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The first ship has moored at the deep-sea port in Matarbari in Cox's Bazar.

The foreign ship reached the Matarbari Deep-sea Port as the authority conducted an experimental capacity test of the newly built port.

Loaded with steam generator parts, the Panama flag carrier "Venus Triumph" docked around 10:20am, sailing off from Indonesia's Pt. Pelabuhan Cilegon Mandiri port on December 22.

These apparatuses will be used for the coal-based power plant in that area, Mohammad Abul Kalam, director of state-owned Coal Power Generation Company Bangladesh (CPGCBL), said.

The CPGCBL is implementing the coal-based power plant project in Matarbari.

The ship reached Matarbari early in the morning yesterday. Later around 10:20am, the vessel was brought to the temporary jetty of the power plant.

The ship is owned by Sea Shore Marine Private Limited, while Ancient Steamship Company Limited is working agent in Bangladesh.

With the aim to navigate the ship, the CPGCBL created a 14-kilometer channel with the width of 250 meter and depth

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

### Bangabandhu-Umbricht meeting



Kashmiri Ministers Golam Rasulkar and Mufti Mohammad Sayeed call on Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Gono Bhaban on December 30, 1972.

December 30, 1972  
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN



KASHMIRI MINISTERS CALL ON PM Golam Rasulkar and Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, minister for supplies and minister for public works respectively, of the Indian State of Kashmir who are now on a private visit to Bangladesh call on Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today. They share that they are happy to see democratic institutions functioning in Bangladesh. They also express their satisfaction at Bangladesh's secular journey.

#### INDO-BANGLADESH CULTURAL ACCORD SIGNED

A cultural cooperation agreement is signed between Bangladesh and India in Dhaka today. The agreement provides for the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## MUNICIPALITIES POLLS

### AL-backed runners win 18 out of 24

STAR REPORT

The ruling Awami League-nominated candidates achieved victory in 18 municipalities out of 24 while their arch-rival BNP-nominated candidates won in two municipalities and independent candidates in three.

BNP candidates won in Rajshahi's Putia and Habiganj's Shayesthaganj municipalities whereas independent candidates won in Dinajpur's Phulbari, Patuakhali's Kuakata and Thakurgaon's Pirganj municipalities.

Result of another municipality -- Khulna's Chalna -- was withheld as BNP backed candidate died during the polling.

The first phase election of municipalities was held on Monday in 24 municipalities.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Mourning swan holds up 23 German trains



AFP, Berlin

A swan mourning the death of its companion on a German railway track held up 23 trains for almost an hour and had to be removed by firefighters using special equipment, police said.

The two birds had strayed onto the track area of the high-speed line between Kassel and Gottingen in central Germany "during an excursion", according to Kassel police.

One of the birds died, likely after getting caught in the overhead power cables, said the statement on the December 23 incident, which was made public Monday.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## BGB shoots Indian man dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An Indian "smuggler" was shot dead by the members of Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) in Mymensingh's Halaughat upazila early yesterday, said BGB.

The man was identified as Thedian Momin, 45, of India's South Garo Hills, said police.

Mahmudul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Halaughat Police Station, said a group of eight smugglers intruded into the upazila's Suryapur Dumnikura area at midnight.

Sensing their presence, a BGB patrol team of Suryapur Camp started chasing them. While fleeing, one of the smugglers threw a sharp cutter to BGB members. One of them was injured.

In retaliation, BGB opened fire on them. One of the "smugglers" sustained bullet wounds and died on

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Mercury may start to drop from Friday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People will not get immediate respite from the bone-chilling cold as the country may not see any major improvement in weather conditions in the coming days.

Temperature may slightly rise in some areas today and tomorrow. But it may start falling again from Friday, said Ruhul Quddus, a meteorologist.

"A similar situation may continue till the next one or two weeks. Cold weather may even prevail throughout January," he told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

Meanwhile, yesterday's lowest temperature was

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



### PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 30

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:27 7:00  
JAMAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:30 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A car and an autorickshaw are parked on the bicycle lane on Manik Mia Avenue and a cyclist has to go around them. The authorities are struggling to free the reserved lane for cyclists. The photo was taken a few hours after a mobile court conducted a drive there to keep the lanes free yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## 50 journalists killed in 2020

Says RSF, highlights murders in India, Pakistan, Mexico

AFP, Paris

Fifty journalists and media workers were killed in connection with their work in 2020, the majority in countries that are not at war, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said yesterday.

The figure shows an increase in the targeting of reporters investigating organised crime, corruption or environmental issues, the watchdog said.

It highlighted murders in Mexico, India and Pakistan.

Eighty-four percent of those killed this year were "deliberately targeted" for their work, RSF said in its annual report, compared to 63 percent in 2019.

"For several years now, Reporters Without Borders has noted that investigative journalists are really in the crosshairs of states, or cartels," said Pauline Ades-Mevel, RSF editor-in-chief.

Mexico was the deadliest country, with eight killed. "Links between drug traffickers and politicians remain, and journalists who dare to cover these or related issues continue to be the targets of barbaric murders," said the report.

None of the Mexico killings had yet been punished, added RSF, which has compiled annual data on violence against journalists around the globe since 1995.

Five journalists were killed in war-torn Afghanistan, it said, noting an increase in targeted attacks on media workers in recent months even as peace talks between the government and Taliban are ongoing.

RSF also highlighted the case of Iranian opposition figure Ruhollah Zam, who ran a popular social media

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6