

Scientists shed light on how brains turn pain up or down

AFP, Washington

Pain perception is essential for survival, but how much something hurts can sometimes be amplified or suppressed: for example, soldiers who sustain an injury in battle often recall not feeling anything at the time.

A new study published in Cell Reports on Tuesday honed in on the brain circuitry responsible for upgrading or downgrading these pain signals, likening the mechanism to how a home thermostat controls room temperature.

Yarimar Carrasquillo, the paper's senior author and a scientist for the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), told AFP the region responsible was the central amygdala, which according to her work appeared to play a dual role.

Studying mice, Carrasquillo and her colleagues found that the activity in neurons that express protein kinase C-delta amplified pain, while neurons that express somatostatin inhibited the chain of activity in the nerves required to communicate pain.

The central amygdala isn't completely responsible for pain itself: if it were removed entirely, then "the 'ouch' of things, or the protective pain, would remain intact," said Carrasquillo.

"It seems to be sitting there waiting for something to happen," for example responding to stress or anxiety that amplifies pain, or being forced to focus on a task that diverts your attention and reduces pain.

Experiencing pain can be a vital warning to seek help, for example in a person experiencing appendicitis or a heart attack.

People who are born with insensitivity to pain, meanwhile, often do not realize the severity of injuries and are at greater risk of early death.

Country

FROM PAGE 16

education, as well as health, sanitation, and demographic factors reflecting decreased fertility rates.

The authors conclude that success in this area can be achieved with robust economic growth and attention to "nutrition-sensitive" sectors such as education, sanitation, and health.

Nepal's remarkable reduction in child stunting from 56.6 percent in 2001 to 40.1 percent in 2011 is associated with, and likely attributable to, increased household assets (a proxy for household wealth), increased maternal education, improved sanitation, and implementation and use of health and nutrition programmes, including antenatal and neonatal care.

However, the 2019 GHI indicates that the level of hunger and undernutrition worldwide falls on the cusp of the moderate and serious categories, at a value of 20.0. This value reflects a decline in the global GHI score in each period examined since 2000, when the global GHI score was 29.0 and fell into the serious category.

The achievement coincides with a decline in poverty at the global level from 28.6 percent in 1999 to 9.9 percent in 2015, the report said, adding that the poverty and hunger are closely correlated.

Four days on

FROM PAGE 16

at Shimulia Ghat unit of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), said, "At least seven-feet deep water is needed for operating ferries. But there are only five to six-feet deep water in the river channel. Navigability is continuously reducing here."

"We are continuously dredging but sufficient depth for ferry operations is not available yet."

Normally 17 ferries ply in this route, which is considered as the gateway of 21 southern districts. But ferry operations have remained suspended since Sunday afternoon.

But operations of 87 passenger-carrying launches and over 300 speedboats were normal.

Meanwhile, Patuaria-Dauladia ferry route was facing excessive rush of vehicles as ferry operations at Shimulia-Kathalbari route remained suspended.

Patuaria is located in Manikganj district and Dauladia is in Rajbari district.

The Daily Star found around two-kilometre long tailback of trucks at Patuaria Ghat yesterday.

"I reached Patuaria ghat on Tuesday evening. But I could not board on ferry till Wednesday afternoon," said truck driver Kamal Hossain.

According to the authorities, the trucks remained stranded as passenger-carrying buses and private cars were boarding ferries on priority basis.

Our Munshiganj and Manikganj correspondents contributed to this report



President Abdul Hamid presenting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with a bouquet when the latter entered the Bangabhaban to make a courtesy call yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Turkey snubs US push for Syria

FROM PAGE 16

Battles raged in the key Syrian border town of Ras al-Ain yesterday, with Kurdish fighters burning tyres in a bid to blind Ankara's warplanes and digging in against a ground offensive by Turkish-backed Syrian rebels.

The operation, now in its second week, has triggered a flurry of diplomacy among major powers.

Trump sent Pence along with his top diplomat Mike Pompeo to Turkey amid the greatest crisis in relations for decades between the Nato allies.

Moscow has stepped into the void left by Trump's withdrawal of US troops from northern Syria, deploying patrols to prevent clashes between Syrian and Turkish forces.

Russian TV showed its forces alongside Syrian government troops taking up positions in and around the town of Manbij following the US pull-back.

The Kremlin said it would host Erdogan for a meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in the coming days, to ensure the operation does not turn into all-out war between Turkey and Syria.

Trump -- facing mounting criticism in Washington over his decision to pull 1,000 troops out of the conflict zone, as well as an unrelated impeachment inquiry -- has hit back at Erdogan, slapping sanctions on three cabinet officials and raising tariffs on Turkish steel.

Pence's office released a statement

that he would meet Erdogan today and "voice the United States' commitment to reach an immediate ceasefire and the conditions for a negotiated settlement".

He reiterated that Trump will pursue "punishing economic sanctions" until a resolution is reached.

There was confusion after Erdogan told reporters he would not meet with Pence -- a position that was later reversed by his office.

The operation has widespread support in Turkey, where decades of bloody insurgency by Kurdish militants have killed tens of thousands of people.

But Western powers fear it will endanger the battle against the Islamic State group, which was led on the ground by Kurdish forces. Thousands of IS prisoners are held in Kurdish-run camps in the region.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said yesterday that the camps were not "currently" under threat from the operation, but Europe has taken an increasingly tough line with Turkey.

Britain and Spain became the latest powers to suspend military exports to Turkey on Tuesday. Canada made a similar move.

BATTLE FOR BORDER TOWN

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have mounted a desperate defence to the east of Ras al-Ain, using tunnels, berms and

trenches.

A Syrian fighter serving alongside Ankara's forces said his forces were trying to cut Kurdish supply lines from nearby Hassakeh to facilitate their advance on the town.

Since launching their assault on October 9, Turkey and its Syrian rebel proxies have secured more than 100 kilometres (60 miles) of border, but Ras al-Ain -- Siri Kani in Kurdish -- has held out.

Erdogan, who like Trump faces political difficulties at home, wants to create a buffer zone stretching 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the border into Syrian territory.

He wants to destroy Kurdish hopes of an autonomous enclave that could serve as a launching pad for attacks in Turkey, and to resettle some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees Ankara is hosting.

"God willing, we will quickly secure the region stretching from Manbij to our border with Iraq," Erdogan said.

Some 500 Syrian Kurds have entered neighbouring Iraqi Kurdistan over the past four days fleeing the Turkish invasion, officials said yesterday.

The refugees were taken to camps in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, an official in the border province of Dohuk told AFP.

The offensive has left dozens of civilians dead, mostly on the Kurdish side, and displaced at least 160,000 people.

Nasa unveils future moon

FROM PAGE 16

size-fits-all, meaning there won't be a repeat of an embarrassing flub in March that caused the first all-female spacewalk to be aborted when a second medium-sized suit wasn't available.

"If we remember the Apollo generation, we remember Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, they bunny hopped on the surface of the moon," Nasa administrator Jim Bridenstine told a hall filled with students and interns at the space agency.

"Now we're going to be able to

walk on the surface of the moon, which is very different from the suits of the past."

Another key innovation is the xEMU's unlimited capacity to absorb carbon dioxide, a by-product of respiration that is also poisonous in high quantities.

It achieves this through a system that both absorbs and then removes the gas into the vacuum of space, unlike current systems that merely absorb it until it reaches a saturation point.

The crew survival suit, meanwhile,

is designed to provide full life support for up to six days -- a scenario that could be required, for example, if a meteorite punches a hole in the spacecraft's hull.

Under the Artemis mission, Nasa plans to land on the moon's South Pole in order to exploit its water ice, discovered in 2009, both for life support purposes and to split into hydrogen and oxygen for use as rocket propellant.

The agency views its return to the moon as a proving ground for an onward mission to Mars in the 2030s.

Court rejects bail prayer of accused

FROM PAGE 16

Judicial Magistrate's Court, but the court did not hear those as the main case document was in the District Judge's Court, Mojibur Haq Kisl, the plaintiff's lawyer, said.

He added that the court also asked the prosecution to publish a newspaper advertisement about fugitive accused Nayeem, 17.

Md Easin Arafat, acting senior judicial magistrate, passed the order after hearing from the prosecution and the defence.

Lawyer Mojibur said six bail prayers of juvenile accused were also submitted before the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court yesterday. The court referred the bail prayers to the Barguna Juvenile Court for hearing.

But the Juvenile Court did not hear those as the main case document was

with the district Judge's Court.

Police had shown arrested Mohaiminul Islam Sifat, an accused in the Rifat murder case, in an attempted murder case that was filed in 2017, the lawyer said.

Twenty accused in the Rifat murder case are in jail. Two accused Musa, 22, Nayeem, 17, are on the run, while Rifat's wife Ayesha Siddika Minni and Arian Shrabon are out on bail.

On June 26, Rifat, 25, an internet service provider, was hacked to death in broad daylight in front of Minni's college in Barguna town.

In the CCTV footage of the incident, Minni was seen screaming and trying to save her husband from the attackers.

Police arrested Minni after a daylight interrogation on July 16. A Barguna court placed her on a five-day remand the following day. Three days

later, a Barguna court recorded her statement under section 164.

On August 29, the High Court granted Minni bail on condition that she cannot talk to the media and she will remain in her father's custody.

On September 1, police pressed charges against Minni and 23 others for their alleged involvement in Rifat murder, an incident that triggered huge public outcry across the country.

On September 18, a Barguna court accepted the charge sheet against Minni and the others.

The name of key accused -- Sabbir Hossain Nayan alias Nayan Bond -- has been excluded from the charges as he was killed in a "gunfight" with police on July 2, six days after the killing of Rifat.

Teenager dies a day after being stabbed

FROM PAGE 16

College Hospital. He was referred to DMCH in the evening, where he passed away early in the morning.

His body was sent to the hospital's morgue for autopsy.

Quoting the victim's family members and locals, the OC said there had been a fight between Jahidul and one of his classmates over a football match recently.

During the fight, Jahidul allegedly slapped his classmate, said the OC.

"We are trying to find the cause of the murder and are pursuing different threads," said the OC.

The victim's mother Noor Jahan lodged a case with the police station accusing 11 people, including the ex-joint secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League's Ishwarganj Degree College unit Moshir Rahman Kanchan as the prime accused, the OC said.

Police arrested Kanchan soon after and he was produced before a Mymensingh court this afternoon with a five-day remand prayer, he added.

Drives are on to arrest the others accused, the OC added. Additional Police Superintendent (Crime) SA Newazi visited the spot.

Climate activists fined for stealing Macron portraits

AFP, Paris

A French court yesterday fined eight activists 500 euros each for stealing official portraits of President Emmanuel Macron from public buildings as part of a protest over climate change.

The trial is the third in France over the phenomenon of stolen Macron portraits.

Last month, a Lyon court cleared two activists of stealing portraits of Macron, saying that taking down the pictures constituted "legitimate" protest.

But a Paris court yesterday returned a different verdict, ruling that the eight accused, who are aged between 25 and 35, were guilty of "group theft", a charge that carries a maximum five-year jail term.

The eight had all admitted to taking down the pictures of Macron hanging

in three local government offices around Paris in February, as part of the "Take Down Macron" campaign of civil disobedience.

They claimed a "moral duty" to act in the face of what they called the inaction of Macron's government on climate change.

The first trial over the portrait thefts took place at the end of May in the eastern town of Bourg-en-Bresse where an environmental campaigner was fined 250 euros (\$225) and five others received suspended fines.

All public schools and government offices in France display the president's portrait, with Macron's showing him perched on the edge of his desk with two mobile phones and the memoirs of French resistance hero and post-war president Charles de Gaulle behind him.

Foreign trips

FROM PAGE 16

own expenses.

Contacted, Md Nazrul Islam, a personal officer to an additional secretary of CHT affairs ministry, who visited Vietnam and Cambodia this year, said, "Khagrachari Hill District Council gave me 1,000 US dollars as pocket money to go abroad for study tour."

However, Nazrul was not asked to submit any payment voucher to the council.

Asked what he had learnt from the tour, he said he visited some cultural and historical places of the two countries. He, however, could not say how the visits were relevant to his job.

The Daily Star also contacted Mohammad Abdul Mazed, accounts and audit officer of Bandarban Hill District Council, who went to China and Malaysia this year. Refusing to say anything, the officer suggested that this correspondent talk to his senior officials about the matter.

Contacted, Executive Engineer of Bandarban Hill District Council Md Mahbubur Rahman said, "We need to learn something from a foreign country, but it is true we can't use our experience properly in our country."

Asked why they did not apply their knowledge and skills acquired from foreign trips, he declined to talk any further and asked this correspondent to talk to other senior officials in the council.

Chairman of Khagrachari Hill

District Council Kongjari Chowdhury on September 30 told this correspondent over phone that these foreign trips bring benefits.

Asked about the benefits, he said he was busy and disconnected the line.

Terming these tours pleasure trips, former member of National Human Rights Commission Banchita Chakma said, "These are nothing but total misuse of government funds."

Bodhisatta Dewan, former principal of Khagrachari Government College and president of Sacteton Nagorik Committee (SANAC) Khagrachari unit, also raised question about these study tours.

He said, "Nobody knows what type of knowledge they acquire from these foreign trips and how they apply it in Bangladesh. These tours are nothing but misuse of fund only for their pleasure."

Asma Taskin, deputy secretary of CHT affairs ministry, said "The purpose of such tours is to gather knowledge and experience. If anyone going on these tours considers these as pleasure trips, it is his or her personal failure."

Asked whether evaluation of the tour participants is done on their return, the deputy secretary said they do not have any such mechanism.

After returning, the staff members share power point presentation on their trips and learnings before senior officials, she said, without elaborating on the matter.

Former NSI chief

FROM PAGE 16

involvement in wartime crimes.

WAHIDUL'S PROFILE

According to the investigation agency, Wahidul, son of Shamsul Haque in Madaripur, was posted in Rangpur Cantonment when the war broke out in March 1971. He, along with the Pakistan occupation army, fought against the freedom-loving people.

He was the adjutant of the 29th Cavalry Regiment of the Pakistan army at Rangpur Cantonment.

Wahidul was transferred to West Pakistan the following month, where he continued his service and returned to Bangladesh in December 1973. He subsequently joined Bangladesh Army, agency officials said.

He was later sent into "forced retirement" as many were aware of his wartime crimes, they said.

He joined the police force as an assistant superintendent in October 1976, a year after the assassination of Bangabandhu, and became the police commissioner of Chattogram in 1988.

He was a director of NSI from 1991 to 1996 and its acting director general

from 1996 to 1997, investigators said.

Wahidul was made the director general of the Department of Immigration and Passports in 1997 and reappointed to the post in 2002. He retired as an additional inspector general of police in October 2005, they said.

THE CHARGE

Around 4:00pm on March 28, 1971, several thousand people assembled near the Rangpur Cantonment area to protest the barbaric mayhem committed on the night of March 25, 1971, and to demonstrate their stance on independence, according to the charge.

Then a group of Pakistan army men led by Wahidul, equipped with machine guns, opened fire, killing 500 to 600 civilians, reads the charge.

In conjunction with the attack, injured civilians were bayoneted to death following the order of one Lt Col Shageer, it added.

Ex-MD

FROM PAGE 16

Operations of the coal-fired power plant remained suspended for more than 50 days as the supply of coal had fallen short.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) began investigation that very month with Md Shamsul Alam, deputy director of the ACC, as the investigation officer of the case.

Abu Hena Ashiqur Rahman, assistant director of the Commission in the district, submitted the charge sheet to the same court on July 24 this year.

Earlier on Tuesday, the court accepted the charge sheet of the case and issued an arrest warrant for the 23 charge sheeted accused.

Omar Faruk, a lawyer for the ACC in Dinajpur, said that all 23 accused worked for BCMCL and have appeared before the senior special judge court of Aziz Ahmed Bhuiyan with bail prayers.

The other 20 accused in the case, including six former managing directors, were granted bail.

Speaking to The Daily Star earlier, Habib Uddin Ahmed said that it was a system loss, which was never taken into consideration since the coal production began in 2005.