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JAMADILUL AWAL 15, 1442 HIRI

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Exhausted, Muhammad Ali resting his face on his palms after waiting for over three hours to get tested for coronavirus at Mugda Medical College and Hospital yesterday. The 55-year-old has been suffering from a cold and fever for a month and travelled to the capital from his village in Rajshahi for treatment.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Govt plans to import 10 lakh tonnes of rice

Proposal for importing 50,000 tonnes from Indian firm okayed

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and
TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government will import at least 10 lakh tonnes of rice from different countries to boost the food grain reserve amid growing concerns over the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The decision came at a time when prices of the staple keep soaring in both retail and wholesale markets and the food grain reserve has dwindled to seven lakh tonnes, almost half of the reserve in the same time last year.

Food Secretary Nazmanara Khanum said the country does not have much shortage of rice against demand.

"But we have decided to increase rice import at government level,

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Graft rules forest dept

61pc of project funds misappropriated: TIB report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As much as 61 percent of the funds for different forest department projects gets embezzled, according to a Transparency International Bangladesh report.

Besides, at least Tk 3 crore changed hands in 60 offices of the department for appointment, promotion, and transfer of officials, the report said.

TIB released "Forest Department:

Governance Challenges and Way Forward" at a virtual press conference yesterday.

While disbursing project funds to the range office, divisional forest offices illegally kept 20 to 25 percent of the money. The embezzled money was divided among forest survey team members, conservators of forests and their assistants, auditors, grievance redress team members, and a section of local journalists, it said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

COVID VACCINATION

Stay alert to anomalies

Health watchdog asks govt as it sits after 9 months

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary body yesterday directed the health ministry to ensure that no irregularities and corruption take place centring the Covid-19, like those of Regent Hospital and JKG healthcare over testing.

This was for the first time that the parliamentary standing committee on the health ministry sat in a meeting since March.

It also asked the ministry to coordinate with the civil aviation ministry and take measures to temporarily suspend air communication with the UK following the outbreak of a new strain of Covid-19 there.

Ruling Awami League MP Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, who is the chairman of the parliamentary watchdog, presided over the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"In our last meeting held in March, we discussed many things on the preparation of Covid-19, procurement of masks and other health equipment for healthcare workers. But after the pandemic began, we

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

2020: THE YEAR OF PANDEMIC

HEALTHCARE DURING OUTBREAK

Vulnerability EXPOSED

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

"Today we are unable to say what we had been saying until now. We have found three patients..."

These were the words of the then IEDCR director Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora on March 8 after the first detection of coronavirus cases in Bangladesh, which changed everything, most probably forever.

Since then, Covid-19 infections multiplied, the number of deaths increased with every passing day and more importantly, the pandemic laid bare the vulnerability of the country's healthcare system.

Uncertainty, lax coordination, disparity in providing health services, corruption and a dearth of logistics and manpower spoke volumes of a weak health sector and its weaker institutions in tackling an unprecedented health emergency that marked the year 2020.

"The main feature of the Covid-19 emergency is that it has exposed the faulty healthcare system of the country," Prof Ridwanur Rahman, a medicine and infectious disease specialist, told The Daily Star.

First detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan late in December 2019, Covid-19 has so far claimed around 18 million lives globally, including 7,531 in Bangladesh.

A year after its emergence, the pandemic, which has devastated lives and livelihoods across the globe and forced countries to pour billions of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Britain first to approve Oxford vaccine

Nod in India expected by next week

AGENCIES

Britain yesterday became the first country in the world to approve a coronavirus vaccine developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca, hoping that rapid action would help it stem a surge of infections driven by a highly contagious variant of the virus.

Boris Johnson's government, which has already ordered 100 million doses of the vaccine, said it had accepted a recommendation from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to grant emergency authorisation.

The approval is a vindication for a shot

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

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BANGLADESH
UPDATE



1,235
New cases in 24hrs



5,12,496
Total cases



7,531
Deaths



4,56,070
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,804,612
Deaths



82,712,325
Total cases

UNIFORM ADMISSION TEST

4 engineering univs to hold one exam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four public engineering universities have decided in principle to form a cluster and hold a uniform admission test.

But opinion seems to be divided on when and where the exam would be held.

Top officials of universities at a virtual meeting with the University Grants Commission (UGC) yesterday said the academic councils at their respective universities had agreed to join the uniform admission test titled “Central Admission Test”.

Representatives of the UGC, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), Chattogram University of Engineering and Technology, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology and Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, attended the meeting.

After the meeting, a vice chancellor told The Daily Star that Buet authorities proposed that their representative would always be chairman of the admission committee and the exams be held at Buet only.

But officials from the three other universities said that representatives of the four universities should take turns to be the chairman and that exams should be held at each of the universities.

The UGC released a statement after the meeting saying, “There is a difference of opinion on formation

of the admission test committee and exam centre.”

Contacted, UGC Member Muhammed Alamgir, who moderated the meeting, said, “We have asked the three universities to clearly state their opinion to the UGC, so that concrete decisions can be made regarding the formation of a cluster.”

Buet officials wrote to the UGC in November stating their interest in joining a cluster of engineering universities to hold the admission test.

Dhaka University, Rajshahi University, Jahangirnagar University and Chattogram University decided to opt out of the cluster.

On December 19, VCs of 19 public universities decided that there will be three exams under the new system -- one each for science, humanities and business studies students -- based on the curriculum of grade-XI and -XII.

The new method of university admission has been in discussion since 2010. It is aimed at relieving admission seekers of the hassles of travelling to different universities in various parts of the country just to be able to sit for the tests every admission season.

On January 23 this year, the UGC announced that universities would hold a uniform admission test in the 2020-2021 academic year.

Alamgir said seven agricultural universities will form a separate cluster to hold the uniform admission test.



A worker standing on the cab of a moving pickup while at least five others are sitting on the household items on its back. None of them seem to be bothered by the risks involved. The photo was taken in Kamalapur area in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO:
ANISUR RAHMAN

Vulnerability exposed

FROM PAGE 1

dollars, is still going strong.

Very recently, a new strain of the novel coronavirus believed to be “more transmissible” has emerged in the United Kingdom, forcing European countries to shut down borders and many other countries to suspend air communications with the UK.

When the pandemic hit the country in March, a widespread shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and substandard PPE came to light.

This caused loss of confidence among frontline healthcare professionals. Besides, around a dozen doctors were issued show-cause notices for writing about the substandard PPEs on their social media accounts.

“At the beginning, [the government] tried to keep the issue of fake [substandard] PPE secret.... there was no step to address it,” Prof Dr Ehteshamul Haque Chowdhury Dulal, general secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association, told The Daily Star.

He said 112 doctors have died of coronavirus, as of December 28.

“But the doctors and other healthcare professionals did not get due recognition despite their valiant efforts in fighting the pandemic.”

He said the casualty among the doctors was more due to the lack of a triage system in the hospitals for systematic prioritising of patients’ treatment according to how urgently they need care.

“The entire Covid-19 planning was driven by the bureaucrats and the chaos is mainly for that reason,” the BMA general secretary said.

He also lamented that family members of only one deceased doctor has been compensated so far.

INADEQUATE TESTING AND SCAMS
For a long time, since the Chinese virus started shaking the world, the government kept the testing facility limited to the IEDCR lab only. It was against the “test, test and test” policy suggested by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Hospitals also started refusing to treat even general patients without a Covid-19 negative certificate. It led to untold sufferings of people seeking medical attention and hundreds of such patients died without getting treatment.

Sixty-three-old Monowara Begum was one such patient who died in an ambulance on June 2 after six hospitals in Sylhet refused to treat her fearing she had Covid-19. Her tragic death made headlines.

Despite executive orders to treat each and every patient and a June 15 High Court ruling that said such deaths will be termed as “deaths due to negligence”, the situation did not change until testing was expanded across the country.

On March 29, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) announced the expansion of Covid-19 facilities and now there are 114 RT-PCR, 24 gene-expert, and 29 rapid antigen-based test labs across the country.

When the number of daily tests was rising, the health ministry surprisingly imposed fees for Covid-19 tests from June 29.

Quoting experts, the Lancet journal wrote on August 29 that the Bangladesh government’s approach to testing and surveillance, including charging patients a fee, is hampering the Covid-19 response.

“Since the beginning, the government’s strategy against Covid-19 was suicidal, Prof Ridwanur said. “From screening at the ports, and quarantine to testing and contact tracing -- all were

in name only.”

The number of daily tests has remained stagnant at around 12,000 despite all the labs having a combined capacity to run more than 30,000 tests a day, he added.

Then there were allegations of fake tests with around 40,000 fake Covid-19 certificates given out by Regent Hospitals Ltd and the GKG Ltd in early July.

Even after months went by, the government is yet to set up much-needed central oxygen supply systems in most district hospitals despite repeated call from the National Technical Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19.

“If there were uninterrupted oxygen supplies in hospitals, many lives could have been saved,” Prof Nazrul Islam, member of the NTAC, told The Daily Star.

Besides, uneven distribution of ICUs across the country remained a major concern in treating critical and elderly Covid-19 patients.

Parallel to lax management of public hospitals, the government had little control over private hospitals in case of treatment expenditure.

While experts see the government’s failure from different aspects, Prof Flora, now additional director general (Planning) of the DGHS, disagreed.

“The Covid-19 was an unknown challenge for the entire world. We had limitations. Despite this, the transmission had never spread widely. From nothing, we have now 167 Covid-19 testing labs. These are our big successes,” Prof Flora told The Daily Star on Monday.

THE CORRUPTION GAP

The government’s response to the coronavirus outbreak has been plagued by wrong decisions, delayed actions, and muddled thinking from the very first day even though it got three months’ time to take preparation.

Since the beginning, the health minister and his officials repeatedly said they were fully prepared to handle Covid-19 transmission, which, according to the experts, gave a “wrong message to the people.”

Health Minister Zahid Maleque on August 15 said the Covid-19 virus will leave the country on its own. “Whether the vaccine comes or not, coronavirus will leave the country.”

Before this, Minister of Road Transport and Bridges Obaidul Quader had gone as far as to say: “We are stronger than the corona.”

While these comments went viral on mainstream and social media and drew flak, a clear lack of coordination among government organisations everywhere also surfaced every day.

The authorities lagged behind in taking decisions like closing airports, sending returning expatriate workers to compulsory quarantine, and imposing a total shutdown.

Internal feuds among different government entities caused delays for the authorities in preparing the emergency response plan on Covid-19, say experts.

Initially, the IEDCR, the government’s disease control agency, was dealing with the pandemic, but then a feud between the high-ups of IEDCR and DGHS delayed the finalisation of the emergency response plan.

Then came the quarantine fiasco. More than two lakh people entered Bangladesh since March when the virus was spreading across the world, prompting countries to shut their borders.

But as the Bangladeshi expatriates started coming in, the government

allowed them to go home without putting them into mandatory quarantine.

After many countries resumed air communications, hundreds of thousands of expatriate workers fell into a dire situation having no testing certification support for them.

On March 23, the government announced a shutdown effective from March 26, but kept public transport running. As a result, tens of thousands of people left Dhaka having been exposed to the virus.

The government then extended the shutdown in phases, which had a substantial impact on the country’s economy.

For the first few months, cases were restricted to Dhaka and cities like Narayanganj and Gazipur. But there was no mechanism to control the exodus of the people leaving Dhaka city centring on Eid-ul-Azha in July-August.

This, according to experts, resulted in the spread of the virus across the country. Then came the influx of hundreds of thousands of garment workers returning to Dhaka with no safety guidelines followed.

“When China was struggling, the IEDCR said, ‘we are prepared.’ But they were not supposed to say it as a research organisation. In the middle [of 2020], the government got better prepared following pressure from the media and others,” Dr Ehteshamul said.

Prof Ridwanur said different organisations of the government did not work as a team while in Prof Flora’s view, “It was a new experience for them. But now they are well-prepared.”

Asked about any issue the government failed to address, Prof Flora said, “We have not been able to engage the community properly.”

THE CORRUPTION AND THE STEPS

In response to widespread criticism over corruption, the government removed some top officials from DGHS, including its director general Prof Dr Abul Kalam Azad.

“Removal of the DG was only an eyewash; no step was taken against others involved. Corruption involving hundreds of crores is not possible for the directorate only. We have seen the then secretary promoted,” Dr Ehteshamul said, adding, “The doctors have been kept under pressure on the other hand.”

The Covid-19 emergency has unfolded how futile the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Act 2018 is. The act gave the lead role to the DGHS boss; in reality, its exercise was impossible due to the existing administrative practice of the government.

Dr Abdul Hamid, a professor of health economics at Dhaka University told this correspondent, “We never analyse the root cause when the state takes steps against anything... Apparently we can see the same this time. That Sabrina, this Shahed -- no one is any de-linked person. They have forward and backward links. If we cannot find those links, we cannot be successful in eradicating corruption.”

In addition to the Tk 798 crore Covid-19-related expense fund, the health ministry has Tk 100 crore for Covid-19 related expenses in Covid-19 hospitals in Dhaka and across the country.

In FY2020-21, the government has a block allocation for the health sector worth Tk 10,000 crore.

Besides, there is \$500 million pledge from the World Bank, for which a direct purchase plan is awaiting Ecne approval. It will be used mainly for the cost of Covid-19 vaccination.

FEDERATION CUP FOOTBALL

Four former champions advance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The quarterfinal line-up for the Walton Federation Cup was completed yesterday, with four former champions advanced into the knockout stages after the final round of group-stage matches at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

11-time champions Abahani defeated three-time champions Muktijoddha Sangsad 2-1 to emerge as champions of Group D with six points from two outings. The win also saw their archrivals Mohammedan SC advance with three points as the runners up of the group.

Abahani took the momentum from a morale-boosting 3-0 win over Mohammedan into match against Muktijoddha Sangsad, dominating them throughout 90 minutes and winning 2-1. But the margin of victory would have been more emphatic had captain Nabib Newaj Jibon not squandered a couple of scoring opportunities.

Afghanistan defender Masih Saighani netted his second in as many games for Abahani, providing a 30-minute lead from a free-kick, before Jibon drove wide twice from close range. Saighani came close to doubling the lead but was well denied by goalkeeper Nurul Karim in stoppage time.

After resumption, Abahani pressed to widen the margin and Haiti’s Kerven Fils Belfort nodded home a corner from Jibon in the 69th minute. Muktijoddha Sangsad pulled one back through substitute Rahit Sarkar three minutes from time, but it proved to be only a consolation goal.

In the day’s second match, Sheikh Russel edged Sheikh Jamal 3-2 to emerge as Group A champions with six points. Sheikh Jamal, despite being equal on one point with Bangladesh Police, moved into the last eight from the same group by virtue of scoring more goals.

It took Sheikh Russel just six minutes to get the lead, a header from Tajik defender Siyovush Asrorov bulging the net before Nigeria’s Obi Moneke doubled the lead in the 39th minute.

After the break, Sheikh Jamal hit back through Solomon King, who converted a spot-kick in the 49th minute. But Sheikh Russel restored their two-goal cushion ten minutes later as substitute Tolkish tapped home. Sheikh Jamal were in danger of being eliminated from the tournament at that point, but King scored again from a penalty to better Bangladesh Police and ensure a quarterfinal berth for his side.

Quarterfinal Line-up:

- Dec 1: Sheikh Russel vs Chattogram Abahani
- Dec 2: Saif vs Mohammedan
- Dec 3: Bashundhara Kings vs Sheikh Jamal
- Dec 4: Abahani vs Uttar Baridhara

3 Jubo League men held for assaulting doctor, nurse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Police yesterday arrested three Jubo League activists in Nagarkanda upazila for assaulting a doctor, nurse and an office assistant during the ongoing measles-rubella vaccination programme.

Arrestees Alamin Mia, 45, Anwar Hossain, 47, and Rubel Mia, 38, are activists of the upazila unit Jubo League.

Sources said when a woman took her daughter for vaccination to the Nagarkanda Upazila Health Complex around noon yesterday, the on-duty nurse asked her to stand in the queue as many were waiting.

The woman became angry and called in her brother Alamin over the phone, who went there with Anwar and Rubel and 10-12 others and assaulted nurse Rekha Khanam.

Jyotirmoy Chowdhury, medical officer of the health complex, tried to stop the attackers but he too was beaten up.

Ekhas Hossain, office assistant of the complex, was also assaulted as he was trying to record footage of the incident on his mobile phone, the medical officer told The Daily Star.

On information, police went to the spot and arrested the trio but others managed to flee, he added.

Sheikh Md Sohel Rana, officer-in-charge of Nagarkanda Police Station, said a case was filed against them.

4 killed as microbus gas cylinder explodes after crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Four persons, including a five-year-old child, were killed in an accident on Sylhet-Zakiganj road in Sylhet’s Golapganj upazila early yesterday.

The incident happened as the gas cylinder of a CNG-run microbus exploded after the vehicle hit a goods-laden truck.

The dead are Rajon Ahmed, 22, and microbus driver Sunam Ahmed, 26, of Sylhet’s Beanibazar upazila; Marjan Ahmed, of the district’s Kanaighat upazila; and Mehedy Hasan, 5, of Sylhet’s Golapganj upazila.

Mehedy was a road-side slum dweller whereas rest of the three were passengers of the microbus.

Harun-ur-Rashid Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Golapganj Police Station, said, “The microbus hit

the moving truck from behind in Hetimganj area around 5:30am. The microbus soon caught fire after its cylinder exploded, leaving three passengers dead on the spot.”

On information, fire fighters rushed to the spot, doused the fire, rescued four injured passengers of the microbus and sent them to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Quoting the child’s relatives, the OC said, hearing the sound of road accident, he came out of the slum after which the microbus’s gas cylinder exploded and a piece of the gas cylinder hit Mehedy, leaving him critically injured.”

He succumbed to his injuries on the way to the hospital, the police officer said.

Graft rules forest dept

FROM PAGE 1

Officials at the forest range offices also took away 20 to 25 percent of the funds before giving it to the beat offices that further embezzled 20 to 30 percent of the remaining funds.

Officials at the range and beat offices later divided the money among themselves and a section of local journalists.

The survey was done between January 2019 and November 2020.

It collected data on hill forests, sal forests, mangrove forests, and mangroves afforestation initiatives in 10 districts.

TIB also collected data from the forest department’s 60 offices, including its headquarters in Dhaka. The researchers interviewed 130 key informants, held six group discussions, and analysed different documents, including survey reports and relevant laws.

The report said between Tk 1 crore and Tk 3 crore were spent by officials hoping to be the chief conservator of forests.

Likewise, Tk 20 to 25 lakh was exchanged illegally for the post of forest conservator, Tk 10 lakh to Tk 1 crore for divisional forest officer, Tk 1 to 1.5 crore for project director, and Tk 1 to 5 lakh for forest conservator.

The money went to policymakers in the ministry, high officials and a section of other employees, it said.

A FRACTION OF GRABBED FOREST RECLAIMED IN FIVE YEARS

The TIB report said in the last five years, the forest department could reclaim about 8,792 of about 2.87 lakh acres of grabbed forest lands.

The department did not make any effort to demolish illegal structures or reclaim lands if the defaulters belonged to influential quarters in Gazipur, Tangail, Mymensingh and Cox’s Bazar, the report said.

TIB recommended determining government forest areas based on the Cadastral Survey (CS) record. Besides, the government should develop an authentic database of grabbed forest lands and take proper steps to reclaim those, it said.

The report said about 1.60 lakh

FORESTLAND IN PERIL

» 2.87 lakh acres of forestland grabbed until Dec 2019

» Forest dept reclaimed only 8,792 acres in last 5 years

» 1.60 lakh acres of forestland allocated to different forces, BFID, govt and private organisations

» 4.32 lakh acres or 9% of total forest area deforested between 2001 and 2019

SOURCE: TIB REPORT, GLOBAL FOREST WATCH

acres of forest areas were given to different state forces and public and private organisations as of September this year.

Of those, 58.62 percent was given to different state forces and law enforcement agencies, 26.89 percent to the Bank and Financial Institutions Division, and 14.49 percent to other public and private organisations.

Although forest conservation is the key responsibility of the forest department, there have been specific instances of its failure in doing so, said the report.

It didn’t object to setting up of the coal-based power plant in Rampal near the Sundarbans although the environment department raised concerns, it added.

The department declared different reserve forests as wildlife sanctuaries and national parks without following relevant laws or taking opinion of people who depend on the forests for livelihood.

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said the picture of the forest department was frustrating.

On occasions, it avoided responsibility by not taking any step while in some cases there were instances of collusion, he added.

Corruption has been “institutionalised” here as “the protector turned into the predator”, he said.

Britain first to approve

FROM PAGE 1

seen as essential for mass immunisations in the developing world as well as in Britain, but does not eliminate questions about trial data that make it unlikely to be approved so rapidly in the European Union or the United States.

“The NHS (National Health Service) will be able to deliver these shots into people’s arms at the speed at which it can be manufactured,” Health Secretary Matt Hancock told Sky News.

“I am also now, with this approval this morning, highly confident that we can get enough vulnerable people vaccinated by the spring that we can now see our route out of this pandemic.”

Johnson called the approval a “triumph for British science”.

Hancock said hundreds of

thousands of doses would be available to administer next week in Britain, which is already rolling out a vaccine developed by Pfizer of the United States and BioNTech of Germany.

The Oxford vaccine has been found in trials to be less effective than the Pfizer/BioNTech shot but, crucially for countries with more basic health infrastructure, can be stored and transported under normal refrigeration, rather than supercooled to -70 degrees Celsius (-94 Fahrenheit).

INDIA INTERESTED

India is keen to start administering the new shot next month; Serum Institute of India (SII), the world’s biggest producer of vaccines, has already made about 50 million doses. Chile is also interested.

SII has already applied for regulatory approval with the Drug Controller

General of India.

SII chief executive Adar Poonawalla had earlier said the vaccine candidate could get approval by next week in India and might be rolled out for the masses in January. “The company is ramping up capacity every week,” he said.

Britain has set itself apart from other Western countries with its fast-track approach to vaccinations, having green-lighted the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine weeks before the EU’s European Medicines Authority (EMA) did so.

A UK government advisory body yesterday recommended a change of course by giving as many people as possible a first dose of coronavirus vaccine right away, rather than giving the second, booster shot within the shortest period of time.

Uncertainty has swirled over the

most effective dosing pattern for the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine since it released data last month showing a 90% success rate for a half-dose followed by a full dose, but only 62% - still usually more than enough for regulators - for two full doses.

The more successful outcome emerged, by accident, in a much smaller number of participants, all under 55, and AstraZeneca is carrying out more tests to see if that rate holds up in a bigger set of volunteers.

AstraZeneca did not specify which regimen had been approved yesterday.

The EMA says it has not yet received full data on the AstraZeneca vaccine and is unlikely to be able to approve it next month. A decision from the US regulator is also not imminent, reports Reuters.

Building up forces to protect sovereignty
PM tells Navy parade

UNB, DHAKA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government is building up every force in such a way so that the country could avail all sorts of measures and training to protect its independence and sovereignty.

"We want peace, not war. But for protecting our country's independence and sovereignty we have to take all measures and training [and] we're building up all our forces that way," she said while addressing the President's Parade-2020, held at Bangladesh Naval Academy, Chattogram.

Attending the event virtually from her official residence Gonobhaban, Sheikh Hasina said the government had transferred Khulna Shipyard and dry dockyards in Chattogram and Narayanganj to the Navy.

"Our aim was to build warships from our own shipyards. We've already started some of our activities for that," she said, adding that a submarine base is being constructed at Pekua in Cox's Bazar while expansion works are going on for Rabanabad Naval Base.

Briefly describing various development activities of Bangladesh Navy, the premier said the government has turned Navy into a three-dimensional force following the Forces Goal 2030.

She said the government has inducted 27 warships, created skilled naval commando and rescue team and aviation teams, inducted two submarines in 2017 and constructed Bangabandhu Complex in the Naval Academy with modern facilities for providing better training.

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Shaheen Iqbal, on behalf of the Prime Minister, distributed different awards among the cadets for their outstanding results.



HELEMUL ALAM

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Md Atiqul Islam yesterday announced the plan of constructing a multi-purpose truck terminal at Tejgaon to accommodate all trucks at the area and keep roads truck-free.

Atiqul made the announcement while visiting the current terminal and meeting with leaders of truck owners' association.

"I have directed DNCC officials concerned to submit a proposal to Bangladesh Railway for getting around 21 bighas of land from the transport agency and forming a project to construct a multi-purpose truck terminal," he said.

As the number of trucks has been increasing day by day, the new multi-storey terminal will be a permanent solution, he claimed.

Around 2,000 trucks would be able to park at the multi-purpose terminal simultaneously, and around 5,000 trucks would be able to use it every day, he added.

Atiqul said floors of the new structure may be both under and above the ground, and the terminal will not be for inter-district trucks.

Hossain Ahmed Majumdar, joint secretary-1 of Bangladesh Covered-van Owners Association, told The

DNCC to build multi-storey truck terminal in Tejgaon



The Tejgaon-Satrasta Road has once again become a parking spot for trucks, choking traffic movement.

STAR FILE PHOTO

Daily Star that there were 39 bighas of land at the area, and a large part of the land was occupied.

He said railway land acted as truck stands since 1948. Late DNCC mayor Annisul Huq had gotten charge from four ministries to clear all occupants from the current terminal and increase its accommodation capacity.

Former railways minister Mujibul Haque had asked truck owners to use the land as long as it is not being used by Bangladesh Railway. He also asked them not to construct any

structure on the land.

Hossain said they spent around Tk 3 crore for the terminal's renovation, after it was recognised as a terminal during mayor Annisul's tenure.

About the terminal's capacity, he said currently, around 700-800 trucks can park there at a time, and it is possible to keep 5,000-7,000 trucks simultaneously, if some adjoining railway land was provided by evicting existing occupants.

Hossain said a truck stand is essential at the area because of

important establishments like BG Press, Central Medicine Store and Karwan Bazar wholesale kitchen market.

Mohammad Nazrul Islam, divisional estate officer and deputy commissioner (railway lands and buildings) of Bangladesh Railway, a few months back told The Daily Star that around eight acres of railway land is being used illegally for the truck stand.

For decades, an illegal truck stand occupied Satrasta, where trucks, pick-ups and covered vans would block both sides of the road, and there was virtually no walkway.

In face of strong opposition from influential transport leaders, no one dared to remove the illegal stand. But things changed for the better after late DNCC mayor Annisul Huq removed it, despite coming under huge pressure.

The renovated Tejgaon-Satrasta road had soon become an embodiment of the late mayor's tireless efforts to ease the city's unbearable traffic congestion. But the road, named after Annisul after his death in 2017, is now facing the same problem, due to absence of any visible action from authorities concerned for a sustainable parking solution that Annisul had pledged.

IPI decries worsening press freedom in South Asia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Austria-based global media watchdog International Press Institute (IPI) issued a statement, decrying the worsening state of media freedom in South Asia during the year of the pandemic.

According to IPI's Covid-19 Press Freedom Tracker, nearly 200 cases of press freedom violations were reported from Asia-Pacific region, of which 107 were from four South Asian countries: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal, said the statement.

"As many as 71 journalists faced arrests and charges for their coverage of the pandemic and its consequences, and 32 cases of physical attacks and verbal threats were reported from these countries," it added.

While the statement claimed that India accounted for the greatest number of violations in the region, it also shed

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

CHATTOGRAM HILL TRACTS

Border outposts to be increased: home boss

Says 'terrorist groups' are trespassing into India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said border outposts (BOP) in Chattogram Hill Tracts adjoining the Indian state of Mizoram will be increased, to curb the activities of 'terrorist groups'.

"There are terrorist groups in the hilly areas. When we chase them, they go into the remote area and cross the border to that side [India]. We are increasing the number of BOPs so that it does not happen," said the home minister while responding to questions from reporters after a Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) function at Pilkhana.

BGB Director General Maj Gen Shafeenul Islam told reporters they gave a list of terrorist hideouts in Mizoram to India at the recently-held border conference.

"They also gave us a list. We didn't find camps there according to their list, and we informed BSF of that," the BGB Chief said.

At the 51st DG-level border conference between BGB and BSF recently, the BGB DG expressed concerns about camps of CHT-based armed separatists in Mizoram.

At a joint press conference on December 25, the Bangladesh delegation also requested India to destroy the camps.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

EMBEZZLING Tk 35Cr

PBI to probe case against ex-mayor Khokon, 6 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court has directed the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to investigate the case filed against former Dhaka South City Corporation mayor Sayeed Khokon and six others on charges of embezzlement of Tk 34.89 crore.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Ashek Imam passed the order yesterday. Atiqur Rahman, bench assistant of the court, told The Daily Star.

The magistrate also asked PBI to submit a probe report in the case before the court by January 31 next year, Atiqur said.

Delwar Hossain, president of Traders-Owners Association of Fulbaria City Supermarket-2 in the capital's Gulistan, filed the case with the same court on December 29.

The magistrate took the case into cognisance and recorded

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

LEAKING ADMISSION, RECRUITMENT QUESTION PAPERS

Two bankers among six arrested by CID

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police have arrested six people, including two bank officials in connection with question leak of different university admission and bank recruitment tests.

The arrestees are Manik Kumar Pramanik, a senior officer of Agrani Bank; Rakibul Hasan Shanto, a senior officer of Janata Bank; Miraz, Rashed, Shafiqul and Ripon.

They were arrested recently following an investigation into a case filed with Tejgaon Police Station in 2018. Of them, Shanto, Rashed and Miraz gave confessional statement to a Dhaka court recently.

"Based on Shanto's statement, a team

of CID arrested Manik along with his two accomplices Shafiqul and Ripon from Rajshahi on Tuesday," a source at the CID, wishing not to be named, told The Daily Star.

Confirming the arrest, SM Ashrafuzzaman, special superintendent of CID's Cyber Investigation and Operation, said details will be shared at a press conference today.

According to CID, the racket was leaking questions of different university admissions including Dhaka University and medical entrance, important government admissions and recruitment exams, including various banks, through digital devices.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Renewable energy for recovery, regeneration

Speakers tell Bapa webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Energy experts, environmental activists and energy entrepreneurs emphasised to go for renewable energy to recover the green economy of the country, as well as environmental and natural regeneration.

They made the call from a webinar titled "Recovery of green economy of Bangladesh: Potential and Challenge" organised by Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) yesterday. The webinar was moderated by Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bapa.

Taking part in the webinar, Atiur Rahman, former governor of Bangladesh Bank and also vice-president of Bapa, said the country must create youth green entrepreneurs to accelerate green economic recovery.

He said Bangladesh Bank has created a green transformation fund and has been working with 150 organisations to turn the economy into a sustainable one.

"It is high time we move to green energy. We must encourage entrepreneurs to produce more solar power than using fossil fuel," he said.

Dr Nazrul Islam, vice-president of Bapa, said Bangladesh is lagging far behind in producing solar power. "We are heading towards producing more coal-based power when countries across the world have diverted their policy away from it," he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

CMP launches SMS service for plaintiffs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

With an aim to take policing to people's doorsteps and bridge the gap between plaintiff and police, Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) introduced a Short Messaging Service (SMS) based complaint and response management system yesterday.

CMP officials said through this service, any complainant or plaintiff will know the last status of the case or general diary (GD) after lodging complaints with respective police station.

Titled "CMP BONDHON", CMP commissioner Saleh Ahmed Tanvir inaugurated the system as part of "Mujib Borsho" celebration at 16 police stations which will come into effect from January 1, 2021.

Addressing a press briefing held at CMP Headquarters, Commissioner Saleh said, "It's a central automatic online software system and now we are running the system on a trial basis."

"Usually, we register all complaints in the register book of the police station after getting a case or GD. The plaintiff would

visit the police station often to know the name of the Investigation Officer (IO) and update the case, which was a time-consuming matter," said CMP boss.

"When a case or GD is lodged with any police station through the system, an SMS will be sent from the system mentioning the case/ GD number, name of IO, section of laws (as per the complaint) and the full address of the plaintiff," said police official Saleh.

He also said "Both IO and plaintiff of the case or GD will receive the SMS notification through the system. In case the IO of the case changes, the name of the new IO will also be sent to the plaintiff."

Apart from that, SMS will be sent when police press charges in the case. It will include the charge sheet number or final report number, submission date and sections of the laws, he added.

"Senior officials of the zone will be informed as they will also receive the SMS to their phones from the system so that they can monitor it," Saleh Mohammed Tanvir said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

HILL CUTTING

Toma Group fined Tk 50cr

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Department of Environment (DoE) Chattogram region yesterday fined Toma Group and Construction Limited for razing two crore 23 lakh cubic feet of hills from a reserve forest at Lohagara.

The fine was imposed after a hearing at DoE office.

According to DoE sources, the group completely flattened a large portion of Rangapahar, a part of Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary, in October with the aim to supply the Dohazari-Cox's Bazar rail project.

On October 28, The Daily Star ran a report covering the massive hill razing.

Mohammad Moazzom Hossain, director of DoE Chattogram region, told The Daily Star Toma Group tried to slow the proceedings by repeatedly delaying the hearing date by seeking time.

"In the hearing we analysed our inspection report, which states they cut a total of 22 million cubic feet of hill at Rangapahar, devastating the whole eco system of the area. Taking all this into consideration, we fined them Tk 50 crore," he said.

Apart from this, a case will be filed against the group for damaging the environment, he added.



Dhaka North City Corporation is installing energy efficient LED street lights at different areas under its jurisdiction. Many roads of the capital are dimly lit, and the move aims to help drivers and pedestrians after sundown. This photo was taken from Kalyanpur area yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

JS session to begin Jan 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11th parliament goes into its 11th session on January 18 amid Covid-19 pandemic.

President Abdul Hamid convened the session exercising the power bestowed upon him by article 72 (1) of the constitution, parliament secretariat said in a press release yesterday.

This will also be the first session of 2021.

The president is scheduled to deliver a speech on the first sitting of the 11th session highlighting the government's various successes and development in different sectors.

MPs will participate on the thanksgiving motion on president's speech and after the discussion the motion will be passed in the House.

Before the House goes into session at 4:30pm, the business advisory

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

DMP INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE

Like previous years, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has issued special instructions for New Year celebrations, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, and has asked all to follow the following instructions:

- 1 No meeting, gathering or celebration on rooftops, roads, flyovers or public places.
- 2 No open-to-all cultural programme or function.
- 3 No fireworks.
- 4 Dhaka University campus will remain restricted for outsiders after 6pm.
- 5 Teachers and other employees of Dhaka University residing on campus can enter the university premises through Nilkhet and Shahbagh entrances after showing their ID cards.
- 6 No outsiders will be allowed to enter Gulshan and Banani area after 8pm but residents can enter through Kakoli and Amtoli points.
- 7 Residents of Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara areas are requested to return home before 8pm.
- 8 DMP has also discouraged people who live in other areas from entering Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara and Dhaka University areas.
- 9 After 8pm, no one would be allowed to stay in Hatirjheel area.
- 10 Bars would remain closed after 6pm.
- 11 People can celebrate the New Year at hotels but no "DJ parties" will be allowed.
- 12 City dwellers are requested not to carry any licensed arms in public places from 6pm today to 6am tomorrow.

স্কলার্স স্কুল অ্যান্ড কলেজ
(ইংরেজি মাধ্যমে দেশীয় শিক্ষা)
[তথ্য ইংলিশ ভার্সনে পাঠদানকারী বাংলাদেশের প্রথম শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান]
www.scholars.edu.bd, info@scholars.edu.bd

২০২১ শিক্ষাবর্ষে PG - IX শ্রেণিতে ভর্তি চলাছে

English Medium এর ছাত্র-ছাত্রীদেরও ভর্তির সুবর্ণ সুযোগ

ছাত্রীদের জন্য আলাদা ক্যাম্পাস

সফলতার ২০ বছর!

যোগাযোগ:
বাড়ি নং-৭১, সড়ক নং ৭/এ, ধানমন্ডি, ঢাকা-১২০৯
০২-৫৫০০০৩৪৫, ০১৭৮৭৩৩৩৯৯, ০১৭১৪০৫৭৫৬৬
০১৭১১৪৪৬৬৩৩, ০১৭১৮৪১৬৯০৪, ০১৮৭৪০০০৬৬৬
অফিস সময়: শুক্রবার ব্যতীত প্রতিদিন সকাল ৮টা থেকে বিকাল ৫টা পর্যন্ত

রিজিষ্টার্ড জেনারেল মোঃ আব্দুল হান্নান (অবঃ)
অধ্যক্ষ, স্কলার্স স্কুল অ্যান্ড কলেজ
সাবেক অধ্যক্ষ, ঢাকা প্রেসিডেন্সিয়াল মেডিকেল কলেজ

‘Ban Tiktok to save the youth’

Writ petition seeks curbs on three social media apps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking its directive on authorities to stop operations of smartphone apps -- Bigo Live, Tiktok and Likee, “in order to protect the young generation from social degradation”.

Md JR Khan Robin submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC, also praying to this court to issue a rule asking authorities to explain why their inaction to stop the use of these apps should not be declared illegal.

He said in the petition that the young generation of the country is being addicted to these apps and are “losing their morality and social values”.

Sometimes, youths are being involved in crimes by being instigated by such apps, Robin said, adding that such apps have been banned in some neighbouring countries -- such as India and Pakistan, and Indonesia.

JR Khan Robin told The Daily Star that he will move the writ petition before the HC after it reopens on January 3 following its ongoing annual vacation.



Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority yesterday demolished illegal structures at Koyla Patti area in the capital's Gabtoli.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Razzaq Foundation launches essay contest on Bangabandhu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation is organising an essay competition on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in two different categories for first to twelfth graders and university-level students within the deadline on February 18, 2021.

In a media announcement yesterday, the foundation said the purpose of the competition is encouraging research, writing and thinking at all levels of education.

“Bangabandhu’s dream and the achievements of Bangladesh” is the topic for school and college-level students and the word limit is 1,750-2,000, while “The role of students and teachers in the emergence of Bangladesh” is for currently-enrolled university students with a word limit of 2,000-2,500. First, second and third place winners in the first topic will receive Tk 5,000, Tk 3,500 and Tk 2,500 respectively; the prize is Tk 10,000, Tk 7,500 and Tk 5,000 in the second topic.

Every entrant must mention their name, education institution, class or department, mobile number and email and the writing must be academic and follow the appropriate format and rules of citation, said the media announcement.

It said the language of the write up could be Bangla or English. The essays will be graded on research, writing, analysis, organisation and coherence and not on any other factor.

The write-up could be sent as hard copy or email attachment to info@abdur-razzaq-foundation.org or Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation, House-75/A, Road-12/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209.

Border

FROM PAGE 3

Responding to the BGB request, BSF director general Rakesh Asthana mentioned Indian government’s ‘zero tolerance policy’ to terrorism, and said appropriate measures would be taken against those camps if there are any.

Yesterday, journalists drew the home minister’s attention to the issue, after a medal distribution ceremony among BGB members.

“They [BSF] are cooperating as much as they can; we are doing the same. Our prime minister has always said we will not allow even an inch of land in our country to be used by any separatist or terrorist, and that is what we are doing,” the minister added.

“We have intelligence about some areas along the border with Myanmar too. From those areas, some miscreants cross the border and commit crimes here. Similarly, some others commit crimes there and take shelter here,” he added.

Earlier, at a special law and order meeting in Khagrachhari, the home minister had said members of police, BGB and Ansar will be deployed at vacant army camps located in CHT to stop killings, extortion and terrorism in the area.

Replying to another question on security about the new year, the minister said security forces are on alert to face any challenge. Everything is under surveillance, he added.

NSU remembers founding member MA Hashem

CITY DESK

North South University (NSU) yesterday organised a virtual discussion session in memory of its recently-deceased founding member and former chairperson MA Hashem.

The programme featured a Khatam-ul-Quran and a discussion session, a press release said.

The programme was attended by members of NSU’s board of trustees and all its employees.

Former president of FBCCI and chairperson of NSU’s board of trustees MA Kashem along with board members Azim Uddin Ahmed, Benajir Ahmed, Mohammed Shajahan, Rehana Rahman and Yasmin Kamal were present as speakers.

Among others, son of MA Hashem Aziz Al Kaiser, also chairman of City Bank and Vice-Chairman, Partex Star Group; daughter-in-law Tabassum Kaiser, director, City Bank; and grandson Amman Al Kaiser were also present.

Prof Atiul Islam, Vice-Chancellor of NSU, presided over the session.

A large number of parents and students also connected to the programme through live broadcast from NSU’s Official Facebook Page, the press release added.

Two bankers

FROM PAGE 3

Following the case filed with Tejgaon Police Station, CID first recently arrested Miraz and Rashed -- both private university students. Based on information obtained from them, they arrested Shanto.

According to the CID official, Rashed is a question solver. Ripon is a public university student in Dhaka and Shafiqul is a trader who is an associate of Manik.

Earlier in 2018, police arrested a student named Nafiu Tahsin from Tejgaon Government Science College, in connection with admission question leak of Dhaka University’s “Ka” unit.

SM Kamrul Ahsan, chief security officer of Dhaka University, then filed a case against Nafiu, with Tejgaon Police Station.

Later in November 2018, CID interrogated Nafiu. In a report submitted to the court, it said the racket was using digital tools and social media to leak DU admission papers, in exchange for hefty sums of money.

Earlier, CID investigated a case filed over DU “Cha” unit question leak in 2017 and pressed charges against 125 people, including 87 DU students and a few Chhatra League leaders, in June, 2019.

After investigation, CID found that the questions were mainly leaked in two ways: from the printing press the night before the exams and through digital devices minutes before the tests started.

Job or admission seekers were given the answers via tiny earpieces a few minutes into the exams.

PBI to

FROM PAGE 3

statement of the complainant that day.

Yusuf Ali Sardar, former chief revenue officer of the city corporation; Md Mazed, its former deputy assistant engineer; and their assistants Kamrul Hasan, Helena Akter, Atiqur Rahman Swapan and Md Walid were also made accused in the case.

According to the case document, Khokon and six others colluded to build and allot shops, violating the main design of Fulbaria City Supermarket-2.

Contacted, Sayeed Khokon told The Daily Star, “I will not comment on the case now, as it is under investigation.”

Aside from 2,300 design-approved shops at Fulbaria Supermarket-2, 911 others were built illegally. DSCC on December 8 started a drive to demolish all 911 illegal shops.

JS session

FROM PAGE 3

committee of parliament is likely to sit in a meeting with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair to fix duration and businesses of the session.

According to the constitution, the president must convene a session within 60 days from the last sitting of the last session. The last session, which was a special session to mark the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was prorogued on November 18.

IPI decries

FROM PAGE 3

light on the situation in Bangladesh.

“The government charged 11 people, including journalists and a cartoonist, with spreading false information about the pandemic. Only two of them were taken into custody, as others were living abroad. At the time of his arrest, cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore was working on a series of cartoons with caricatures of ruling party leaders and allegations of corruption in the health sector,” it said.

In Bangladesh, a journalist was killed for his reporting on drugs and illegal gas connections, it added.

In 2020, IPI has observed unacceptable levels of attacks against independent media and journalists in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Press freedom has already been severely curtailed in recent years in the region, said the statement, quoting IPI Executive Director Barbara Trionfi.

Strengthening independent media and keeping journalists safe in the region will be a core aspect of any strategy countering the pandemic’s effects. Otherwise, democracy in the region will be severely damaged, she said.

নালন্দা উচ্চ বিদ্যালয়

ছায়ানটের সংস্কৃতি-সমৃদ্ধিত সাধারণ শিক্ষা কার্যক্রম

ভর্তি বিজ্ঞপ্তি— শিক্ষাবর্ষ ২০২১

নালন্দায় প্রাক-প্রাথমিক* থেকে নবম শ্রেণি পর্যন্ত ভর্তি চলছে

* প্রাক-প্রাথমিক: অষ্টকুর (৩-৪ বছর), কিন্ডলয় (৪-৫ বছর), মঞ্জুরী (৫-৬ বছর)

প্রথম শ্রেণি: (৬-৭ বছর), দ্বিতীয় থেকে নবম: শ্রেণি অনুযায়ী বয়স

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নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পদ: প্রশাসনিক সমন্বয় সহযোগী; আবেদনের শেষ তারিখ ২০/০১/২০২১

বিস্তারিত তথ্য: www.chhayanaout.org

ফেসবুক পেইজ: www.facebook.com/nalonda.org

যোগাযোগ: ০১৭৯৫ ৭৬০ ৩৭৬

ছায়ানট সংস্কৃতি-ভবন, বাড়ি ৭২, সড়ক ১৫এ, ধানমন্ডি আ/এ, ঢাকা।

Bangladesh Lamps Limited

Change of addresses of the Head Office and Factory

This is for the kind information of all our valued shareholders and other concern that the Head Office and Factory of Bangladesh Lamps Limited have been shifted from Sadar Road, Mohakhali, Dhaka to:

House-22, Road-4, Block-F, Banani, Dhaka-1213 (Head Office).

Ghashirdia, Narsingdi (Factory).

Henceforth, any communications are to be addressed to our above mentioned offices accordingly.

Dhaka 31-12-2020

Mohammad Ruhan Miah
Company Secretary

ট্রানসটেক®

TRANSTEC®

Renewable

FROM PAGE 3

Dr Saleemul Huq, director of International Institute for Environment and Development, underlined individual initiatives in the process of green transformation.

“Without participation of underprivileged community, the green transformation won’t thrive much. We have to devise ways to include them in the journey,” he said.

Dr Fahmida Khatun, executive director of Center for Policy Dialogue; Prof Siddique Jubayer, former secretary of power division; and Dr Dipal Chandro Barua, president of Bangladesh Solar and Renewable Energy Association, were also present at the webinar, among others.

CMP launches

FROM PAGE 3

Police officials said the service is totally free and the system will be reviewed after two or three months based on its performance.

In the press conference, CMP commissioner said no one is allowed this year to celebrate outdoor programmes on the night of December 31. Presenting 16 restrictions, the commissioner said no one will be allowed to use any public place, open space or rooftop for New Year celebrations on 31st night.

CMP additional commissioners, DCs of the four zones, and officers-in-charge of police stations were present during the press briefing.

Clearing & Forwarding license For Sell

Clearing and Forwarding business or license may be sell out for **Dhaka Airport, ICD Kamalapur, Ctg port.**

Interested foreign or local person may contact: **01712515011**

Condolence Message

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

Mr. Sharif M. Afzal Hossain

Birth: 01 January 1950 and Death: 29 December 2020

The distinguished organizer of Liberation war of Bangladesh and valiant freedom fighter Mr. Sharif M. Afzal Hossain started his eternal journey on 29 December 2020 at 5:50 P.M at Combined Military Hospital Dhaka. (Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Elahi Rajiun). He was 71. He left his wife, only daughter, grandsons, granddaughter and countless well-wishers to mourn his death. He is the father in law of Mr. Ziaur Rahman, Managing Director of Bay Group.

He was born on 01 January 1950 in a respectable Muslim family of Sharifbari in the village of Khoda Bushpur at Modhukhali sub district under Faridpur district.

He obtained MA (SS) & LLB degree from Dhaka University and TCC from Japan, SSC from Netherlands and certificate of IVP from USA. Besides he obtained different international Course Certificates from Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, India, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

He was a business leader. He earned his name and fame as distinguished organizer, writer, resource person, Media personality and good orator.

Sharif M. Afzal Hossain was first generation industrialist and businessman. He started his business through setting up industries and trading companies. He was Chairman of Joint venture industries and other local Group of Concerns. He was associated with different national and international forums. He was founder, Advisor and Director of various educational and service providing industries.

We are deeply shocked of his demise and praying to Almighty for salvation of his departed soul. May Almighty give his family strength and courage to bear this irreparable loss.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

জেলা সুপারের কার্যালয়

জেলা কারাগার, দিনাজপুর

E-mail: jspdinajpurjail@gmail.com

পুনঃ দরপত্র (২য় বার) বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১	প্রকিউরিং এনটিটি	১	জেলা সুপার, দিনাজপুর জেলা কারাগার, দিনাজপুর।
২	দরপত্রের নাম ও মেয়াদ	১	০১-০১-২০২১ হতে ০১-১২-২০২১ পর্যন্ত বিভিন্ন প্রকার খাদ্যদ্রব্য সরবরাহ।
৩	দরপত্র প্র্যাক্‌জ নং	১	ডায়েটরি-০২/(০১-১২)২০২১
৪	দরদাতাদের ন্যূনতম যোগ্যতা	১	দরপত্র দাখিলে বর্ণিত মতে।
৫	বার্গেট ও ফার প্রারিত উদ্দেশ্য	১	জাতীয় রাজস্ব পত্রিক।
৬	দরপত্রের প্রকৃতি	১	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)
৭	দরপত্র সিটিউল প্রারিত স্থান	১	জেলা সুপারের কার্যালয়, জেলা কারাগার, দিনাজপুর ও কারা উপ-মহাপরিদর্শক, ঢাকা/খগপুর বিভাগীয় দপ্তর।
৮	দরপত্র সিটিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১	১৮-০১-২০২১ বেলা ২.৩০টা পর্যন্ত।
৯	দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	১	(১) জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, দিনাজপুর (২) কোতওয়ালি বাসা, দিনাজপুর এবং (৩) জেলা সুপারের কার্যালয়, জেলা কারাগার, দিনাজপুর এর প্রধান ফটকে প্রকৃতি বার্তা, ১৯-০১-২০২১ বেলা ৯.০০ ঘটিকা হতে বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১০	দরপত্র বাজ উন্মুক্তকরণের স্থান ও সময়	১	জেলা সুপারের কার্যালয়, জেলা কারাগার, দিনাজপুর, ১৯-০১-২০২১ বেলা ১২.৩০টা।
১১	মূল্যায়ন কমিটির সভা, ডকুমেন্টের স্থান ও সময়	১	জেলা সুপারের কার্যালয়, জেলা কারাগার, দিনাজপুর, ২০-০১-২০২১ বেলা ১২.০০টা।
১২	দরপত্র সিটিউলের মূল্য	১	টাকা ১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) মাত্র।
১৩	জামানতের পরিমাণ	১	(১) ক্রপ-ক টাকা = ৬৫,০০০/- (২) ক্রপ-খ টাকা = ১৫,০০০/- (৩) ক্রপ-গ টাকা = ৫০,০০০/- (৪) ক্রপ-ঘ টাকা = ৯৫,০০০/- (৫) ক্রপ-ঙ টাকা = ১,০৫,০০০/-
১৪	দরপত্র অনুমোদনকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ	১	কারা মহাপরিদর্শক, বাংলাদেশ, ঢাকা।
১৫	দরপত্রের সাথে যে সকল কাগজপত্র জমা দিতে হবে	১	দরপত্র সিটিউল/ডকুমেন্টে বর্ণিত মতে।
১৬	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ	১	জেলা সুপার, জেলা কারাগার, দিনাজপুর।
১৭	দরদাতাদের প্রতি বিশেষ নির্দেশাবলী	১	দরপত্র সিটিউল/ডকুমেন্টের শর্তাবলী পাঠান্তরে ক্রয়কাগজে অবহিত হবে দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে।
১৮	দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত অন্যান্য তথ্যাবলী জানার জন্য কর্তৃপক্ষের সাথে যোগাযোগ করা যেতে পারে।	১	
১৯	কর্তৃপক্ষ কোনো কারণ দর্শালে ব্যতিরেকে যেকোনো/সকল দরপত্র বাতিল/প্রত্যাহার করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।	১	

মোঃ মোকাম্মেল হোসেন
ফোন নং-০২৪৬৭৭০০১৬২
জেলা সুপার
জেলা কারাগার, দিনাজপুর

জিডি-২১০১

Vacancy Announcement

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in the rank of General Manager

Asia Pacific General Insurance Company Limited, the leading Insurance Company in Bangladesh engaged in Non-life Insurance business looking for recruitment in the under mentioned:

Position: Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in the rank of General Manager.

Education: BBA / Honors and M.Com/ MBA from reputed University with Finance/Accounting, Qualified Chartered Accountant (CA) will be given preference.

Experience: Having minimum 15 years of Working Experience as CFO or Deputy CFO in any reputed Non-life Insurance Company.

Remuneration: Negotiable.

Other Benefits: As per Company policy.

Deserving candidates are requested to send their CV to the Chief Executive Officer of the Company at **Homestead Gulshan Link Tower (6th Floor), Ta-99, Gulshan Badda Link Road, Dhaka - 1212.**

Visit our website: www.apgicl.com

এশিয়া প্যাসিফিক জেনারেল ইন্স্যুরেন্স কোং লিমিটেড
ASIA PACIFIC GENERAL INSURANCE CO. LTD.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

e-Zone
Servicing Change Managers

E-Zone HRM Limited is a management consulting group providing one-stop HR solutions. E-Zone HRM Limited has a formal agreement with one of the United Nations agency to provide outsourcing services under a third party contract.

E-Zone HRM Limited is now seeking applications for a UN Organization from Bangladeshi Nationals for the following vacancies under third party outsourcing contract modality. For detailed Job Description, please visit the following website link to apply for the post.

Title: HIV Officer (Consultant)

Duty Station: Cox's Bazar Field Office. **Contract Duration:** 12 Months. **Number of Vacancies:** One. **Contract Type:** Contract with E-Zone.

Last Date of Application: January 06, 2021

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un43.html>

National Housing Authority

Low Income Community Housing Support Project

Grihayon Bhaban, 82, Segunbagicha
Dhaka - 1000
www.nha.gov.bd

Memo No.: 25.38.0000.704.014.138.2020-
Date: 29-12-2020

e-GP Tender Notice

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

Sl.	Name of Work	Tender ID	Tender/ Proposal Publication Date and Time
01	Construction of Internal Pathway with pipe Drain & U-Drain at Shahidganj (Ward No-06), Sirajganj Pourashava.	531617	
02	Construction of Road with RCC U-Drain, Pipe Drain, Sanitation Facility Sub-structures etc. at Pramanik Para (Ward No- 05) Settlement under Sirajganj Pourashava	531618	03-01-2021, 10.00 AM
03	Construction of Road with RCC U-Drain, Pipe Drain, Sanitation Facility Sub-structures etc. at Kalibari (Ward No- 12) Settlement under Sirajganj Pourashava.	531619	

1. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the e-GP Portal and no online / hardcopies will be accepted.

2. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

3. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal to be deposited through any branch of the registered bank.

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

GD- 2103

(Quazi Wasif Ahmad)
Project Director
Low Income Community Housing Support Project
Member (Engineering & Coordination)
National Housing Authority



Labourers cutting off topsoil from a farmland for manufacturing bricks in different brick kilns of Tangail's Basail upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Topsoil removal for brick making damages fertility of farmlands

Powerful syndicate already sold earth from at least 7 different points in the last couple of weeks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Topsoil of croplands are being used for manufacturing bricks in different brick kilns of Tangail's Basail upazila, damaging the fertility of lands and also destroying local environment.

A group of influential earth traders are buying the topsoil of the farmlands from local people in Kawaljani union of the upazila and selling the soil to different brickfields.

As a result, the local rural roads have been badly damaged due to rampant plying of earth-laden trucks and illegal tractors.

Local people said the influential traders were cutting off topsoil at least seven points in Moheshkhali and Ronggilabari

areas of the union for the last couple of weeks.

The syndicate of powerfull earth traders having political clout is doing the brisk business of crores of taka after managing the local administration, they alleged.

Hobibur Rahman Chowdhury Hobir, chairman of Kawaljani Union Parishad, said the rural roads in the area were badly damaged by the recent devastating and prolonged floods. Now the roads are also being damaged due to rampant plying of earth-laden heavy vehicles.

Despite repeated pleas, the influential earth traders did not pay any heed to the matter, he said, adding that only the local administration can stop the illegal act.

Asked about the matter, Nahian Noon, assistant commissioner (Land) in Basail,

they were not informed about the matter.

Necessary steps will be taken in this regard after investigating the matter, said the assistant commissioner.

Contacted, Mohammad Mujahidul Islam, deputy director (DD) of Directorate of Environment in Tangail, said the use of topsoil for brick making causes serious damages to the croplands and its fertility.

However, they have nothing to do in this regard as it is the duty of the local assistant commissioner to take action to stop the illegal act, he said.

The DD added that the brick kiln owners all use the topsoil of the farmlands to make bricks. They must have taken permission from the deputy commissioner's office to collect earth for manufacturing bricks.

PANGSHA MUNICIPALITY

Stop dumping garbage by highway, demand locals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

In a display of disregard for human health and the environment, for the past couple of years, the authorities of Pangsha municipality in Rajbari have been dumping garbage from the town onto a spot right beside the Rajbari-Kushtia regional highway.

Stench from the massive pile of decomposing garbage near 'College Mor' area on the highway has created a suffocating atmosphere for locals and commuters alike.

Established in 1990, Pangsha municipality has yet to introduce a waste management system for the town. As a result, waste from households, businesses as well as hospitals and clinics in the area are being disposed of out in the open, raising the risk of spreading contagious diseases.

During a recent visit, this correspondent witnessed dumping of garbage at the spot from rickshaw-vans and garbage trucks engaged by Pangsha municipality.

Requesting not to be named, a garbage collection worker of the municipality said, "We've been dumping waste here for the last two years as there's no waste management system in the municipality."

College student Animesh Chakraborti, a resident of Purapara area, said, "Garbage is being dumped beside an important road, causing the spread of foul smell and making lives of commuters as well locals miserable."

College Mor area resident Abdus Samad said liquid waste from the dump starts flowing on the road during rain and pedestrians have no other option but to walk over it and risk spreading of diseases.

Poisonous smoke emitted from burning of the garbage is also causing respiratory problems for locals, especially their children, he added.

Ashish Das, a resident of Banjana village, said, "We are the worst sufferers as we have to use this road to get to Pangsha town. I hope the municipality authorities will take necessary steps in resolving this situation permanently."

Contacted, Pangsha Municipality Mayor Abdul Al Masud Biswas admitted people's sufferings and said, "We are compelled to dump the garbage there because we have no other place... We submitted a plan to the higher authorities and we hope that the problem will be solved soon."



Commuters on a rickshaw-van pass the open landfill, created by Pangsha municipality in Rajbari, near College Mor area on Rajbari-Kushtia regional highway. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS



PHOTO: STAR

The construction work of 250-bed hospital in Pirojpur town progresses in full swing.

PIROJPUR 250-BED HOSPITAL

30% work completed, construction in full swing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

The construction work of 250-bed hospital in Pirojpur town is going on in full swing. A total of 30 percent work of the construction has been completed so far.

People from nearby district will also be benefitted following completion of the construction work of the 12-storey hospital.

Under the supervision of Public Works Department (PWD) in Pirojpur, Banga Builders Ltd and Khan Builders (JV) are constructing the hospital building.

The work order for construction of the hospital building was given on August 30 in 2018 and it was scheduled to be completed within January this year. But due to coronavirus situation, the construction work was badly hampered.

The authorities concerned later extended the time till December next year, said a PWD official.

Md Sultan Mahmud Shoikot, sub-divisional engineer of PWD office in Pirojpur, said they are expecting to complete the main structure of the building in between

August and September next year.

The construction work is now going on in full swing, he said.

Locals said Pirojpur is one of the underdeveloped southern districts of the country. The health service here is not satisfactory. At present, Pirojpur District Hospital has the capacity of 100 beds. If any patient suffers from critical illness, he is referred to Khulna or Barishal.

"It takes over one hour to reach Barishal or Khulna to carry a patient," said an ambulance driver in Pirojpur town.

It is also expensive to take

patients, especially poor one, to Khulna and Barishal.

"Most often it is difficult for the people to carry a patient to Khulna or Barishal if the patient's condition is critical," said Khalid Abu, Pirojpur district unit general secretary of Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, adding that after being completed the construction work of the 250-bed hospital, it will ensure better health facility to the patients of the district.

He said that they demanded for a medical college in Pirojpur for a long time.



THE SECURITY PRINTING CORPORATION (BANGLADESH) LTD.
GAZIPUR.

LOCAL/INTERNATIONAL e-TENDER FOR SUPPLY OF 300 PCS NYLO PRINT PLATES.

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

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Price per e-Tender schedule | : 1000.00 (one thousand) Taka only. |
| 2. Date of publish of e-Tender | : 31.12.2020. |
| 3. Last date & time for submission of e-Tender | : 04.02.2021 up to 11.00 A.M. |
| 4. Date & time for opening of e-Tender | : 04.02.2021 at 11.15 A.M. |

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

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

GD- 2104



Nearly a year of its installation, the CT scan (computed tomography scan) machine at 250-bed Pabna General Hospital begins operation on Sunday. The hospital authorities got the 440 voltage new power connection recently, following a report, headlined 'Cost Tk 2cr, service zero,' published on the country page of The Daily Star on December 1.

PHOTO: STAR

Nirmul Committee distributes warm clothes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee (Committee for Realisation of Bangladesh Liberation War Ideals and Trial of War criminals) distributed warm clothes among the Baul singers and their family members in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila yesterday.

The committee members distributed 220 blankets and same number of bed covers among the cold-hit families during a programme organised at Sufala Satej Government Primary School premises in the upazila, says a press release.

On the occasion, a colourful cultural programme was arranged, where child singers performed 'Lalon Geeti' and 'Bhawaiya' songs.



The Security Printing Corporation
(Bangladesh) Ltd.
Gazipur-1703

e-Tender Notice for procurement of the following items for The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd., Gazipur as per e-Tender schedule.

Name of the items of e-Tender for procurement:

1. Supply of 2100 packets White Mat Board
2. Supply of 5,150 kgs P.P. Strap.

For details, please visit our website:

Website	: www.spcbl.org.bd .
Telephone	: 88-02-9205110-15, 9205116
Mobile	: 88-01534002183 & 88-01534002184
Fax	: 88-02-9205108, 9205109
E-mail	: info@spcbl.org.bd
e-Tender site	: etender.spcbl.org.bd/114.130.43.56

Syed Amjad Hossain
General Manager (Local Purchase & Sales)
Phone: 88-02-9204405

GD-2100

Stay alert to

FROM PAGE 1
saw that we lacked in preparations,” Selim, also a presidium member of AL, said.

The committee also said they saw corruption and scandals centring facemasks and Covid-19 test.

Different quarters have already raised concerns over possible mismanagement and irregularities regarding vaccination.

The standing committee said the coronavirus vaccination programme should be under full control of the ministry and the vaccines will be given at government hospitals and upazila health complexes.

Selim asked the ministry to complete necessary measures to preserve the Covid-19 vaccine in advance, adding that the ministry should start training doctors on Covid-19 vaccination at the district and upazila level on vaccination.

He also said the vaccine cannot be given in the hands of the private sector. “If anyone wants to import vaccines from abroad, they have to do so with the government’s permission.”

The government has already signed

an agreement with Serum Institute of India and Beximco Pharmaceuticals Limited to buy three crore doses of the Oxford vaccine.

The chairman of the committee also said they have asked the ministry to communicate with different vaccine producing countries and organisations so that Bangladesh can procure vaccines suitable for children under 18, as the existing vaccine is not applicable for them.

About the suspension of air communication with the UK, Selim said many countries, including India and countries close to the EU, have stopped air communication with the UK due to a new strain of Covid-19, said to be 70 percent more contagious.

“We have asked the ministry to immediately coordinate with the Civil Aviation Ministry to take measures... We can suspend the air communication primarily for one or two weeks and monitor the situation in the UK meanwhile,” Selim added.

He said, “Earlier we have seen that Italy-returnee passengers, instead of staying in institutional quarantine, roamed around

their areas and contributed to spread the Covid-19 in the country.

“There was also some negligence regarding keeping people in quarantine when the Covid-19 was first detected in the country.”

State Minister for Civil Aviation Ministry M Mahbub Ali recently said the highest authority of the government, as well as different concerned ministries, are closely monitoring the Covid-19 situation in the UK, while the government is yet to take any decision on suspending air communication.

US nurse tests

FROM PAGE 16
affiliate that his arm was sore for a day but that he had suffered no other side-effects.

Six days later on Christmas Eve, he became sick after working a shift in the Covid-19 unit, the report added. He got the chills and later came down with muscle aches and fatigue.

He went to a drive-up hospital testing site and tested positive for Covid-19 the day after Christmas, the report said.

Fugitives can’t be on any

FROM PAGE 16
Journal at 11:30pm the same day. There PK Halder refuted the allegations of laundering a huge amount of money abroad.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Soheli came up with the order after hearing a petition filed by Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan.

He prayed to this court to initiate a contempt of court proceedings against the authorities of Ekattor TV for broadcasting the interview of PK Halder and for bringing him as a guest to the talk show.

While passing the order, the bench said the freedom of expression is guaranteed by the constitution of the republic, but the freedom is subject to some reasonable restrictions.

The HC also fixed January 10 for holding a hearing on this issue.

Lawyer Khurshid submitted the petition yesterday morning.

In the petition, he said PK Halder is accused of laundering a huge amount of money and is a fugitive in the eye of the law as a lower court has issued an arrest warrant against him on November 25 and the government and the ACC are trying to arrest him through the Interpol.

During hearing of the petition, the lawyer told the HC bench that the Ekattor TV authorities have shown audacity and disrespect to the HC by allowing PK Halder to talk to the television programme as a guest and broadcasting his interview since a rule is pending against him.

He mentioned that another HC bench on January 7, 2015, directed the authorities concerned to stop publishing statements of BNP leader Tarique Rahman in the media as he is a fugitive.

Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik told the HC bench yesterday that there was a serious

repercussion as Ekattor TV had treated PK Halder as a guest in the talk show.

Issuing a suomuto rule, the HC bench led by Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder on November 18 wanted to know what steps have been taken to arrest PK Halder, who fled the country after allegedly siphoning off around Tk 10,200 crore from some non-banking financial institutions, and to bring him back to the country.

The court ordered the authorities concerned of the government and the ACC to explain the steps taken to arrest and bring him back.

In the rule, the court also asked the authorities to show causes as to why their inaction and failure in arresting and bringing PK Halder back should not be declared illegal.

On October 21 this year, another HC bench directed the law enforcement authorities to arrest PK Halder immediately after his return.

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

In an investigation, Bangladesh 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, said the bank officials.

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

The ACC opened an 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.

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.

Transport strike set to begin

FROM PAGE 16
transport owners and workers. The local administration, however, said they are trying to solve the problem.

President of Pabna district transport owners association, freedom fighter Habibur Rahman Habib, said vehicular movement on the Dhaka-Pabna highway in Sirajganj’s Shahzadpur has been hampered for over a week due to the harassment of Pabna transport workers going through the upazila to Sirajganj.

“The men of [Shahzadpur] transport owners and the transport workers association used to collect excessive toll from vehicles going from Pabna to Dhaka on the highway, Shahzadpur transport men often assault workers of vehicles of Pabna when they are driving on the highway,” Habibur Rahman Habib told the Daily Star.

He said transport movement to and from Pabna on its highways will remain closed indefinitely.

Talking to The Daily Star, Md Firoz Khan, former president of transport workers association, claimed no step was taken to resolve the issue, which is why transport owners and workers decided on the indefinite transport strike.

“We had placed a six-point demand on Monday with a 72-hour deadline for fulfilling them, but till now no step has been taken in this regard, so the strike has kicked off,” Firoz Khan said.

However, Pabna Deputy Commissioner Kabir Mahamud told The Daily Star that the Pabna district administration has already talked to the Sirajganj district administration and the transport leaders of both districts. “We are trying our best to solve the problem,” The DC added.

WHO urges fair distribution

FROM PAGE 16
the first cases of pneumonia of unknown origin to the UN health agency.

“Vaccines offer great hope to turn the tide of the pandemic. But to protect the world, we must ensure that all people at risk everywhere - not just in countries who can afford vaccines - are immunised,” he said.

He also urged countries to combat conspiracy theories and attacks on science, saying “The choice is easy,”

Cabinet okays

FROM PAGE 16
National highway (N-1) (Daudkandi-Chattogram portion), informed the additional secretary.

He said the committee returned the proposals asking for revision.

Road Transport and Highways Division forwarded the proposal to award Tk 290.27 crore contract for one package (Chattogram portion) of the project to Taher Brothers Ltd as well as to award Tk 556.54 crore contract for construction work of Kumilla portion under the same project to joint venture of Abdul Momen Ltd and Spectra Engineers Ltd.

The committee also gave a nod to the proposal of Local Government

Engineering Department (LGED) for appointment of joint venture of Ramboll Denmark A/S, Aqua Consultant & Associates Ltd (Bangladesh) and Resource Planning and Management Consultants (Pvt.) Ltd, as consultant at Tk 57.79 crore for Second City Region Development Project.

The committee also approved the proposal of Bangladesh Power Development Board for repair works of two units of Karnaphuli Hydroelectric Power Plant involving Tk 126.81 crore.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal chaired the meeting in virtual platform.

Govt plans to import 10 lakh tonnes

FROM PAGE 1
keeping the second wave of Covid-19 in mind, because the government may have to go for food intervention [distributing food free of cost or at reduced price],” she told The Daily Star yesterday.

“Till now, we have a target to import 10 lakh tonnes of rice at government level. If necessary, we will import more. Apart from this, we will collect paddy from farmers if they are willing to sell,” the secretary said when this paper contacted her after the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase approved a proposal to import 50,000 tonnes of rice from an Indian company.

As per the proposal, PK Agri Link Private Ltd will provide the rice at Tk 33.72 per kg.

Bangladesh imported only 4,000 tonnes of rice in the last fiscal year, according to the food ministry documents.

The development came two days after the food ministry, following the approval of the prime minister, on Monday wrote to the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to allow the private

sector to import rice at 25 percent duty to stabilise the rice market.

Currently, an importer has to pay 62.5 percent duty to import rice. However, rice importers will have to apply to the food ministry with all necessary documents to avail the reduced duty.

The NBR will issue a circular in this regard soon and none would be allowed to import rice at this reduced rate without government approval, the food secretary said.

Asked how much rice they would allow the private sector to import, the food secretary said, “There is no ceiling here. We will allow them [private sector] until the rice price comes down to tolerable levels and the farmers get a reasonable price for their products.”

However, Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque earlier this week said the government will not allow import of more than six lakh tonnes of rice by the private sector to safeguard the interests of farmers.

Apart from the 50,000 tonnes, the purchase committee earlier approved another proposal of procuring 1 lakh tonnes of rice, while the government

will collect another 1.5 lakh tonnes of rice from India under the government-to-government initiative.

These moves came as prices of rice have kept soaring in both retail and wholesale markets.

According to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), price of per kg coarse rice was Tk 46 yesterday, which is 47.69 percent higher than the price of the same rice on December 30 last year.

The price of fine and medium rice also saw a rise between 20 and 25 percent compared to the price of December 30 last year, according to the TCB.

The food grain reserve was 7.39 lakh tonnes -- 5.37 lakh tonnes of rice and 2.02 lakh tonnes of wheat -- on Sunday, while the reserve of food grain was 13.83 lakh tonnes on the same date last year, according to the food ministry.

The government’s failure to attain its Boro procurement target and increased distribution of cereal among people affected by the pandemic and recurring floods are blamed for this situation.

New import

FROM PAGE 16
Bangladesh. Talking to newsmen on his arrival at Dhaka Airport after attending the 50th anniversary of the USSR, Syed Nazrul informs that Breznev, the first secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, in his four-hour long report presented on the occasion discussed Bangladesh and his report demonstrated the Soviet desire to further strengthen relations with the country. The names of Bangladesh and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are very familiar to each and every citizen of the Soviet Union, he adds.

BHASHANI’S CALL FOR SOCIALISM
Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, president of the Bangladesh Nationalist Awami Party, announces today that he would lead a deputation to Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman next week to discuss the 15-point charter of demands of the seven-party committee of action which is headed by the Maulana himself.

Addressing a peasant-worker rally at the Suhrawardy Uddyan today, Maulana Bhashani says that if Bangabandhu agrees to the charter of demands, the forthcoming elections would be free, fair and impartial. Whoever will emerge victorious in such an election, be it Awami League or any other party, he would ungrudgingly respect the electoral verdict, adds the Maulana. “But under any circumstances the struggle for socialism would continue,” he reiterates.

Source: January 1, 1973 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Bangladesh Observer and Ittefaq.

3 of family die

FROM PAGE 16
at Shashongachha railway crossing near the Cumilla Railway Station.

Sub-Inspector Ismail Hossain Siraji, in-charge of Cumilla Railway police out post, confirmed four passengers, including two women and a driver of an auto-rickshaw, were injured after the incident.

He added that all four were taken to Cumilla Medical College Hospital where Farid Munshi died after admission. Peyara Begum died while undergoing treatment. Akhi and driver Robiul were referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

On the way there, Akhi succumbed to her injuries.

While talking to reporters, Md Harun, a relative of the family, said, “Farid Munshi were on their way to Cumilla town for medical treatment purposes. They hired a CNG-run auto-rickshaw from the village home and was on their way when the accident occurred.”

22 more die

FROM PAGE 16
2,677.93 recoveries and 44.22 deaths per million.

The country’s infection number reached the 5,00,000-mark on December 20. The first death was reported on March 18 and the death toll exceeded 7,000 on December 12.

The government has been warning of a second wave of Covid-19 in winter and urging people to follow health safety measures. It has also adopted a “no mask, no service” policy.

Bangladesh will get Covid-19 vaccines for around 4.5 crore people by May-June next year, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam said recently.

“We will get 3 crore doses of vaccine for 1.5 crore people at the end of January or early February next year and 6 crore doses for 3 crore people by May-June.”

Russia opens ‘fraud’ probe against Navalny

AFP, Moscow

Russian investigators on Tuesday opened a criminal probe into Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, alleging he used more than 356 million rubles (\$4.8 million) of donations to his organisations for personal purposes including holidays abroad.

<div><div></div><div>DESCO POWER IS YOURS ISO 9001:2015 Certified</div><div></div></div> <div>Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd. (DESCO) House # 22/B, Faruque Sarani, Nikunja # 2, Dhaka-1229,Bangladesh Tel. No: +88 02 8900110-11, 8900820-23, Fax No. +88 02 8900100 E-mail: pit@desco.org.bd, Web: www.desco.org.bd</div>				
Invitation for International Tender				
1	Ministry/ Division	Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources/Power Division		
2	Agency	Dhaka Electric Supply Company Limited (DESCO)		
3	Procuring Entity Name	Procurement, Inspection & Testing Division, DESCO		
4	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka, Bangladesh		
5	Invitation for	Construction of 12(Twelve) storied commercial building with 06 (Six) nos. basement floors for 'DESCO Head Office Building' at plot- 49/A, Nikunja-2, Khilkhet, Dhaka.		
6	Tender No.	ICT - 55/2020		
7	Invitation Ref No.	27.24.0000.021.07.055.20.1379		
8	Date	30/12/2020		
KEY INFORMATION				
9	Procurement Method	One Stage Two Envelope Tendering Method		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
10	Budget and Source of Funds	DESCO's own fund		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
11	Tender Package Name	Total Civil & Finish Works, Building Electro-Mechanical System and Complete Facade Works for DESCO Head Office Building		
12	Tender Selling Date, Closing & Opening Date and Time	Last Selling Date	Closing Date &Time	Opening Date & Time
		February 15, 2021	February 16, 2021 12.00 Hr BST	February 16, 2021 12.30 Hr BST
13	Date & Time and Address of the office for Pre-tender Meeting	January 20, 2021; 11:00 Hr BST Conference Room, Office of the Managing Director, DESCO. House # 22/B (3 rd floor), Faruque Sarani, Nikunja#2, Uttara, Dhaka-1229, Bangladesh.		
		Selling Office of Deputy General Manager (Accounts), DESCO House # 22/B (6 th floor), Faruque Sarani, Nikunja#2, Dhaka-1229.	Receiving Conference Room, Office of the Managing Director, DESCO House # 22/B (3 rd floor), Faruque Sarani, Nikunja#2, Dhaka-1229, Bangladesh.	Opening Conference Room, Office of the Managing Director, DESCO House # 22/B (3 rd floor), Faruque Sarani, Nikunja#2, Dhaka-1229, Bangladesh.
14	Name & Address of the office for selling Tender Document, receiving & opening tender			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
15	Eligibility of Tenderer	This invitation for Tender is open to all eligible Tenderers or JVCA as mentioned below: 1. General Experience : The minimum number of years of general experience of the Tenderer in the construction works as Prime Contractor, subcontractor or management contractor shall be 15 (Fifteen) years under public or reputed sector organization in national or international counting backward from the date of publication of Invitation for Tender in the News Paper. 2. Specific Experience – A. The minimum specific experience as a Prime Contractor in construction works of i) At least 3 (Three) contracts of successful completion of 10 Storied or above Building with Basements (having not less than 1000 Sqm area of each Basement &10000 Sqm total built area of the building) of Office / Residential building works in any Govt./ Semi-Govt./ Autonomous Organization or reputed private sector in national or international level over the last 10 (Ten) years till the date of publication of Invitation for Tender in the News Paper. ii) Among the 3 (three) Contracts, at least 01 (One) Contract shall be of 12(Twelve) Storied or above Building with minimum 3(three) Basements with a value not less than BDT 170.00 (one hundred seventy) Crore including Civil, Sanitary& plumbing and Electrical works in a single contract (To be supported by work completion certificate). iii) The contractor or his nominated Subcontractor(s) must have completed two or more unitized curtain wall work in a single contract, glazing area not less than 10,000 sqm in last 05(five) years and should have unitized curtain wall fabrication work experience in Asia. (as per annexure-XI to XV) iv) The contractor or his nominated Subcontractor's must have experience of successful completion of Piling with Hydraulic Rotary Rig, Sanitary & Water supply system, Electrical works, Air conditioning works, supply & installation of Lift & Escalator, Generator, Electrical Sub-station, Fire detection & protection System works etc. as per annexure-XI to XIII. B. In case of foreign tenderer, experience certificate shall be authenticated by Chamber of Commerce and Industries or Foreign Ministry or Embassy/High commission of the tenderer's country. Authentication by Chamber of Commerce and Industries shall have to be attested by Bangladesh Embassy /High commission in tenderer's home country. 3. Tender capacity- Not less than BDT 175.00 (one hundred seventy five) Crore 4. Liquid Assets/ Working Capital /Credit Facilities- not less than BDT 20.00 (Twenty) Crore . Tenderer's latest Credit Information Bureau (CIB) report of Bangladesh Bank must be submitted with the information on Liquid Assets/ Working Capital/ Credit Facilities. 5. Average annual Construction Turnover over: not less than BDT 120 (One hundred twenty) Crore calculated as total certified payments received for contracts in progress or completed, in the last 05 (Five) years till the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper; 6. Other eligibility and qualification criteria of Tenderer are detailed in Tender Documents. NB: Bangladesh Bank exchange rate (USD to BDT) on the date of tender opening will be considered for evaluation process.		
		i. Setting up site including developing compacted formation level, ii. Erection of required site facilities, iii. Shore protection by Shore pile, king post pile & tension pile using Hydraulic Rotary rig method. iv. Construction of Raft/ Mat Foundation v. Construction of Basement in Top down Method. vi. Construction of RCC works in Foundation and Superstructure vii. Construction of suspended steel structure Bridge connecting buildings at each floor above 1 st floor. viii. Brick work/Stone work/Tiles work/Plaster Work/Epoxy paint work/ Paint work/ Water feature work/Grill work/ Aluminum and glazing work/ Wood works/Plantation work and all other finish work as per construction drawing. ix. Provide facilities of internal & external electrification, internal & external sanitary, internal water supply, internal gas work etc. x. Supply fitting and fixing of HVAC system, Electric Generator & substation works, Fire protection & suppression works, Fire detection including alarm & evacuation system works, vertical transportation such as elevator & escalator works, BMS system, Building Automation System etc. xi. Complete Security works as per tender document, Complete IT & communication works, xii. Sewage treatment plant, waste disposal works, Solar system, Rain water harvesting, deep tube well to be detailed in tender documents. xiii. Supply, Fitting & Fixing of complete unitized curtain wall glazing system with aluminum Louver fin works. Brief Description of works has been mentioned in the tender document: volume 2, 3 & 4 of 4. Completion Time: 36 (thirty six) months.		
17	Price of Tender Document	US\$ 300.00 (USD Three Hundred) or BDT 25,000/- (Twenty Five Thousand Taka) only payable in the form of Pay Order/Bank draft from any scheduled bank in Bangladesh in favor of ' Dhaka Electric Supply Company Limited (DESCO) '.		
18	Tender Security Amount	The amount of the Tender Security shall be: BDT 7,00,00,000.00 (Taka Seven Crore only) for participating in the tender. The tender security shall be in the form of an irrevocable Bank Guarantee issued by any scheduled bank of Bangladesh or by any internationally reputable bank in favour of ' Dhaka Electric Supply Company Limited '. But in case of internationally reputable bank, the Bank Guarantee should be endorsed by its any correspondent bank located in Bangladesh.		
19	Address of official inviting tender	Interested tenderers may obtain further information from the office of the following address during normal office hours (09:00 to 17:00 hours BST) . Office of the Superintending Engineer (P.&T) Address: House # 22/B (1 st floor), Faruque Sarani, Nikunja#2, Dhaka-1229, Bangladesh. Email: pit@desco.org.bd, pd.descohq@desco.org.bd		
20	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any/all tender(s) without assigning any reason whatsoever.			
Engr. Mohammad Kamruzzaman SE (Procurement, Inspection & Testing), DESCO				

“What I read in 2020”: Writers Select

COMPILED BY SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI AND TOWRIN ZAMAN

We asked some of the prominent writers and academics from Bangladesh about the books they most enjoyed in 2020. Some of them confessed that the year has been too difficult to find much time for reading. Others named a diverse line up of books, from fiction set in Bangladesh, Nigeria and Florida, to nonfiction exploring current affairs, poetry, history and memoir.

FAKRUL ALAM

Writer, academic, translator
Author of *Once More into the Past* (Daily Star Books, 2020)
One book which bowled me over and which I realise I should have read a long time back is Akhteruzzaman Elias's masterpiece, *Khawabnama* (Mawla Brothers, 1996). I believe it's being translated now; if it finds a good international publisher Elias will surely be on the shelves with Hardy and Faulkner as a literary chronicler who made a whole region come alive at a certain moment of history.

As the year ends, I am being astounded by Shashi Tharoor's immensely relevant and learned but completely absorbing book, *The Battle of Belonging* (Aleph Book Company, 2020), and I can't resist telling you how the Nobel Prize awards alerted me to Louis Gluck's quiet but subtle poems of emotions evoked oh so delicately!

KAISER HAQ

Translator, critic, academic
Of books published this year, I have read with particular pleasure two books that happen to be very different in subject matter. *A Little History of Poetry* by John Carey (Yale University Press, 2020) engagingly blends biographical and historical information with insightful textual commentary, and in just 80,000 words covers almost everything poetic from *Gilgamesh* to Maya Angelou and Les Murray. *Has China Won* (PublicAffairs, 2020) by Kishore Mahbubani is a timely and brilliant analysis of issues arising out of China's meteoric rise as an economic superpower. It includes wise advice that the West had better heed.

SELINA HOSSAIN

Writer, academic, translator
It is hard to find books on Indian Aryan tribes and learn about their traditions and experiences. I found both in the writings of Indigenous author Verrien Elwin, edited by Mahashweta Debi in an edition published by the Shahittya Academy in 2001.

REBECCA HAQUE

Professor of Literature, University of Dhaka
In 2020, I re-read *The Romantic Agony* by Mario Praz (Oxford University Press, 1978, tr. A. Davidson), Meena Alexander's *Name me a Word* (Yale University Press, 2018), Shahidha Bari's *Dressed* (Jonathan Cape, 2019), Moira Egan's



COLLAGE: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

Synaesthesia (Encounter Books, 2017), Toni Morrison's *The Measure of Our Lives* (Knopf, 2019), Chuck Palahniuk's *Consider This* (Grand Central Publishing, 2020), Ntozake Shange's *For Coloured Girls who have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* (Scribner, 1997), and Lakhsmi Vishwanathan's *Women of Pride* (Roli Books, 2008).

SHAHEEN AKHTAR

Author, development worker
Although originally a poem about love, verses on the Prophet Solomon have been performed in synagogues for the past 3,000 years, yet never have they lost their depth and essence, even when translated into Bangla. This year, I was completely enchanted by the *Soleiman Geetika* in poet Sajjad Sharif's translation.

TAHMIMA ANAM

Writer & anthropologist
Author of *The Bengal Trilogy* (Daily Star Books)
The book that bowled me over this year is Leesa Gazi's *Hellfire* (Westland Publishers, 2020, tr. Shabnam Nadiya). It was published in Bangla 10 years ago as *Rourob*, but I read it for the first time in English. It's a surprising, dark, thought-provoking novel which has haunted my dreams since I read it. The translation captures the humour and tone of Leesa Gazi's writing perfectly. I cannot recommend it enough.

SHABNAM NADIYA

Writer and translator
Among a handful of books that blew me away this year, Barnali Saha's *The North End* (Pathak Samabesh, 2020) has a simple story—the narrator is in Dhaka asking a friend to help her leave her husband and fly off to her Danish boyfriend. Saha uses this springboard to explore

why the pricey coffee joint The North End has eight branches, all in Dhaka, and one in Ukhiya, the remote border town hosting the biggest Rohingya camp, globalization, international aid, and the refugee crisis. This novel is rooted in *desh* while it casts a keen eye on the bigger world out there and does so utilising a female voice that is contemporary, urban and self-aware.

FARAH GHUZNAVI

Author of *Fragments of Riversong* (Daily Star Books, 2013), Editor of *Lifelines*
Written by Florida-based novelist Carl Hiaasen, *Squeeze Me* (Knopf, 2020) manages to satirise what many of us would consider beyond satire—namely, an American president who spends much of his time in his Florida resort, surrounded by his fawning, racist fan club. Hiaasen then draws in a cast of misfits to tell a blackly humorous tale where the only illegal alien worth worrying about is a Burmese python. It is the snake that is responsible for the disappearance of one of the president's rich acolytes, whose “murder” is inevitably blamed on an illegal migrant.

I also enjoyed reading Oyinkan Braithwaite's *My Sister, the Serial Killer* (Doubleday, 2018). This book tells the story of a dysfunctional pair of Nigerian siblings. As the elder of the two, Korede has been brought up to protect Ayoola. But when this extends to cleaning up after Ayoola's murderous tendencies, the reader is left wondering what really drives Korede to keep rescuing her sister. For me, the story was a brilliant escape from the challenges of pandemic reality, and a welcome introduction to a writer capable of pulling off such an interesting and unusual writing style.

THE BOOK REPORT

READING RE(AR)VIEW

A Wrap on Reading Challenges and Recording Stats

YAAMEEN AL-MUTTAQI

As the final pages of 2020 flick away, a lot of us find ourselves cracking open our diaries, or signing into our reading apps to log in the last few books of the year. Reading challenges are great—it was a reading challenge that introduced me to one of my now favourite authors, and another that made me finally finish the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, a whole decade after my dad confiscated it from me for reading too much.

Challenges with set criteria can be a great way to diversify your reading. The Reading Women challenge, for instance, is diverse and intersectional—the categories for the 2021 challenge include trans authors and writers from Muslim, Latinx, Caribbean, Asian, Arab, and indigenous backgrounds, and stories related to incarceration, social justice, rural settings, and queer life. “Our goal is to encourage you to read widely (and fight the patriarchy [...]) so just have fun with it!” they told readers on Instagram. With the dearth of diverse voices in the publishing industry—be it the indigenous and minority lives of Bangladesh, or the paltry offerings of ethnic counterparts in the West—the more diverse authors we read, the more they will be published, and the greater the variety of human experience will be out there for us to dive into.

For those who get a serotonin rush from ticking off goals, reading challenges can help track capabilities and prejudices and improve ourselves year on year, like an athlete keeping a log of how fast and long they can go each month.

Personally, I prefer using The StoryGraph, a web platform that functions much like Goodreads to catalogue your reading. It is, however, far more user friendly and community based, and aims to deliver a more nuanced approach to recommending books and categorising likes and dislikes. StoryGraph breaks down the moods, genres, pace, lengths, and ratings of your books, and records how many times you have reread them. From my breakdown, for instance, I learned that I was mostly in the mood for adventure this year, and that I vastly overestimate the average size of the books I read.

As many of our followers have told us on Instagram, books were an escape from the grim reality that has been our

everyday this year—“providing a sense of achievement and also something to wake up to every morning,” as Sabrina Anjum Poonam, a bookstagrammer, put it. But as adults, we may crave the days when we could finish entire 500-page novels in one sitting, when we never had to worry about meals, or laundry, or bills, or jobs and assignments. All these activities take time and energy, and reading, for many of us, is a hobby that needs to be put to the side for more important tasks.

A truth we do not often acknowledge, too, is that sometimes we need a break from our hobbies. Burnout is very real—as Mutiul Md Muhaimin shared with us on social media, “This year was so horrible that hobbies, like reading, that normally uplift me did not do anything to cheer me up.” These anecdotes reveal



CARTOON: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

a common theme: life happens, it is okay to take a break sometimes, and in that break, you can find other ways to grow, to listen to stories, to gain new information, through video games, podcasts, film, TV shows and documentaries. Your books will be there for you when you get back.

Humans are social creatures that enjoy consuming and telling stories. Reading challenges are a wonderful marriage of those traits. As they become more and more popular, it really boils down to setting realistic boundaries and expectations. And being kind to oneself if you fail to meet them. Reading is fun. Whatever challenges you set yourself in the coming year, hold onto that joy.

Yaameen Al-Muttaqi works with robots and writes stories of dragons, magic, friendship, and hope. Send him a raven at yaameen3112@gmail.com.

THE SHELF

Daily Star Books' Favourite Reads of 2020

COMPILED BY MEHRUL BARI

The DS Books staff are excited to recommend the books, published in 2020, that taught us what it means to find joy, to be terrified and uplifted, and to willingly get lost in the written world. A longer version of this list—with more books suggested by more staff writers—will be available online. Read and follow us on @thedailystarbooks on Instagram, @DailyStarBooks on Twitter, and fb.com/DailyStarBooks on Facebook. Have a happy new year!

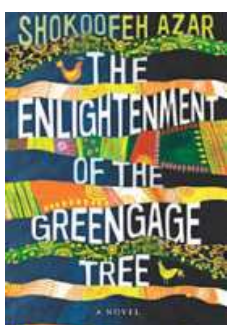


LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND
Rumaan Alam (Ecco Books)
Selected by Sarah Anjum Bari

Out of all the books that I had to speed through for work this year, Rumaan Alam's *Leave the World Behind* was an exception. I gulped it down because it was impossible to put down. The novel captures perfectly the mood of 2020—the slow dread and unease of living in a world approaching collapse, while we distract ourselves with social niceties and capitalist consumption and, unnoticed, our prejudices and animal instincts to protect our own start kicking in.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE GREENGAGE TREE
Shokoufeh Azar (Europa Editions)
Selected by Shah Tazrian Ashrafi

A work of magic realism, told through the perspective of a dead narrator, *The Enlightenment of the Greengage Tree* is about an Iranian family post-revolution, treading through the consequences of a brutal regime's rise to power. The stories in this book brilliantly capture the terror and beauty of being alive. It opened my eyes to new frontiers of literature and its endlessly expanding scope.

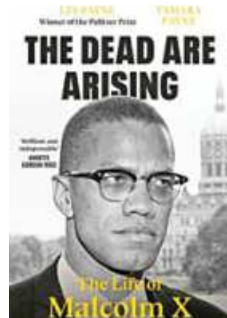
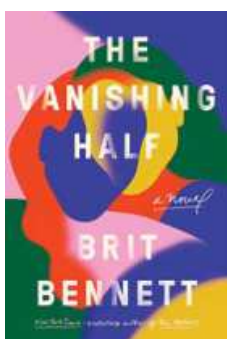


SISTERS
Daisy Johnson (Riverhead Books)
Selected by Mehrul Bari

One of the year's greatest highlights was Daisy Johnson's *Sisters*, a gothic-domestic drama which follows siblings September and July on their way to a house that has no option but to be haunted. Not paranormal by any means, there are ghosts aplenty—with even the prose, jarring, shifting often between its characters like crazed rattles. As much *Martha Marcy May Marlene* as *Turn of the Screw*, Johnson's *Sisters* presents 2020 with one of its most haunting tales this side of the television.

THE VANISHING HALF
Brit Bennett (Riverhead Books)
Selected by Samira Ahmed

The Vanishing Half tells the story of twins Desiree and Stella, a timely, topical read that explores Black history and underscores the devastating, long-lasting effects of racism on marginalised groups. Bennett's writing pulls the reader right into the gripping events of her novel. No wonder HBO snapped it up for a seven-figure deal!



THE DEAD ARE ARISING: THE LIFE OF MALCOLM X
Les & Tamara Payne (Liveright)
Selected by Israr Hasan

My favorite book of 2020, which I read twice in two separate readings, is the latest fleshed out biography of Malcolm X. The book brings to life the vivid pageant of black resistance under oppression, and the will to confront the ideas of change and personal reinvention. It also charts the formation of one of 20th century's most charismatic civil rights activists, whose thoughts saturate the ongoing social justice movements across the globe.

BANG!
Matt Kindt & Wilfredo Torres (Dark Horse Books)
Selected by Mir Zariiful Karim

Few books can entice more than with a cover quote from Keanu Reeves. Liking it to James Bond and *Tintin*, and with an unprintable adjective about the graphic novel's mad-cap nature, the man wasn't wrong. *BANG!* is absolutely all those things and more. When within the first few pages the suave and punchline-ready secret agent gets fatally shot and dumped into the ocean by what would normally be a prototypical Bond Girl, you know that things are going to spin out of control soon.

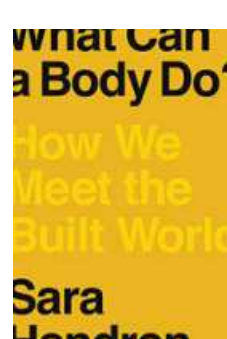


WRITERS & LOVERS
Lily King (Grove Press)
Selected by Towrin Zaman

Reading this felt akin to being hugged by a close friend. A story about a 31-year-old writer grappling with the mess that is her life, it is a book about writing a book. The prose enchanted me and the character and her journey will stay with me for a long, long time.

WHAT CAN A BODY DO? HOW DO WE MEET THE BUILT WORLD?
Sarah Hendren (Riverhead Books)
Selected by Selima Sara Kabir

This will definitely be a go-to suggestion for anyone looking to learn more about disabilities, or even just for its thought-provoking storytelling. I think it deserves to be added to college/university syllabi on diversity and inclusion.






SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A total of 2,170 migrants perished in attempts to get to Spain by boat this year, compared to 893 in 2019, according to the report by the NGO Caminando Fronteras. The shortest route to the islands is more than 100 kilometres from the Moroccan coast, but it is notoriously dangerous because of the strong currents in the Atlantic.



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
সরঞ্জাম নিয়ন্ত্রক (পূর্ব) এর দপ্তর
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম

তাং-৩০-১২-২০২০ইং

সংশোধনী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

অত্র দপ্তর হতে জারিকৃত আন্তর্জাতিক দরপত্র বিক্রয় বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-২০২০-২১/০৪ তাং-০৮-১২-২০২০ইং এর অন্তর্ভুক্ত ক্রমিক ১ হতে ৯ এর দরপত্র খোলার সময় অনিবার্য কারণবশতঃ আদিষ্ট হয়ে নিম্নবর্ণিত ভাবে সংশোধন করা হলো।

সংশোধনী বিবরণী	যা হইবে	পরিবর্ত
দরপত্র দলিল ক্রয়ের তারিখ ও সময়	১৪-১২-২০২০ হতে ১২-০১-২০২১ইং তারিখ পর্যন্ত (সকল কর্মদিবসে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে)।	১৪-১২-২০২০ হতে ০৬-০১-২০২১ইং তারিখ পর্যন্ত (সকল কর্মদিবসে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে)।
দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১৪-১২-২০২০ হতে ১২-০১-২০২১ইং তারিখ পর্যন্ত (সকল কর্মদিবসে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে) এবং ১৩-০১-২০২১ইং তারিখ বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।	১৪-১২-২০২০ হতে ০৬-০১-২০২১ইং তারিখ পর্যন্ত (সকল কর্মদিবসে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে) এবং ০৭-০১-২০২১ইং তারিখ বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	১৩-০১-২০২১ইং তারিখ বেলা ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা।	০৭-০১-২০২১ইং তারিখ বেলা ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা।

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে।

মোঃ এমদাদুর রহমান
সহকারী সরঞ্জাম নিয়ন্ত্রক (সদর) (চঃ দাঃ)
পক্ষে-সরঞ্জাম নিয়ন্ত্রক (পূর্ব)
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম

এস(২০)(২৪০)
জিডি-২১০৭

KEY EVENTS 2020

PLANE CRASH IN IRAN

On January 8, a Ukrainian International flight crashed in Iran, killing all 176 people on board. On January 11, it was revealed that the crash was due to missiles launched by Iran. Tehran said they mistook the airliner for enemy jet.

US-TALIBAN ACCORD

The US and the Taliban signed a deal in Doha on February 29, with all foreign forces to quit Afghanistan by May 2021 after nearly two decades of war. Talks between the Afghan government and insurgents started in September, but fighting raged on as the Taliban launched attack after attack and a string of civil society figures were assassinated. The Pentagon is due to pull 2,000 of 4,500 US soldiers out of the country by January 15, 2021.

SHOOTING IN THAILAND

On February 8, a disgruntled Thai soldier started a shooting spree at a mall in Nakhon Ratchasima that left 30 people dead and 57 wounded. The shooter was shot and killed.

RIOTS IN DELHI

Starting from February 23, a 5-day riot killed at least 53 people in the worst violence the Indian capital witnessed in decades. The violence erupted after a mob led by a ruling party leader targeted sit-ins in New Delhi against a new citizenship law, which critics say goes against the secular ethos of the country. Besides Muslims, at least a dozen Hindus died in the violence.

PAKISTAN PLANE CRASH

On May 22, a Pakistani plane carrying 99 passengers and a few crew members crashed after the pilot reported technical difficulties. At least 2 people have survived. This is one of Pakistan's first flights since the coronavirus lockdown. Later a probe blamed Pilot's mistake for the tragedy.

THAIS RISE UP AGAINST ELITES

Students spark pro-democracy protests in July that rolled on for the rest of the year calling for a new constitution, reform of the untouchable monarchy, and for Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha to resign.

CRISIS IN BELARUS

Belarus strongman President Alexander Lukashenko's disputed victory in August 9 elections sparked four months of anti-government protests, centred on his main rival, political novice Svetlana Tikhonovskaya. Opposition leaders were jailed or driven into exile.

THE NAVALNY AFFAIR

Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was flown to Berlin on August 22 in a medically induced coma after becoming violently ill 2 days earlier. Tests reveal he was poisoned with the Soviet-era nerve agent Novichok. Navalny accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of trying to kill him and later released a recording where he appears to trick the alleged agent responsible into telling him the poison was put in his underpants.

JAPAN PM RESIGNS

On August 28, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan announced his resignation, citing health concerns. Abe, Japan's longest serving prime minister, suffers from colitis, an incurable bowel disease.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Heavy fighting for the Armenian-populated region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which broke away from Azerbaijan after a war in the 1990s, went on for 45 days starting from September 27. Several thousand died before a Kremlin-brokered peace deal on November 9, with Armenians losing swathes of territory to Azerbaijan forces.

ETHIOPIA: TIGRAY CONFLICT

In early November, Ethiopian Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize winner Abiy Ahmed ordered a military response to attacks on federal army camps in the dissident northern Tigray region. The Tigray People's Liberation Front -- which has dominated Ethiopian politics for nearly three decades -- denied responsibility and said the reported attacks are a pretext for an "invasion". Federal forces took control of the Tigrayan capital on November 28.

FARMERS PROTEST IN INDIA

Since late November, tens of thousands of farmers from across India launched a mass protest against government reforms on farming laws in the country. There has been a lot of anger against these three new laws, as farmers believe that they are not in their best interests and will harm their business. Farmers say they will continue to protest until the government changes back the reforms carried out in September.

FLASHBACK 2020

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

It was a year like no other. The world has seen many wars, ground shaking political unrests, revolutions and devastating natural calamities. But in no point in modern history, mankind, with all its scientific advancements, was so helpless against a global crisis created by one of the tiniest organisms. In the last 12 months, the novel coronavirus has paralysed economies, devastated communities and confined nearly four billion people to their homes. From Paris to New York, from Delhi to Lagos, and from London to Buenos Aires, streets fell eerily silent, except for all too frequent wail of ambulance sirens, a reminder that death loomed close. Social inequalities, which for years had been growing, were exposed like never before. Human interaction took place behind plexiglasses, face masks. Social media replaced human touch. Though the pandemic dominated the news and lives of people, the year also saw some major conflicts, political upheavals, natural disasters, social unrests all around the world. Here is a look back at some of the major events of the year.



Biden beats Trump

Deeply-divided Americans voted in record numbers in the November 3 presidential election between outgoing Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden after a nasty election campaign. After four days of nail biting because of record early voting, Biden took the White House by 7 million votes. Biden secured 306 electoral votes against Trump's 232. Trump cried fraud without evidence and has yet to concede defeat. Electoral College confirmed Biden's win on December 14.

India-China border tensions

On 5 May, the first standoff began as a clash between Indian and Chinese soldiers at a beach of Pangong Tso, a lake shared between India and Tibet, China, with the Line of Actual Control (LAC) passing through it. Many were wounded. After a number of skirmishes, on June 15, at least 20 Indian soldiers and an undisclosed number of Chinese soldiers were killed in a fierce fight using fists, rocks and clubs. But no shot was fired as troops from both sides respected a long held agreement. Tensions have subsided after several rounds of military and minister-level talks.

Black Lives Matter protests

The killing of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African American, by white police officers on May 25 in Minneapolis sparked protests across the US and inspired anti-racism rallies across the world. The Black Lives Matter movement led to a major debate about race and the toppling of statues of figures linked to slavery or colonisation. After months of unprecedented protests, Covid-19 pandemic fears finally dampened the fierceness of the movement. Secluded protests are still on going in some parts of the US.

Hong Kong clampdown

On June 30, a year after a massive wave of demonstrations, China imposed a sweeping new security law on Hong Kong that opponents say undermines the semi-autonomous city's liberties, promised under its handover from Britain in 1997. Pro-democracy lawmakers were ousted, harassed and arrested. In December, three prominent Hong Kong activists were jailed including Joshua Wong.

China-US tensions

2020 saw US-China relations nosedive, with Trump calling Covid-19 the "China virus" and saying Beijing was responsible for "a mass worldwide killing". They also clashed over the repression of Turkic speaking Uighur minority in the Chinese region of Xinjiang, as well as the national security law imposed on Hong Kong. News of tit-for-tat sanctions, crackdown on IT sector, closure of consulates and war of words has dominated the whole year.

Beirut blast

A massive explosion on August 4 destroyed much of Beirut's port and devastated swathes of the capital, killing more than 200 and injuring at least 6,500. The blast from a vast stockpile of ammonium nitrate fertiliser devastated an already teetering Lebanese economy and the credibility of its governing elite.

Rampaging virus

Of humanity is in lockdown as governments scramble to halt its spread. Massive state aid programmes are rolled out to save jobs as the International Monetary Fund predicts recession, with the global economy shrinking by 4.4 percent. In November, drug companies announce positive results for several vaccines as a second wave of cases lashes the planet. Within a month, the first shots are being given but by Christmas some 1.76 million people are dead, with the US the worst hit.

Iranian roulette

The world held its breath after top Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani was killed in a US drone strike in Iraq on January 3, days after pro-Iranian protesters storm the US embassy in Baghdad. Iran retaliated by launching a volley of missiles at bases in Iraq housing US troops. The same day, it shot down a Ukrainian passenger plane "in error" shortly after take off from Tehran, killing all 176 people on board. Tensions flared up again at the end of November when top Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh was assassinated, with Tehran blaming Israel.

Israel's new friends

The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain normalised ties with Israel on September 15 as Palestinians condemned the move as a "stab in the back". The next month Donald Trump announced that Sudan is joining them, while in November unconfirmed reports of a secret trip to Saudi Arabia by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sparked speculation that the kingdom is set to follow. In another twist, Morocco "resumed relations" with Israel on December 10 in return for the US recognising its claim to Western Sahara.

Fires and hurricanes

A record-breaking Atlantic hurricane season, flash floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and wildfires plagued already reeling communities from Australia to Turkey this year. Thousands of people lost their lives. The year began with Australia experiencing its worst fire season on record, with some six percent of the country in flames and nearly three million animals killed. The western United States faced similar record-breaking wildfires later in the year. Other parts of the United States, Central America, and Southeast Asia were hit with numerous destructive tropical storms.

Brexit endgame

Britain became the first country to leave the European Union on January 31 following its 2016 Brexit referendum. But crucial talks on future ties and trade with the bloc dragged on for months, breaking deadline after deadline as negotiators try to avert a hard Brexit before a last-gasp deal on Christmas Eve. While British PM Boris Johnson claimed victory, Scotland's anti-Brexit leader Nicola Sturgeon said its future is "an independent, European nation".

NOTABLE DEATHS



Egypt's former president **Hosni Mubarak**, who was swept from power by the Arab Spring in 2010, dies in a military hospital aged 91 on February 25



John Lewis, a pioneer of the civil rights movement and long-time member of the US House of Representatives, dies July 17. He was 80.



US Supreme Court judge and feminist icon **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**, dies aged 87 on September 18.



Kuwait's ruling Emir **Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah** died September 29 at age 91.



Saeb Erekat, one of the most experienced and high-profile advocates for the Palestinian cause over decades of dispute with Israel, died on November 10. He was 65.



Bahrain's Prince **Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa**, the world's longest-serving prime minister, dies aged 84 on November 11.



Former French president **Valéry Giscard d'Estaing**, who legalised abortion and brought the country high-speed trains, dies aged 94 from Covid-19 on December 2.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 31, 2020, POUSH 16, 1427 BS

Post-pandemic education must adapt to new reality

The govt. must ensure that no student is left behind

THE unprecedented global pandemic that hit us early this year has, aside from exposing the cracks in our healthcare system, also brought under the spotlight the disparities that exist within our education system. For almost all of this year, our students have been kept out of classrooms, and there are fears this will continue well into 2021. While the entire world has scrambled to adapt to this ‘new normal’ and continue to provide education, Bangladesh too has attempted to meet the needs of over four crore students through remote learning.

However, this has only exposed how dependent our education system is on traditional classroom learning. At the beginning of the pandemic, many educational institutions, especially public ones, found it difficult to shift to online learning, creating a public-private divide. A huge digital divide between urban and rural students, and between students belonging to different social classes, quickly became obvious, and there were concerns about students from rural areas with poor connectivity missing out on their education, thus further deepening social inequalities. The economic burden created by Covid-19 only added to the worries of resources being taken away from education, leading to greater dropouts, child labour and child marriage.

Against this backdrop, experts have suggested that it is high time for the government to introduce “blended learning”, combining online education and traditional face-to-face classroom teaching, as well as airing recorded lessons and engaging in other forms of innovative remote learning and resource-sharing methods. However, the key word here is “innovation”—something which has, unfortunately, been lacking from our education system for a while now. The classes being shown on television for students across the country, in order to bridge gaps in access to the internet and related devices, have been criticised for being dull and repetitive, thus failing to hold children’s attention. Dependency on rote memorisation, private tuition, coaching centres and guidebooks mean that even students who do have access to online classes have struggled with their lessons. While more than a crore students of classes 6-10 were promoted based on assignments and without exams, major public examinations have been postponed indefinitely, including JSC, SSC, HSC and university exams, simply because we could not come up with more innovative ways to assess students beyond traditional examination methods. Although certain public universities have decided to hold exams in 2021 following safety measures, most of them have refused to reopen dormitories and have given no instructions for students who cannot afford private accommodation in Dhaka.

While we step into this new year, our education institutions and relevant government bodies must leave behind their traditional rigidities and adapt to the new reality. They must make every effort to reduce the digital divide in Bangladesh to ensure that no student is deprived of their education. If we are to truly adopt blended learning, teachers’ capacities to provide this education must also be enhanced, and the entire process of classroom instruction and examinations must change. But most importantly, the authorities must ensure that the interests of the students are at the heart of all their decision-making and that no student is left behind.

Forced deportation of workers must stop

Host countries should implement a mandatory “migrant protection policy”

ACCORDING to government data shared by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), the average monthly return of migrant workers in the country increased by four times in the last three months compared to what it was in the previous five months. Data shows that between April 1 and August 27, some 85,790 migrant workers returned home from 26 countries, while the number of returnees increased to a little over 3.26 lakh as of November 30. While many of our workers were deported due to the coronavirus pandemic, many were forced to return due to a fall in global oil price and job losses in tourism, services and construction sectors in the Gulf countries.

Thousands of our workers got stranded after coming home on holiday at the beginning of the pandemic, while others were forced to return by the host countries. Many among them could not fly abroad despite completing all the procedures. A joint survey by Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants and RMMRU this year found that remittance was the only source of income for 57 percent households. Naturally, these families have slipped into poverty amid the pandemic. Reportedly, the government created separate funds of Tk 200 crore and Tk 500 crore as loan support for returnee migrants, and Bangladesh Bank also announced a separate scheme for the returnees. We would like to know an update from the authorities concerned as to how the money was disbursed or whether the schemes were implemented properly.

Our migrant workers have been facing multidimensional challenges as their rights are being violated in many ways. Many were unfairly blamed for Covid-19 transmission in some of the host countries and eventually deported. But during this time, irregular migration on different routes to reach European countries also continued. A large number of our migrants also fell victim to national and transnational trafficking gangs and a number of them had to lose their lives.

We urge the government as well as organisations working with migrants’ rights to put pressure on the host countries to stop forced deportation of workers. Besides, demand should be raised in multilateral forums to implement a mandatory “migrant protection policy” during crisis times, which will include natural disaster, economic recession and health crisis, as stressed by RMMRU. As for addressing the issue of irregular migration, the government needs to adopt some new policies. Its initiative to bring informal grassroots service providers or middlemen under a legal framework to tackle fraudulence is commendable. We hope it will be done without any delay. Furthermore, the government should continue negotiating with the migrant-receiving countries so that the workers stuck at home can have visas and other necessary documents to rejoin their jobs abroad.

The Other Face of Globalisation

Covid-19 and Bangladeshi migrants in 2020



TASNEEM SIDDIQUI

labour market created a scope for the marginalised people of developing countries to benefit from the globalisation process through accessing employment overseas. At the same time, globalisation has also exposed labour migrants to great vulnerabilities including life-threatening situations. The Covid-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on the global trade and commerce, yet it is the migrant workers who have borne the cost more disproportionately than any other group, be it national workforce or citizens of a country.

During the whole period of this crisis, migrants have been serving in essential frontline jobs such as health care, transport, construction, agriculture and food processing industries in different destination countries. Lack of protection of these workers is self-evident from the fact that the spread of Covid-19 has been disproportionately higher among the migrant communities; death rate is also the highest among them. In many of the Gulf and other Arab countries, South East Asian or even some of the European countries during the months of March, April, and even May, migrants were seen on roads, shopping areas and other public places desperately looking for food and shelter. In some cases, employers abandoned them, and in other instances, government authorities were busy apprehending them on the pretext that they were in irregular status. Taking advantage of the pandemic, many of these countries even deported them.

Bangladeshi migrants topped the list when it came to infected persons or people who were in sheer need of assistance. Reports have noted that by July 2020, more than seventy thousand Bangladeshis were infected in 186 countries. By December 27, some 2,330 Bangladeshi migrants had succumbed to Covid-19 in 21 countries (Prothom Alo, 28/12/2020). In Singapore, Bangladeshis constituted almost half of the migrants infected with Covid-19. One-fourth of those who died in Saudi Arabia due to Covid-19 are Bangladeshis. Out of the 328 who died due to Covid-19 in the UAE, 122 were Bangladeshis. Along with Gulf and other Arab countries, Bangladeshi migrants were passing their days in acute hunger in European countries such as Spain, Italy or Portugal as well. The countries of destination shrugged off their responsibility of taking care of its migrant workforce to the extent that Bangladesh government had to organise food and medicine for Bangladeshis in different parts of the world. This has been despite the fact that various international normative frameworks and standards—

such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Global Compact for Migration, and Guidelines for Migrants in Countries in Crisis—uphold that during a crisis situation, it is the responsibility of the destination countries to look after the migrants irrespective of their legal status.

Countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE declared Covid-19 testing free for all migrants irrespective of their legal statuses. In reality, Abdul, who died in July due to brain stroke, had informed

live-in female domestic workers suffer way more hardship compared to those workers who stay outside. Covid-19, however, shows that job loss is almost non-existent among the live-in female domestic workers. Nonetheless, in many instances, they had to agree to delayed payment of wages. With all members staying at home for most of the day, their workload had increased manifold. Close scrutiny of their work by the employers as well as dissatisfaction of the employers

Ali used to be paid a small portion of his salary and the rest of the salary used to be cleared at the end of the year. Due to his arrest and arbitrary return, he could not get his payment from his employer. He left behind Tk 500,000 of his hard-earned income in UAE.

The experiences of the Bangladeshi migrants in 2020 demonstrate that violation of the rights of workers is integral to the process of the current form of globalisation. Covid-19 has essentially



It is unfortunate that labour-receiving countries can still get away with exposing migrants to extreme health risks or deporting them without respecting their job contracts.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

his family before he passed away that he had all the symptoms of Covid-19 but was worried to secure treatment due to his irregular status. Many migrants like Abdul may or may not have been infected by the virus, but passed away without treatment because of their fear of arrest and deportation. Migrants in irregular status or those holding so-called free visas for all practical purposes remained outside the purview of health care that these countries were supposed to provide them.

A survey of BCSM and RMMRU on forcibly returned migrants shows that thirty percent of these migrants residing in 17 countries lost their jobs. Another forty percent remained partially employed with a re-negotiated lower wage, and the rest on free visa could not get employment. Without job or access to income, Fazar Ali took money from home to survive. Before returning to Bangladesh from Kuwait, Selim was surviving by spending his savings that he had generated over the last one year to pay for his visa renewal. In this current unregulated globalisation framework, Bangladeshis like Fazar and Selim are the ones who have been subsidising the economies of the destination countries.

The vulnerability of female migrants has brought out a complex dimension of migrants’ vulnerabilities during crisis situations. Under normal circumstances,

did manifest in physical and verbal abuses. Cleaners, manufacturing workers or live-out domestic workers may not have gone through similar physical and verbal abuses, but they lost their jobs either fully or partially. Their sheer survival in destination countries was at stake.

From early April, the governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Maldives started negotiating with Bangladesh government to take back its citizens who were working in their countries in irregular status. They also pushed the idea of pardoning some of the convicted Bangladeshi migrants if the government brought them back. Arresting and detaining migrants under the pretext of strict implementation of lockdown and drives against irregular migrants were some of the techniques used by the governments of destination countries to deport the workers. Plainclothes members of law enforcing agencies picked up Bangladeshi workers from in front of their residences, shopping centres, roads, food stalls, and put them into detention camps and then deported them to Bangladesh. Shafique, one such worker, remained in one pair of clothes in a detention camp for 28 days. With deep anguish, he said he had taken his shower wearing a plastic packet!

According to the Migrant Forum in Asia, the year 2020 has also witnessed millions of dollars of wage theft. Mohon

exposed that reality. In that sense, there has been little change since the time of the Great Depression of the 1930s, or from the times of oil crisis in 1973. As during the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the global financial crisis of 2009 and 2010, migrants are still being used as the safety valve to cushion the negative outcomes of the crisis.

It is unfortunate that in this age, labour-receiving countries can still get away with exposing migrants to extreme health risks, keeping them effectively outside the health care and other social safety nets, and deporting them without respecting their job contracts or clearing their due wages and other entitlements. The extent of discussion that took place in the recent past on the challenges of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals or those of Global Compact for Migration in the context of Covid-19 does not match the level of discussion that is required on the inability of existing global standards in ensuring the protection of marginalised migrants in crisis situations. The situation of migrants in destination countries during this crisis does warrant a major scrutiny of the rules of the game by all parties for redefining the norms and standards of globalisation.

Tasneem Siddiqui is Professor of Political Science, University of Dhaka, and founding Chair of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

How to Make Climate Pledges Stick



SHANG-JIN WEI

US has withdrawn from the Paris climate accord, it is easy to interpret them as part of the ongoing geopolitical competition for global leadership. But managing climate change is not a zero-sum game. Here, national competition to strengthen ambitions and policies benefits everyone.

To bridge the gap between pledges and tangible results, we will need to lock in these recent commitments and create incentives for other countries to increase their own climate targets. While Covid-19 lockdowns have reduced global carbon dioxide emissions this year, intensive pre-pandemic emissions are likely to return with a vengeance in 2021.

How can we start truly reducing emissions in a timely, efficient, and fair manner? Over the next ten years, Americans need to reduce their per capita carbon consumption from about 200 percent to about 80 percent above the current Chinese level (from about 18 metric tons of carbon per person per year to ten). Similarly, Germany needs to cut its per capita carbon consumption from about 80 percent above the current Chinese level to below the current Chinese level (from about ten to six metric tons per person per year). And the Chinese need to cap their per capita emissions before the end of the decade, while also moving toward carbon neutrality.

To those accustomed to hearing that China is the world’s largest greenhouse-gas (GHG) emitter, these recommendations may come as a surprise. In terms of annual contributions to atmospheric GHGs, China is indeed the world leader, followed by the United States. But in

terms of individual annual contributions, an average German leads a life that is about 80 percent more carbon intensive than the average Chinese; and the average American’s footprint is about 200 percent larger than the average Chinese.

It is no less important to bear in mind that climate change is caused by the entire stock of atmospheric GHGs, not just the emissions from a given year. Because GHGs dissipate slowly, the cumulative emissions from the Industrial Revolution onward—especially those since 1900—

than China (and most other developing countries) at controlling more visible forms of particle pollution, which is not necessarily the same thing as limiting planet-warming GHGs.

Lastly, rich countries’ imports are typically much more carbon intensive than their exports, which means that their residents are maintaining a high-carbon lifestyle partly by offshoring a portion of their emissions to other countries. This is true for rich countries that run a balanced trade account, and it is even more the case



It’s time to move beyond finger-pointing and working toward a uniform carbon tariff and tax regime to increase the costs of emissions globally.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

do more damage than the emissions in, say, 2018-20. From this cumulative point of view, the US and Europe are responsible for an overwhelming majority of atmospheric GHGs, dwarfing the contributions of all other countries combined.

And yet, not all advanced-economy citizens feel this responsibility, for at least three reasons. First, we hear constantly from politicians and the media that China is the “largest emitter,” which, though true, is not the whole truth. Second, Europe and the US are doing a much better job

in countries that run a large merchandise trade deficit. Americans, for example, have a substantially more carbon-intensive lifestyle than the country’s domestic carbon production may suggest.

To go beyond the currently deficient commitments under the Paris climate agreement—and to make up for the time lost under outgoing US President Donald Trump—we need both new pledges and new sticks and carrots. For starters, all rich countries should aim to achieve carbon neutrality on the consumption side, not just on the production side, no later than

2050. Those that can reach this target sooner should of course do so.

Moreover, all of today’s middle-income countries should aim to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Because the carbon intensity of developing countries’ exports is often higher than that of their imports, a net-zero emissions pledge is a taller order on the production side than it is on the consumption side. The international community needs to provide technical and financial assistance to low- and lower-middle-income countries, conditioned on their efforts to achieve near-carbon neutrality by 2075.

We can do better than relying just on national pledges and voluntary compliance. A uniform structure of tariffs on carbon-intensive imports and domestic taxes on CO2 emissions for Europe, North America, China, Japan, and like-minded countries would substantially raise the cost of emitting GHGs globally. The revenue from carbon tariffs and taxes can be used to support not only renewable energies but also innovations to reduce the costs of carbon capture and storage.

A carbon tariff would make it costlier for China to walk back on its recent climate commitment, because its carbon-intensive exports would become less competitive. It also would make China *more willing* to fulfil its pledge, because it would lose less business to other exporting countries that have lower environmental standards. And, of course, without the US and China’s participation in any international carbon tariff system, the scheme would not cover enough global imports and consumption to be effective.

US President-elect Joe Biden’s victory and China’s new climate pledge together represent a new opportunity to tackle carbon emissions. We should seize it before it vanishes.

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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

Don't let a 'good crisis' go to waste



THE year 2020 was like no other in recent history. I saw, in the words of WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom, a “once-in-a-century health crisis”, referring to the Covid-19 pandemic, which continues to rage across the world. The 1918-20 Spanish flu, of course, dwarfed the current pandemic in terms of numbers, infecting a third of the world’s population and killing about 50 million. Notwithstanding the hundred-year gap and the difference in magnitude, there are some remarkable similarities between the two pandemics in the way people reacted to them. For example, both saw resistance to masks and hygiene etiquettes. A group self-styled “Anti-Mask League” was active in 1919 in America’s San Francisco; during the current pandemic, salespersons in groceries and restaurants who demanded that customers wear masks were attacked.

In Bangladesh, we have noticed a lack of enthusiasm to wear masks among a section of the public. Fortunately, we are yet to hear of any organised opposition or resistance to it as seen in other parts of the world. Bangladeshis are known for easily adapting to new ideas when convinced. We have seen this time and again. But the key is, they *have* to be “convinced”. This requires special attention and deliberate organised efforts, similar to ones we have seen in cases of family planning, immunisations or oral rehydration therapy (ORT). Typically, such efforts come from the public sector. In specific cases, non-governmental sectors also played critical roles.

Introducing new concepts is always tricky but if done diligently and patiently, it usually comes to fruition. In the 1980s, BRAC implemented a nation-wide programme to popularise the use of ORT for treating the scourge of diarrhoea. Of the twin challenges of transferring the technology to mothers and making them use it, the former was found to be rather easier. With careful planning and house-to-house visits across the country, BRAC was able to transmit the message of how to make the diarrhoea solution correctly. But making people use it was an entirely different ball game. Initial research pointed to a very low utilisation rate—10 percent. BRAC mounted a research programme to understand why this was happening, even when knowledge surrounding the benefits of ORT was nearly universal. The information retrieved through the research was then used to modify BRAC’s approach to programme implementation.

One of the reasons found, for example, was the lack of involvement of men in the programme. The health workers were all women, who connected with the women in the villages, keeping the men uninformed. This often led to speculations and suspicions about the “real” motive of the BRAC programme. In our society, men are often the decision makers and keeping them in the dark meant that women lacked the agency to use the solution. BRAC augmented its strategy by recruiting male workers and connecting with the men at bazars, mosques, temples, schools and tea stalls. It, along with other modifications, worked. The use rate climbed over time and Bangladesh now has the highest use rate of ORT in the world, with over 80 percent of mothers using it when their children have diarrhoea. Not only this, the concept of ORT is now being transmitted intergenerationally.

Coming back to the current pandemic, we are struggling with the use of masks. Are we approaching this problem keeping the twin challenges in mind? To date, I am not aware of any scientific study that examined the reasons why people are reluctant to use masks. The world is celebrating the arrival of vaccines now. There are still many questions to be answered about these vaccines in terms of their availability, duration of immunity, logistics and financing. For a country like ours, it may be “Dilli dur ast”—still a long way to go. Until we are able to vaccinate the majority of our population and create the so-called herd immunity, masks and hygiene etiquettes will remain our only armour against the virus. The government and the society as a whole haven’t done enough in this respect yet.

Despite grave predictions, Covid-19 has

not appeared as the greatest crisis in the history of Bangladesh. Indeed, compared to many others, we have been able to *carry on*. The Bloomberg report that included us in the league of 20 most resilient nations fighting the pandemic is a testimony to this, and we are proud of that. Given the resilience of the people, perhaps we could do better if right policies were adopted and implemented well.

The decade following the end of the Spanish flu saw unprecedented progress in the USA. As The Economist said recently,

specialised equipment (ventilators, testing kits and PPEs) and supply of necessary drugs. Unlike other natural disasters in the past, we have been overwhelmed in this particular case. The head of the government firmly took over the helm but others seemed ill-prepared, leading to poor or little coordination between the different arms of the state. Efforts to get citizens on board were tragically absent. It also showed how poverty and vulnerability deterred enforcement of tough actions in protecting citizens’ health. Added to this

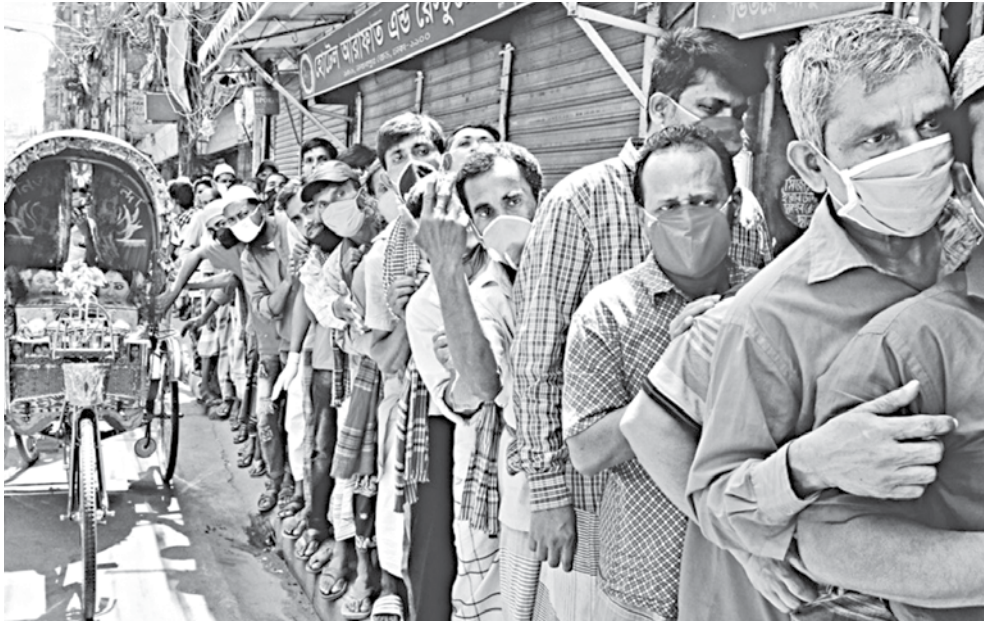
perhaps the Covid-19 crisis and its aftermath might give the government the impetus to bring universal healthcare to everyone in the country. The government spends less than 1 percent of the nation’s GDP on health, the lowest in the world. Our South Asian neighbour Sri Lanka, for example, spends four times as much. Seventy-four percent of our nation’s health expenditures are borne out of pocket, leading 3-4 million people sliding into poverty every year. This will inevitably increase as a result of the Covid-19 fallout. The generous allocation of new resources to meet the pandemic-related challenges convinces us that the government, if committed, can make more money available for health.

The key to achieving UHC is reforming the health financing system. In particular, it requires switching from a system of private voluntary financing (mostly people paying fees for services) to a compulsory public system. This has happened in every developed country in the world. Many countries at Bangladesh’s income level have made tremendous progress towards UHC including Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Vietnam and Morocco. Thailand achieved UHC in 2002 when its GDP per capita was almost exactly the same as Bangladesh’s today. UHC is, therefore, perfectly affordable in Bangladesh.

Progressive leaders often take this initiative because UHC reforms are extremely popular. Across the world, politicians who have delivered UHC to their people have become national heroes. This was the case in Germany, France, Australia, Japan, Canada, Korea, Thailand, Brazil, Mexico, and Indonesia. It is also interesting to note how many of these great UHC reforms emerged out of national crises—including in the UK, France and Japan after WWII, Thailand in 2001 after the Asian financial crisis, and Rwanda after the genocide in 1994. And yet again in 2020, we are seeing some leaders recognising the opportunity that Covid-19 might give them to launch popular UHC reforms, notably in Ireland and South Africa. The crisis even precipitated a change of government in the United States where the Democrats campaigned on a pro-UHC platform.

Bangladesh’s prime minister has the political capital and courage to go for a big push on UHC. As there are sufficient resources available in the country to achieve this goal, there is no reason why she shouldn’t become Bangladesh’s national UHC hero and write her name in the history books. What a wonderful gift this would be during the Mujib Borsho and the golden jubilee year of Bangladesh’s independence!

Mushtaque Chowdhury is Convener of Bangladesh Health Watch, with its secretariat located at the James P Grant School of Public Health. He was previously Vice-Chair of BRAC.



The generous allocation of new resources to meet pandemic-related challenges convinces us that the government, if committed, can make more money available for health.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

With such a deadly disease ever-present amongst us, with the potential to flare up quickly, it is in our best interest that there is truly universal access to a full range of health services needed to tackle the disease and other conditions.

“the Roaring Twenties became a ferment of forward-looking, risk-taking social, industrial and artistic novelty.” The Spanish flu also led to qualitative change in the ways medical practice and education are conducted. More than half of the medical schools were closed down due to poor quality. The new discipline of public health made its debut with the opening of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, thanks to the far-sighted philanthropists such as the Rockefellers.

As the saying goes, “never let a good crisis go to waste”. This necessitates acting quickly and decisively to mitigate the crisis in a way that demonstrably impacts people’s lives. The Covid-19 crisis has revealed the weaknesses in Bangladesh’s health system. These include inadequate surveillance systems and capacity to track the spread of the virus, shortages of health human resources of all categories, lack of essential facilities and equipment (e.g. functioning primary care centres, hospitals and ICUs), insufficient

is the inherent crisis of valid, relevant and timely data.

Covid-19 has set the ground for a “new” health system. Bangladesh has about 30-40 million people who are poor by any standard. With rising poverty and unemployment due to the crisis, this number is likely to rise to about 50 million in the next two to three years. They, in addition to the remaining population, will need publicly financed healthcare. With such a deadly disease ever-present amongst us, with the potential to flare up quickly, it is in our best interest that there is truly universal access to a full range of health services needed to tackle the disease and other conditions. Covid-19 is, therefore, perhaps the ultimate example of why we need universal health coverage (UHC)—if anyone is left out, it threatens the health security of everyone.

The government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has committed to achieve UHC for Bangladesh. Unfortunately, this commitment remains unimplemented. But

2020 IN RETROSPECT

Reinventing the university in a post-pandemic world

MOHAMMAD SHAMSUZZAMAN

WHY does the year 2020 still linger around? The Covid-19 pandemic has brought our civilisation to its knees this year. We’re already tired, scared, and hopeless. We are perhaps living through one of the most turbulent phases of human history, where all we want is to dodge death while dreading seeing our loved ones die. As the new year beckons us, uncertainty looms large in the horizon. Vaccines have emerged, as did a new strain of the virus. In the meantime, the Merriam-Webster dictionary declared “pandemic” as the word of the year 2020. Thus an essentially medical term gains popular and intellectual grounds. I pretend to be an intellectual sometimes. Never could I figure out the intellectual import of such a terrible word, though. I see a new world ahead where we have to rejigger most of our institutions, including universities. What would that university look like?

Such a university would no longer be defined by an online vs on-site binary. A functional university is a flexible one employing various forms and norms of teaching and learning. The pandemic has stretched the scope of teaching and learning at a traditional university otherwise restricted by time and space. Students no longer have to come to universities, which can reach out to them at their convenience. Sceptics would scoff at such a proposition of teaching—it’s pandering, they might say. Way before the pandemic, however, online degree programmes were and alive. Now that reputed universities worldwide have entered the online space, as it’s the only option available during the pandemic, it might emerge as a game changer. It’s doubtless problematic. Who can prove that in-person instruction is perfect? Benedict Carey, in his article “What We’re Learning About Online Learning” in The New York Times, claims that research comparing in-person to online learning comes from so many disciplines where courses, teachers, students, and class composition vary so much that there’s no compelling evidence as of now to conclude that online instruction is inherently inferior to on-site instruction. However, as promising as online instruction appears to be, it was not an informed option. It was a mid-semester emergency. So, it suffers from a shock factor.

Some stakeholders are so shocked by online schooling that they abjure it altogether. Emily Gould, for example, in her essay “Remote Learning Is a Bad Joke” in The Chronicle of Higher Education, claims “it’s

no one’s favourite way to teach or learn.” While I don’t want to generalise her personal experience with online teaching and learning, she doesn’t sound like a renegade to me. Until the pandemic hit, teaching has never been a sedentary profession for me. I never sit while teaching. I jokingly tell my students, “Form a ring around me; I want to be the ringleader.” I roam around the class as we participate in dialogues—punctuated by other activities—on topics assigned. This creates an ecology of inclusion and engagement by disrupting the power dynamics implicit in teacher-student hierarchy as reflected in a typical classroom sitting arrangement. Now though, during class, I sit and talk. Sitting is exhausting and talking (a euphemism for lecturing!) is not teaching. My talk is occasionally disrupted by technological

Residence at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In his essay in The Chronicle of Higher Education titled “How Should College Prepare for a Post-Pandemic World”, he urges colleges and universities to anticipate and plan for change following the pandemic. Drawing on his personal engagement, however, he seems completely disillusioned with online instruction as he claims that it is serviceable but exhausting and unsatisfying. He continues, “if one were to invent a crisis uniquely and diabolically designed to undermine the foundations of traditional colleges and universities, it might look very much like the current global pandemic.” As colleges and universities around the globe are now faced with an unprecedented existential threat, Rosenberg doesn’t sound like a prophet of doom. To some, he might



What would the post-pandemic university look like?

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

glitches, Internet failure, and power outage. Add to that some nonchalant students in their pajamas who can never resist the temptation of going off screen while the class is in session. Besides, sceptics squawk that online instruction fails to provide students with hands-on training. There is, then, an element of compromise there. That sets the Klaxon horn for some professionals against online instruction.

One is Professor Brian Rosenberg, president emeritus at Macalester College, USA, who is currently a President in

sound like a visionary, for his grouses are grounded in reality. Nonetheless, the universe of online instruction is not a monolith. It’s a kaleidoscope of realities wedged between the chaos of the past and possibilities in the horizon. As such, some professionals find Rosenberg’s perspectives on online instruction insipid.

Erika Christakis, for example, in her essay “School Wasn’t So Great Before Covid, Either” in The Chronicle of Higher Education, claims that “many of the problems of remote schooling are merely exacerbations of

Such a university would no longer be defined by an online vs on-site binary. A functional university is a flexible one employing various forms and norms of teaching and learning.

problems with in-person schooling.” Schools were far from perfect before the pandemic, for they already became the warehouses perpetuating the same drills and skills for ages without exploring the possibilities that science and technology afforded. Musty classrooms with an unhealthy teacher-student ratio, lecturing as the default mode of teaching, excessive high-stakes tests, and reliance on rote learning divorced from content knowledge and critical thinking warranted modifications in in-person schooling. As the pandemic suddenly forced schooling online, most of these problems spilled over into online instruction along with the problems implicit in the medium itself. It compounded the crisis further. Learning plummeted. Online schooling was rebuffed headlong. That exasperates the advocates who are convinced about its redeeming potential. The passion and rationale of those debating the pros and cons of online instruction are so persuasive that academia seems divided into two warring camps now.

And the pandemic is potentially a Pandora’s box for both camps. A complete digital transformation of higher education seems to be an unlikely proposition to the diehard patrons of in-person instruction. Education is a human-curated, and socially mediated, intellectual endeavour. It presupposes proximity. The pandemic has pathologised proximity. Humans are grounded. Regular academic rituals are disrupted. As a response to such a crisis, online instruction emerged as a stopgap approach to enrolling and serving students. In the meantime, the protracted isolation imposed by the pandemic has increased

our yearning for in-person interactions. This prompted Professor Rosenberg to speculate that following the pandemic, the traditional in-person schooling will become even more prized. Likewise, in the Harvard Business Review, Sean Gallagher and Jason Palmer argued in their article “The Pandemic Pushed Universities Online: The Change Was Long Overdue” that remote learning is dressed up as online learning via Zoom that has little evolved from video conferencing from the late-1990s. It’s spotty. So the paradigm of analogue, on-campus, and degree-focused learning is apparently not shifting ground anytime soon.

The advocates of online instruction will find such a projection a touch ambitious. The pandemic will leave the global economy crushed in its wake. An in-person education is already resented by students and their families for its hefty price tag. It’s elitist and exorbitant. If a year ago families struggled to afford the cost of in-person education, a year later, with income lost and savings exhausted, the challenges they face drive them toward online education. It’s cheap, convenient, and skills-based. The programmes that some of the reputed universities run entirely online are cost-effective. For example, the cost of a two-year in-person MBA programme in the US exceeds USD 60,000 and may cost as much as USD 100,000. An online MBA, on the contrary, at the University of Illinois costs only USD 22,000. Surprisingly, an online MA in computer science at Georgia Tech costs only USD 7,000, as Sean Gallagher and Jason Palmer tell us in their article in the Harvard Business Review. Add the cost factor to the fact that forced isolation might be followed by an extended period of voluntary separation because of the “epidemic of anxiety” that is likely to follow in the wake of the pandemic, as Professor Rosenberg cautions. When the emergency subsidies—but normal life fails to return—online schooling is the option.

These are binary options. Following the pandemic when the world gradually settles down, education will probably become more inclusive and experimental. Online schooling works. In-person education worked. Pitting one form of schooling against another is reductive. Ideally, a post-pandemic university is a linear university. It will be both stubbornly pristine and doggedly digital. It will function equally effectively whether in a pandemic or in our recovered peace and “normality.”

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COVER STORY

THE VERSATILE SHOWMAN

Emon Chowdhury has made himself renowned with his skills in being a multi-instrumental musician. From playing for the band Chrikutt to making his own instrumentals, he has showcased his talents in various forms. He was even awarded the 'National Film Award' for doing the background score in the movie 'Maya The Lost Mother'. In this interview with Rafi Hossain, he talks about what inspired him to begin his journey in music and his ambitions with music.

Rafi Hossain: Welcome to Uncensored with Rafi Hossain. Today, we are joined by the renowned music director from the new generation Emon Chowdhury. Emon, thank you for giving us your time.

Emon Chowdhury: Thank you for having me, Rafi Bhai. I am very happy to be here talking to you.

Rafi: Emon, I must congratulate you for winning the 'National Film Award'.

Emon: Thank you, I won it for doing the background score of the Masud Pathik film Maya The Lost Mother.

Rafi: What instrument do you prefer the most?

Emon: I am mainly a guitarist, and I like to identify myself as a guitarist. I also know how to play some other instruments.

Rafi: How did you learn to play so many instruments?

Emon: It was a gradual process. I still am learning to play instruments better, and I hope that I will keep on learning to improve my abilities for as long as I am alive. I was raised in a household where everyone was very invested in music. There was always many instruments lying around the house, and when I was young, I found out that guitar classes were being held at my house. Due to living in such a musical environment, it inspired me to become a multi-instrumentalist. When I was much younger, my father tried to teach me to play the guitar and the tabla, but I was never very keen towards it, so he gave up and thought that I would never be interested in music. But, when I was in class eight, I used to see this senior friend from my neighborhood

playing the guitar and singing. I was inspired by that and thought to myself that I need to learn to play the guitar. Then, I told my father about it, and he was skeptical at first, but he soon realized how invested I was when I borrowed guitars from others to practise. My father bought me a guitar and since then, he has been supporting me. My father has always been supportive in my musical ventures and I am very grateful to him for that.

Rafi: When getting married, did anyone from your wife's family raise objections because you are a musician?

Emon: I had to hear that a lot. There was even a point where we almost had to elope. It is a very funny story. At that time, I was on tour with my band Chirkutt in the US, and I heard that my then girlfriend, who is my wife now, might be married off. Fortunately, that did not happen. After hearing that, I quickly came back here, and we decided that we need to get married. Once we came back, Sumi apu



PHOTO: COLLECTED

told me that she will arrange everything for me. So, we booked a resort, and Sumi apu herself arranged everything, and even bought things like the Panjabis we all need to wear. My wife was also very enthusiastic about it, and it was decided that the wedding would be held, and we would invite our band members and some other friends. I even told my parents about it and said that if needed, we would hold a bigger ceremony in the future. However, the night before the wedding I got a call around four am. Sumi apu had called me crying saying that Pavel had got into an accident and had hurt his arm. Upon hearing that, I said that we have to cancel the wedding as we cannot do it without Pavel. However, a

year later, we finally held a wedding, this time with the support of both our families, but we still used the same clothing Sumi apu had bought.

Rafi: When you started, did you set yourself any goal, or do you not plan too far ahead in the future?

Emon: I did not plan too much, but I did set myself a few goals. I wanted to make good music, and music which I will feel good about making. I wanted people to enjoy listening to what I make. I also like making instrumentals. I have noticed how other countries value instrumental music a lot, but in Bangladesh, it is not given the

importance it deserves. That is why I try to introduce more instrumental music here, and I am doing that by doing instrumental styles which are a little uncommon here. I did that by making an instrumental where I incorporated both guitar and violin together. I also try to use different instruments from other countries. I even did an instrumental style called the one-man band, which is a very rare style, where I had to play all the different instruments a band might use by myself.

Rafi: Do you enjoy composing songs more or do you enjoy playing instrumentals more?

Emon: I enjoy all aspects of music. But, I enjoy playing the guitar the most. I really enjoy doing background scores, since I have to do that a lot with advertisements.

Rafi: What kind of music do you enjoy listening to the most?

Emon: I really enjoy listening to classic bands. I am a huge fan of Pink Floyd; David Gilmour is one of my all-time favorite guitarists. Other than that, it depends on my mood what I like to listen to. But, I try to listen to as many types of music as I can.

Rafi: Do you have any parting message for the readers?

Emon: We are now going through a very difficult time, so I would urge everyone to stay safe. My love and prayers to you all, and I hope you all will keep on supporting and praying for me. Thank you for having me here, Rafi Bhai. I would also like to thank The Daily Star for always supporting art.

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

As we bid farewell to a year that brought forward world-shifting events, altering the course of life and our way of living over a deadly pandemic, we certainly are grateful to be alive with the hope for better days ahead. Here is a look back at our entertainment industry in 2020.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

This year, we lost many gems of our industry. We lost music composer Azad Rahman and National Award-winning musician Andrew Kishore. He was widely regarded as one of the best playback singers in the country. Composer and musical director Alauddin Ali, popular actor Sadek Bachchu, Ekushey Padak-winning stage and TV actor and director Aly Zaker, renowned actor Abdul Kader and Salim Khan, the proprietor of Sangeeta. The works of all these legendary personalities will always be reminisced for generations to come.



Only twelve films were released!

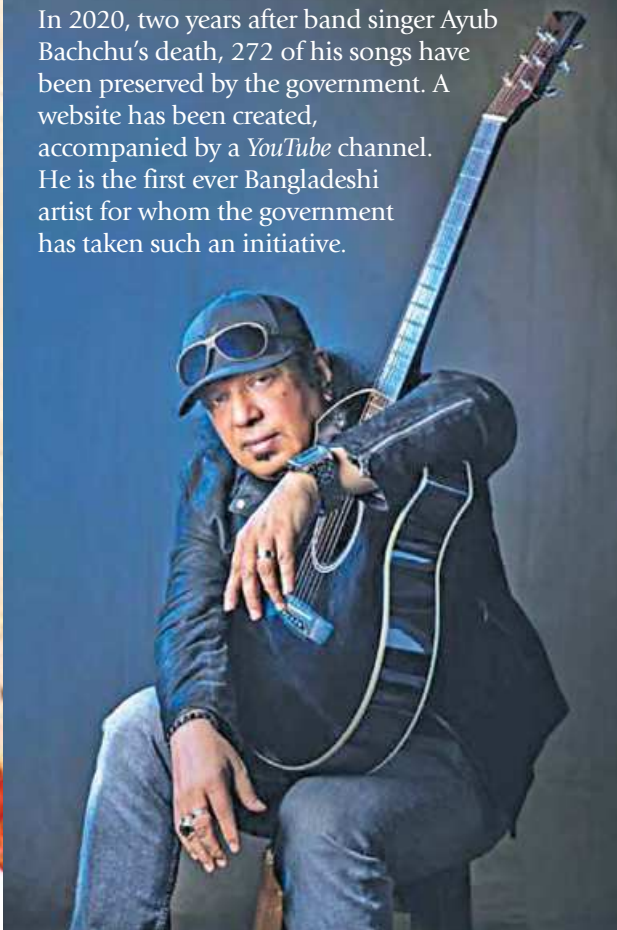
In 2020, only twelve films were released which, compared to the forty-one that were released in 2019, seem overwhelmingly low. The reason behind the small number is the COVID-19 pandemic. Cinema halls, only sixty to seventy in number, had closed down in March, and finally opened on the 16th of October. Multiplexes followed by opening on the 23rd of October. Among the released films, Bir managed to make some profits.

Star Cineplex shutting down?

Around September, the first cineplex in Bangladesh, Star Cineplex announced that it would be shutting down the Bashundhara City branch. However, after further talks with Bashundhara City authorities, it was decided that the cineplex would remain there. Star Cineplex has been running in Bashundhara City since 2004.

Official preservation of Ayub Bachchu's songs

In 2020, two years after band singer Ayub Bachchu's death, 272 of his songs have been preserved by the government. A website has been created, accompanied by a YouTube channel. He is the first ever Bangladeshi artist for whom the government has taken such an initiative.



Ferdous Wahid leaving music

Musician Ferdous Wahid has decided to not release any new music after the 31st of December this year. He also announced that he will no longer be performing onstage.



Songs that gathered attention

The song Keu Kotha Rakheni by Minar garnered over half a crore views on YouTube. Monir Khan's song, Onjona 2020, got over one crore views. Imran gifted his listeners by releasing both audio songs and movie songs. The song he did with Kona for the film Bishua Shundori, called Tui Kobe Amar Hobi Re, gathered over three crore views, while Jani Pabona also got a lot of attention from fans.



Jaya Ahsan won an international award

In Madrid International Film Festival 2020, Jaya Ahsan had won the Best Female Actor award in the Foreign Films category. She won this award for starring in the film Robibaar, directed by Indian director Atanu Ghosh.



Three films of Shakib Khan

A total of three films have been released in 2020 starring Shakib Khan: Bir, Shahenshah and Nabab LLB. Bir was directed by Kazi Hayat and produced by Shakib Khan. It is the fiftieth film of the director. Nabab LLB, directed by Anonno Mamun, was released on the OTT platform iTheater on 16 December. It is the first ever film in Bangladesh to be released solely online.



PHOTO: STAR

Sabina Yasmin the music director

For the first time in her career, Sabina Yasmin became the composer and music director of a film. She did it in the Sarah Kabori directed film Ei Tumi Shei Tumi.

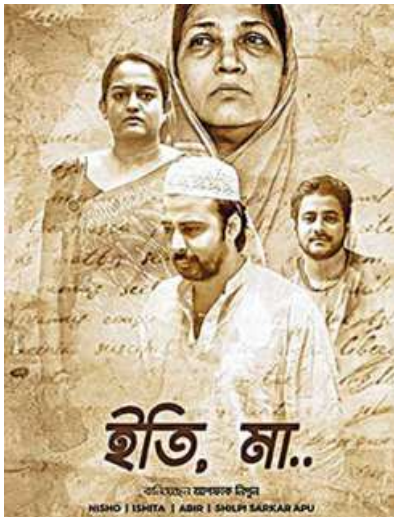
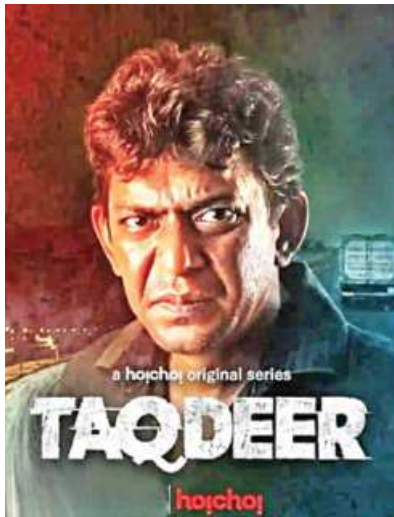
Pori Moni in 'asia's 100 digital stars'

On the 7th of December, American business magazine Forbes released their list of Asia's 100 Digital Stars. Bangladeshi actor Pori Moni has been featured in the list. Aside from this, socialbakers.com has also released the names of the top Bangladeshi digital artists, where Pori Moni can be seen at the top of the list.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub & Amina Hossain



Looking back at 2020’s memorable TV and web projects

SHARMIN JOYA

The pandemic-riddled year was a challenging one for the entertainment industry. Since March, all activities had come to a halt, with television and web projects incurring huge losses.

Shoots gradually resumed over the year, maintaining health guidelines as per the government’s instructions.

Compared to other years, the number of tele-fictions made were minuscule, with important festivals like Pohela Boishakh, Eid-ul-Fitr witnessing very few productions.

However, many of the ones that were released stirred excitement among the audience, and gathered accolades for production and storytelling.

In Valentines’ season, telefilms that resonated the most with the audience were Ashfaque Nipun’s “Mukh O Mukhoshor Golpo”,

Shafayet Mansoor Rana’s “Poripuruk” and Sanjoy Samaddar’s “Shift”.

One of the highlights of this year’s television industry was the seven-day series titled “Ghor Bondi Shomoyer Golpo”, aired on Eid Ul Fitr. The series brought a completely new experience for both artistes and the audience.

Renowned directors Nurul Alam Atique, Giasuddin Selim, Animesh Aich, Sumon Anwar, Shihab Shaheen, Shafayet Mansoor Rana and Goutam Koiri worked on the series, each portraying different stories addressing life during the pandemic.

Jonab Tanvir Ahmed’s “Extra Artiste” featuring Fazlur Rahman Babu and Allen Shubhro was a critically acclaimed project.

Vicky Zahed’s “Jonmodaag” featured the popular pairing of Afran Nisho and Mehazabien Chowdhury. On the other hand, Ashrafuzzaman’s fiction “Hamleter Phirey Asha”,



featuring Mosharrar Karim and Rownak Hasan, was a memorable flick.

Eid-ul-Adha saw an impressive number of hits. Shafayat Mansoor Rana’s short film on the pandemic, “The Last Order” was astoundingly good, while Ashfaque Nipun’s

“Victim” was the talk of the town for a good while. The director’s “Eti Ma”, starring Afran Nisho and Rumana Rashid Ishita, was especially lauded because of Ishita’s memorable performance.

Other notable projects include

Sanjoy Samaddar’s “Je Shohore Taka Ore”, Rafat Mozumder Rinku’s “Bodh”, Mohidul Mohim’s “Photo Frame”, Mizanur Rahman Aryan’s “Shohor Chhere Poranpur”, Vicky Zahed’s “Nirbashon” and Mahmudur Rahman Hime’s “Keno”.

Although web content is considered to be mandatory consumption all over the world, the Bangladeshi audience had to wait for a long time to experience local web content that is up to the mark. The pandemic somewhat enabled web projects to flourish, and prove that it is possible to create content on par with international projects.

“August 14”, based on true events, was exemplary. Shihab Shaheen was highly appreciated along with Tasnuva Tisha for her flawless and bold appearance on screen. “Hares” on Robi TV Plus, directed by Wasim Sitar, featured Iftekhar Ahmed Fahmi and Nazia Haque Orsha.

The flick gained praise for its gritty storytelling.

Abrar Athar’s web original for ZEE 5, “Mainkar Chipay”, kept the audience on the edge of their seats. It was undoubtedly one of the best works of this year. Afran Nisho, Shariful Razz and Shamol Mawla were in this project that earned great response from audiences from both home and abroad.

Syed Ahmed Shawki directorial “Taqdeer” on Hoichoi was the showstopper for 2020, setting a new bar for web series in the country. Chanchal Chowdhury, Manoj Pramanik, Sanjida Preeti and Sohel Mondal gave it their all to make it one of the most memorable projects for years to come.

Overall, even amidst the limitations, directors, actors and entire filming crews are to be lauded for their efforts to keep bringing entertainment to our screens.

A musically dormant 2020

ZAHID AKBAR & SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

The Covid-19 pandemic rendered the music industry into disarray for the first few months, one which it tried hard to fight back. Even though the year is musical activities were largely limited to online releases and ‘live’ concerts on social media, we did see a number of notable releases from artistes.

The announcement of renewed activities from Bangladesh Lyricist, Composers and Performers Society (BLCPS) to ensure artistes’ intellectual property rights was a welcome one.

An initiative was taken by the government to preserve 272 songs by legendary musician and LRB frontman Ayub Bachchu.

Eminent singer Sabina Yasmin expanded on her illustrious career by debuting a music director in the film “Ei Tumi Shei Tumi”.

Minar Rahman’s “Keu Kotha Rakheni”, released in January, has received 1.5 crore views, and is one of the highlights of the year. “Tui Ki Amar Hobi Re”, a duet by Imran Mahmudul and Kona from the film “Bishwo Shundori”, is also a highlight of the year, with more than 3 crore views.

One of the fastest rising stars in the industry, Pritom Hasan went from strength to strength with his music. “Bhenge Porona Ebhabe” was an unexpected and heart-wrenching ballad that won over the audience with its beautiful presentation. It was unlike anything that the usually flamboyant Pritom had done before.

Tanjib Sarowar crossed the 10-million mark with his hit single, “Dube Dube”, while “Sa Re Ga Ma Pa” famed star Mainul Ahsan Noble impressed thoroughly in the latter half of the year with the release of “Ovinoy”.



Eminent lyricist-composer Prince Mahmud gifted the fans “Alo”.

Near the end of the year, eminent music composer Prince Mahmud collaborated with Tanjir Tuhin to release “Alo”, a chilling and beautiful song about the uncertainty of life in this pandemic.

Up and coming musicians made their presence felt throughout the year. Shonar Bangla Circus released their album “Hyena Express” earlier this year, earning a cult-hit status among the fans. Farooque Bhai Project released his EP, “Cin Bhoot Tonic”, further solidifying his spot as one of the most sought-after indie musicians. Conclusion’s “Auroop:Nirakar” was also released to much fanfare.

Amidst a comparatively quiet for the band music industry, established bands

like Nemesis, Shironamhin, and Meghdol released “Cafeteria Periyé”, “Tumi, Ami o Bhor” and “Tobu Mon”. Towards the end of the year, shows started to pop up sporadically around the country. Notably, Nemesis hosted one for an early peek at the “Gonojowar” music video this month, with astounding success. Small venues like Jatra Biroti, Bookworm and L’espresso also opened their doors, albeit with precautions, to regular shows.

A musical controversy that was the most discussed this year was the release of Chanchal Chowdhury and Meher Afroz Shaon’s rendition of “Shorbotto Mongol Radhe”, composed by Partha Barua. The song had to be taken down from YouTube, as band Sorolpur claimed copyright to it. Debate is still going on based on the merits of the copyright.

2020 was also the year of losses, as we had to bid adieu to some of our most beloved musicians. In May, singer, composer and music director Azad Rahman passed away. He was known for his masterpieces including “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo”, “Bhalobashar Mullo Koto”, “Moner Ronge Rangabo”, among many others.



Pritom Hasan’s “BhengePoronaEbhabe” was one of the best songs of the year.

Legendary singer Andrew Kishore lost his battle to cancer in July. He will forever be remembered for his playback, with songs like, “Daak Diyachen Doyal Amare”, “Bhalobeshe Gelam Shudhu”, “Amar Shara Deho Kheyo Go Mati”, “Amar Buker Moddhekhane”, “Hayre Manush Rongin Fanush”, “Bhengeche Pinjor Meleche Dana”, among hundreds of other memorable tracks/

Alauddin Ali passed away in August. The incomparable music director scored over 300 films throughout his illustrious career. The 8-time National Award Winner’s greatest work is considered to be for films “Golapi Ekhon Train E”, “Koshai”, “Shundori” and “Jogajog”, among others, for which he won the National Award for Best Music Director, as well as Best Lyricist.

Salim Khan, proprietor of one of the country’s leading audio production company, passed away this month. In the 80’s and 90’s, Sangeeta was responsible for the flourishing music industry, with “Produced by Salim Khan” being a hallmark on cassettes of that era.

Even though 2020 is considered to be a year of loss and uncertainty, the music industry’s efforts to adapt and improvise is heartening. Heading into a fresh start, musicians are eagerly waiting to make the most of 2021.



272 of legendary rockstarAyubBachchu’s songs were preserved by the government.

The highs and lows of the film industry in 2020



Unoponchaash Batash

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Cinema halls across Bangladesh, much like most countries of the world, had their lights out for most of 2020, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. Only 11 new, Bangladeshi films were released this year. All cinema halls were closed down from March 18.

Single-screen theatres have seen a drastic decline in numbers over the last two decades, and the 70-odd in the country that were in operation, have missed out on the three big occasions, where mainstream movies make business – Pahela Baishakh, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha – as people were confined to their homes to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

After over six months of inactivity, cinema halls across the country were permitted to reopen from October 16. However, most movie theatres, including Modhumita Cinema Hall, are still not ready to open. Meanwhile, Jashore’s Monihar, one of the most popular movie theatres of the country, celebrated its 37th anniversary this year.

Before movie theatres were closed down, noted director Kazi Hayat’s “Bir” was released on February 14, and Shamim Ahamed Roni’s “Shahenshah” was released on March 6. These two films feature Shakib Khan in the lead role.

Despite resuming operations, cinema halls remained heavily reliant on reruns of old films, as no producers were willing to take risks with new, big-budget movies.

Masud Hasan Ujjal’s first film, “Unoponchash Batash,” was set to release in March, but it was delayed indefinitely due to the pandemic. After seven months, “Unoponchash Batash,” produced by Red October Films, hit theatres on October 23. Noted television director Chayanika Chowdhury’s debut film, “Bishwoshundori” and Ekushey Padak winner Tanvir Mokammel’s seventh feature film, “Rupsha Nodir Baanke” (Quiet Flows the River Rupsha), were released on December 11. Anonno Mamun’s “Nabab LLB”, starring Shakib Khan, was released on the online platform, iTheatre, on December 16. The Gazi Rakayet directorial “The Grave” was released on December 25, the last Friday of the year.

On the other hand, the third and fourth floors of the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC)



Bishwo Shundori

were demolished to make way for a new, fifteen-storeyed building. The new building will consist of an auditorium, a residential hotel, shooting spots, a cinema theatre, a bank and a food court. It will also have offices for insurance organisations, film producers and television channels, along with a three-storeyed parking lot in the basement.

Due to various allegations, Bangladesh Cholochitro Shilpi Samity President Misha Sawdagar and General Secretary Zayed Khan were boycotted by 18 organisations. The organisations held a meeting, where they came to a decision to send a written application to BFDC’s



Rupsha Nodir Baanke

MD -- to strengthen the ban on Misha Sawdagar and bar Zayed Khan from entering its premises altogether. The actions were on the basis of Misha Sawdagor’s irresponsibility, going to the USA before clearing previous allegations, and Zayed Khan’s anti-interest activities against artistes that could result in confrontation if he enters the BFDC premises.

Moreover, this year, elections for the new committee of the Bangladesh Film Directors Association were cancelled due to the pandemic, and shifted to next year.

At the end of the year, the activities of the present committee of the Bangladesh Film Producers and Distributors Association were suspended by an order of the Ministry of Commerce, which has been upheld by the High Court.

Many artistes, including Shakib Khan, Sadika Parvin Popy, Mosharrar Karim, Nurat Imrose Tisha, Mahiya Mahi, and Bappy Chowdhury, steadily returned to shooting during the pandemic, and started adapting to the ‘new normal’.

The actors, production team and crew members followed strict safety and hygiene rules on the sets and at home. Dighi, who has worked as a child artiste before, is set to play the lead role in the film, “Tungipar Mia Bhai”, opposite Shanto Khan. Directed by Shamim Ahamed Roni, the film was shot at BFDC and several other locations.

Mosharrar Karim and Tarin are preparing for their first ever Bangladesh-India joint production, “Dictionary”,



The Grave

directed by Bratya Basu. After a long hiatus, celebrated actor Riaz is set to return to films with Dipankar Dipon’s “Operation Sundarban”.

The governments of Bangladesh and India are jointly producing a feature film based on the life and works of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Arifin Shuvoo has been cast to play Bangabandhu. The movie, directed by acclaimed filmmaker Shyam Benegal, went on the floors this year.

Jaya Ahsan won the award for Best Lead Actress in a Foreign Language Film, for “Robibaar” at the Madrid International Film Festival. Popular actor Pori Moni was the only Bangladeshi included in Forbes Asia magazine’s ‘100 Digital Stars’ list. The Lifetime Achievement Awards at the National Film Awards 2019 will be given to renowned actors Masud Parvez (Sohel Rana) and Kohinoor Akhter Suchanda for their incredible contribution to the Bangladeshi film fraternity.

On the other hand, noted actor Salma Begum Sujata was hospitalised after she suffered from a severe heart attack. Popular film actor and ruling



Nabab LLB

Awami League lawmaker for Dhaka-17 constituency Farooque tested positive for Covid-19. Earlier, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Six members of Nayakraj Razzak’s family, including his sons Bapparaj and Samrat who are both actors, their wives and children, tested positive for Covid-19 too.

Siam Ahmed, Pori Moni and Bidya Sinha Mim were the busiest actors of the year, despite the challenges faced by the film industry.

Translated by Shababa Iqbal



Bangladesh Under-19 pacer Shoriful Islam leaps in the air after having India batsman Ravi Bishnoi run-out through a direct hit from his own follow-through during the Under-19 World Cup final in Potchefstroom, South Africa in February this year. The memories of that match may seem distant as we edge closer to the end of 2020, a year that had seen the sporting world, much like everything else, halted for most part. The cubs went on to register a historic three-wicket victory against India and lifted the Under-19 World Cup -- arguably the biggest achievement in Bangladesh's sporting history.

PHOTO: ICC

SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR

The country stood still when the pandemic struck in March but sportsmanship was intact even in the toughest times of 2020. Every year The Daily Star recognises the sportsperson of the year based on on-field performances. But it was probably a different scenario altogether in 2020 as players stood up for humanitarian causes during the pandemic in Bangladesh.

MAZHAR UDDIN

The stars of Bangladesh sport, ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal among them, came forward to help 91 struggling athletes from different disciplines as well as different coaches by providing monetary help, paid through money transferring mobile apps and portals.

Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan also formed a charitable foundation to help people in need during the pandemic. Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and Rubel Hossain also extended their support during this period.

But among all the stars, two names stand out as The Daily Star this time honours two sportspersons of the year in cricketer Nazmul Islam Apu and former women's cricketer Arifa Jahan Bithy for their relentless support to suffering people during the pandemic.

He may be famous for the 'Nagin dance', his trademark celebration after scalping wickets on the international circuit, but



"I know the pain of hunger. I have experienced it once upon a time in my life and that prompted me to contribute towards society within my limitations. I tried to manage funds and also contributed from my own savings. I feel delighted to make people happy and I will continue to help in future as well."

ARIFA JAHAN BITHY

left-arm spinner Nazmul showed another side to his character during testing times. He not only showed his humanitarian side but also displayed the signs of a true fighter after himself testing positive for Covid-19 alongside his parents.

The cricketer has worked tirelessly with his friends to collect funds, purchase goods, and package and deliver goods from a community centre to his hometown in an industrial area in Narayanganj.

Nazmul even began to stay away from his family in a separate home for about 20 days so that they would not be infected as he continued helping people during that time.

Arifa, currently working as a coach in domestic cricket, also stands out for her outstanding contributions during the pandemic. Although Arifa never played for the national side her humanitarian performance surely makes her a national star.

From providing cooked food to people in need on the roads, helping out pregnant women, distributing free sanitary napkins to girls, reaching out to people in flood-affected areas to provide food, to even donating sewing machines to widows and divorced women, Arifa made sure she stretched her hand out to people around her in any way possible.



"After the Dhaka Premier League was postponed, my friends and I were discussing how we could help the people in our area who were suffering. I didn't just want to help for one or two days. I wanted to take responsibility for those people for at least a month. But I didn't have the finances to support around 500 people. Tamim [Iqbal] came forward to support me financially and also provided goods. Mushfiqur Rahim also came forward and joined the cause and donated a sum of money from his auctioned bat. A few of my friends also helped make this happen."

NAZMUL ISLAM APU

A year like never before

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

The year 2020 in the sporting calendar had been a remarkable one due to the challenges facing sporting events all over the world. Not since the World War II has there been a more severe case of disruptions to the sporting calendar as elite-level sports found out that it was not immune to the escalation of the pandemic and the consequences it brought. If fans were the integral part of sporting events, 2020 became the year when fans became peripheral to continuation of the major events, at least in terms of their presence in stadiums.

From February-March, the realisation dawned that sports simply could not go on as it had done under normal circumstances. As warning signs flashed, Champions League fixtures started being played behind closed doors before UEFA postponed all fixtures with one particular Atlanta-Valencia game apparently fuelling contagion in Italy due to presence of supporters. By March, all major sporting events had been postponed owing to the pandemic. Novak Djokovic, who won his eighth Australian Open title in January, quickly became the bad boy of the tennis world as an ill-fated Adria Tour in June -- one he himself organised -- acquainted tennis with the realities of the pandemic and dented tennis's planned return.

As sports succumbed to the chain reaction of the pandemic, the sporting scenario completely changed worldwide. A year that had begun with much promise for Bangladesh in the sporting front, with the under-19 cricketers winning the World Cup in England, became almost a separate reality. By March, including cricket, all domestic sporting events halted and the young cricketers' development was hampered significantly while the national team's home series against Australia and

New Zealand were postponed indefinitely along with domestic competitions.

As sports faced a bleak future, it also ushered hope and resilience as it so often does. The German Bundesliga returned in May but the most significant factor was the fact that there would not be any fans in major sporting events. With other major European football competitions too restarting in June, the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo or Lionel Messi returning to action gave people something to cherish amid lockdowns. The unity shown, the

Bangabandhu T20 Cup in November-December as a significant crop of cricketers got some much-needed cricketing action. It would also pave the way for the upcoming home series against West Indies to be confirmed -- set to be Bangladesh's first international assignment since the start of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the passing away of the footballing legend Diego Maradona would leave its mark on 2020 along with the death of Kobe Bryant while on the domestic front the passing away of former



gargantuan task of setting up bio-secure bubbles -- while it still felt like a delicate, fragile thing to consider sports amid the pandemic -- and the logistics required while there was no map to use as a guideline for such a scenario, will remain exemplary as sports slowly returned.

International Cricket slowly began too as West Indies became the first team to tour England during the pandemic in July.

Bangladesh Cricket, too, returned with domestic competitions such as the BCB President's Cup in October and the

national star Badal Roy was a big loss for the country's football.

As an unrelenting year comes to an end, sports fans are left with the longing to return to the old days even as new strains of the virus can put significant denture to those plans. Players too have felt that vacancy in the stadiums. Maybe the transition can best be surmised when Messi says: "It's horrible to play without fans, it's a very ugly sensation. Seeing no-one in the stadium is like a training session and it is very tough to really get going at the start of a game."



SPORT

2020 IN REARVIEW



Duplantis raises the bar



Liverpool end 30-year wait



Lewandowski drives Bayern juggernaut



Hamilton's tribute to Schumacher



Messi has had enough



Nadal's record-equalling 20th



Dhoni packs his bags



Djokovic loses his cool



Swiatek, the new queen on the block



Khabib's emotional goodbye

MOMENTS THAT MADE 2020

A year that had seen sports halted for most part due to the coronavirus pandemic and left sporting bodies around the world scratching heads to figure out ways to resume events, moments from the sporting arena were supposed to be scarce. Instead, sports in 2020 gifted some of the most enduring and poignant moments. From Rafael Nadal's record-equalling 20th Grand Slam to Lewis Hamilton's tribute to Michael Schumacher on equalling the German's record podium-finish, from Novak Djokovic's momentary lapse of reason to Lionel Messi constant show of discord with the Barcelona hierarchy, from the clenched fists of the Black Lives Matter movement to Khabib Nurmagomedov's emotional goodbye to his MMA career – there were plenty of moments to savour and cherish.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED



Black Lives Matter all the way

THE ONES WE'VE LOST



Bangladesh lost a footballing great in Badal Roy, 62.



Paolo Rossi's death at 64 was as shocking as that of Maradona's.



Diego Maradona, one of the greatest footballers of all time, passed away at a hospital in Buenos Aires following a heart attack on November 25, plunging the world of sport into disbelief and sorrow.



Ram Chand Goala, 81, a legendary name in Bangladesh cricket, passed away in Mymensingh.



Cricket world was sent into shock and disbelief at the death of Dean Jones, 59 in September.



Sir Everton Weekes, the last of the three Ws, died aged 95 on July 1.



India lost two of its greatest footballers -- Chuni Goswami, 82, and PK Banerjee, 83 -- 40 days apart.



Basketball legend Kobe Bryant, 41, was killed along with his daughter and seven others in a helicopter crash in January.



Swadhin Bangla Football team striker AKM Nowsheruzzaman died of Covid-19 at the age of 72.



Alejandro Sabella, 66, had played 8 times for Argentina and guided the Albiceleste in the 2014 World Cup.



Former footballer Golam Rabbani Helal, a key member of Abahani in the '80s, breathed his last at the age of 67.



Former national cricketer and manager ASM Faruque died of cardiac arrest at the age of 75.



Cox's Bazar Runway Expansion

Cabinet okays company appointment

Project to cost Tk 1,568.86 crore

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and DWAIPIYAN BARUIA

A joint venture company that includes China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) has been awarded the Cox's Bazar airport runway expansion work for Tk 1,568.86 crore.

The cabinet committee on purchase approved the proposal of civil aviation and tourism ministry to appoint the joint venture of M/s CYWEB and CCECC for the expansion works at its 37th meeting held yesterday.

Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal, additional secretary of the cabinet division, said this during a briefing to the journalists after the meeting.

The government last year took initiative to expanding the runway of Cox's Bazar airport, aiming at upgrading it to international standard and offer foreign holidaymakers a hassle-free trip to the world's longest unbroken sea beach.

In the meeting, a deal was awarded to Halla Construction Co. Korea while approving the same ministry's proposal on variation of construction work of Cox's Bazar Airport Development Project quoting Tk 70.24 crore.

The committee yesterday returned two proposals of Road Transport and Highways Division on construction project titled Performance-Based Operation for 4-years and Strengthening of 4-Lane Dhaka-Chattogram

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Even with a footbridge just a few feet away, pedestrians choose to risk their lives and cross the street by jumping over barricades. Such carelessness often results in fatal accidents. The photo was taken yesterday in the capital's Dhanmondi area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Fugitives can't be on any media

HC issues injunction as TV interviews PK Halder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued an injunction restraining electronic, print and social media, including Facebook and YouTube, from broadcasting and publishing statements, interviews and conversations of fugitive convicts and accused under trial until further notice.

The court made the order after a petition was filed to take necessary steps against the authorities of Ekattor TV for broadcasting an interview of fugitive accused Proshanta Kumar Halder, popularly known as PK Halder.

It also directed the TV channel to submit by January 10 the video clips of the interview and conversations PK Halder had with the channel on December 28.

The channel broadcast an interview of PK Halder at 10:00pm on December 28 and connected him to the talk show Ekattor

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

22 more die from Covid, 1,235 get infected

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh recorded 22 more deaths from Covid-19 and 1,235 new infections in 24 hours ending 8:00am yesterday.

The number of deaths rose to 7,531 since the first cases were reported in the country on March 8.

With 1,235 new infections, the country's total caseload stood at 5,12,496, said the Directorate General of Health Services.

So far, 32,14,344 tests have been carried out. The overall infection rate stood at 15.94 percent and the death rate at 1.47.

However, 4,56,070 patients -- 88.99 percent -- have so far recovered.

Bangladesh is seeing 3,009.26 infections,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

New import policy announced

December 31, 1972
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJAN

IMPORT OF LUXURY ITEMS REMAINS BANNED

The import policy for the shipping period January-June, 1973, announced by Commerce Minister MR Siddiqui today envisages import of goods worth Tk 219 crore. The import list has been expanded with the addition of 16 new items which included linseed oil, corn oil, arms and ammunition, educational and mechanical toys and equipment for agricultural and irrigation work. The import of luxury items remains banned while there are provisions for import of essential commodities like medicines and baby food.

USSR KEEN TO ASSIST BANGLADESH

Minister for Industries Syed Nazrul Islam says in Dhaka today that the Soviet Union is keenly interested to assist in the economic development of

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



3 of family die as train hits autorickshaw

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Three members of a family were killed and another man was critically injured when a CNG-run auto-rickshaw ran into a mail train at the Shashongachha level crossing in Cumilla yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Farid Munshi, 65, his wife Peyara Begum and their daughter Akhi Akter from the district's Debidwar upazila. They were passengers of the CNG-run auto-rickshaw. The driver of the vehicle, Robiul, was critically injured.

Shafikur Rahman, Cumilla Railway station master, said the accident occurred around 6:50am when the CNG-run auto-rickshaw, which was trying to cross the railway from the wrong side, hit a Dhaka-bound mail train

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Transport strike set to begin in Pabna

Owners, workers say it is to protest illegal toll collection in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Vehicular communication through Pabna is set to be hampered as its transport owners and workers are likely to enforce an indefinite strike from this morning in protest of extortion and harassment by

their counterparts in Shahzadpur upazila on the highway to Sirajganj.

Communication with 22 districts and movement of vehicles between southern and northern districts through the highways of Pabna will be suspended, according to

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 31

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:30	12:45	4:00	5:27	7:00
JAMAAT 6:05	1:15	4:15	5:30	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



An elderly woman lights a small fire to keep warm. Winter has set in hard in remote hilly areas and with the lack of winter clothes, locals have only a few options for heating. The photo was taken at Sajek's Kanglok village.

PHOTO: ANVIL CHAKMA

CORONAVIRUS

US nurse tests positive after vaccination

REUTERS, California

A 45-year-old nurse in California tested positive for Covid-19 more than a week after receiving the Pfizer Inc's coronavirus vaccine, an ABC News affiliate reported on Tuesday.

Matthew W, a nurse at a different local hospitals, said in a Facebook post on December 18 that he had received the Pfizer vaccine, telling the ABC News

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COVID-19 VACCINE

WHO urges fair distribution to all

REUTERS, Geneva

The head of the World Health Organization, marking a year since the first cases of the novel coronavirus were reported by China, yesterday urged countries to ensure that vaccines are made available to people at risk everywhere, not just in rich nations.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general, appealed for \$4 billion to buy Covid-19 vaccines for distribution in lower and middle-income countries through the COVAX vaccine facility.

"This is the challenge we must rise to in the New Year," Tedros said in a video message issued a day before the first anniversary of China reporting

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



সেবা পেতে মাস্ক পরুন
No Mask No Service



মুজিব বর্ষে স্বাস্থ্য খাত এগিয়ে যাবে অনেক ধাপ

এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড
(১০০% সরকারী মালিকানাধীন ঔষধ প্রস্তুতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান)

যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সংবাদ সংস্থা ব্রুমবার্গের এক সূত্রে
'কোভিড সহনশীল র‍্যাঙ্কিং' এ

দক্ষিণ এশিয়ায় শীর্ষ স্থান এ বাংলাদেশ

বৈশ্বিক মহামারী করোনাভাইরাস মোকাবিলা করে আর্থ-সামাজিক উন্নয়নসহ বসবাস উপযোগী নিরাপদ দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার মধ্যে শীর্ষ স্থান এবং শীর্ষ ২০ দেশের তালিকায় বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান অর্জন করায়



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের
মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী
জননেত্রী শেখ হাসিনা



জনাব জাহিদ মালেক এম পি

মাননীয় মন্ত্রী, স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয় ও চেয়ারম্যান, এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড পরিচালনা পর্ষদ, সচিব, স্বাস্থ্য সেবা ও সচিব, স্বাস্থ্য শিক্ষা বিভাগ, মন্ত্রণালয়ের সকল কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারী, স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর, ঔষধ প্রশাসন অধিদপ্তর, পরিবার পরিকল্পনা অধিদপ্তর এর সকল কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারী ও দেশের সকল চিকিৎসক, নার্স, স্বাস্থ্যকর্মীসহ সকলকে এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড এর পরিচালনা পর্ষদ, ব্যবস্থাপনা কর্তৃপক্ষ ও সর্বস্তরের কর্মকর্তা, কর্মচারী ও শ্রমিকদের পক্ষ থেকে জানাই

আন্তরিক কৃতজ্ঞতা ও অভিনন্দন।

বৈশ্বিক মহামারী করোনাভাইরাস স্বাস্থ্য ঝুঁকির মধ্যে দিয়েও পরিচালনা পর্ষদের কার্যক্রমী সিদ্ধান্ত ও পদক্ষেপ এবং মাননীয় ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক

অধ্যাপক (ডাঃ) এহসানুল কবির জগলুল
এর সার্বিক তত্ত্বাবধানে নিরলসভাবে কাজ করে যাচ্ছে প্রতিষ্ঠানের সর্বস্তরের কর্মী

বিশ্বব্যাপী করোনা ভাইরাসের মহামারীর কারণে বাংলাদেশ সরকারের
১০০% সরকারী মালিকানাধীন ঔষধ প্রস্তুতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড এর ধারাবাহিক কার্যক্রমের প্রতিবেদন।

করোনা ভাইরাসের কারণে সারা বিশ্বের সাথে বাংলাদেশ ও সার্বিক বিপর্যয়ের মুখে পড়ে। করোনা ভাইরাসের প্রাদুর্ভাব থেকে দেশ ও জাতিতে সার্বিক বিপর্যয়ের হাত থেকে নিরাপদ রাখার জন্য সরকার মার্চের শেষ সপ্তাহ থেকে লকডাউন ঘোষণা করেন। ফলে দেশের সর্বস্তরের কলকারখানা, দোকানপাট, সমস্ত ব্যবসা বাণিজ্য বন্ধ, স্কোলাস চলাচল ও পরিবহনের উপর কড়াকড়ি বিধি নিষেধ আরোপ করে। ১০০% সরকারী মালিকানাধীন এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড সরকারের আরোপকৃত প্রতিটি পদক্ষেপ সম্পূর্ণরূপে পালন করেছে এবং স্বাস্থ্য সংকট মোকাবিলা সরকারের পাশে দাঁড়ানোর জন্য সর্বাত্মক চেষ্টা অব্যাহত রেখেছে এবং বর্তমানেও রাখছে।

সরকারী মালিকানাধীন এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড এর পরিচালনা পর্ষদ ও ব্যবস্থাপনা কর্তৃপক্ষ গভীরভাবে মনোনিবেশ প্রদান করে ক্রিভাবে দেশের সাধারণ মানুষের স্বাস্থ্য সেবা নিরাপদ ও নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত করা যায় এর জন্য এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড এর শ্রমিক, কর্মচারী ও কর্মকর্তাগণ সরকার যোষিত সাধারণ ছুটি এবং লক ডাউনের মধ্যে জীবন বাজি রেখে ও স্বাস্থ্য বিধি মেনে তাদের উৎপাদন কার্যক্রম সচলরূপে সম্পন্ন করে সরকারের চাহিদা অনুযায়ী সারাদেশের সরকারী হাসপাতাল, সদর হাসপাতাল, সিভিল সার্জন, জেলা স্বাস্থ্য কমপ্লেক্সসমূহ, কমিউনিটি ক্লিনিক, উপজেলা ও থানাসহ অন্যান্য সংস্থায় ঔষধ সরবরাহ নিশ্চিত করেছেন।

সরকারী মালিকানাধীন একমাত্র ঔষধ প্রস্তুতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড করোনা ভাইরাস সংক্রান্ত Hand Sanitizer সহ অন্যান্য জরুরী প্রয়োজনীয় ঔষধ অধিক পরিমাণ উৎপাদন ও সরবরাহ অব্যাহত রাখে।

মহান আল্লাহ তায়ালার অশেষ কৃপায় সব প্রতিবন্ধকতা কাটিয়ে বিগত বছরের তুলনায় ২০১৯-২০২০ অর্থ বছরে উৎপাদন, সঠিক মাননিয়ন্ত্রণ ও সরবরাহ ধারাবাহিকভাবে বৃদ্ধি পেয়েছে এবং সর্বস্তরে প্রশংসিত হয়েছে।



এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড
(১০০% সরকারী মালিকানাধীন ঔষধ প্রস্তুতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান)