



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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**DHAKA NORTH CITY CORPORATION**

**ATIQUUL ISLAM wins**

**VOTES CAST FOR**

<b>4,47,211</b>	<b>2,64,161</b>

**DHAKA SOUTH CITY CORPORATION**

**SHEIKH FAZLE NOOR TAPOSH wins**

**VOTES CAST FOR**

<b>4,24,595</b>	<b>2,36,512</b>

## Voters keep off

Low turnout, show of strength by AL men, poor presence of BNP polling agents mark Dhaka city polls; Taposh wins south, Atiqul north; BNP rejects polls, calls hartal for today

STAR REPORT

The polling atmosphere was eerily festive. Almost too peaceful to be true.

Election posters flooded every nook and cranny of the capital. Supporters of the candidates, mostly from the Awami League, were seen outside the polling centres. Law enforcers patrolled the streets while peace prevailed.

Yet, an astonishingly poor number of voters turned up at the centres in the high-voltage Dhaka city polls, dampening the spirit common in elections in the country.

Almost all the polling agents at the centres were for the mayoral and councillor candidates chosen by the AL.

The Daily Star correspondents could hardly spot polling agents or supporters of the BNP candidates at the centres. It was as if an invisible force made them disappear on the election day.

Unofficial results show that both the AL mayor candidates won the city polls by a big margin.

Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, AL mayor candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation, bagged 424,595 votes, while his rival Ishraque Hossain of the BNP got

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The polling centre at Mohammadpur Government High School remains nearly devoid of voters from the morning until afternoon. But around 2:00pm, officials said over 1,500 votes had been cast.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

**EVM EXPERIENCE**  
Not smooth sailing at all  
Fingerprint mismatch, lack of privacy, helping hand vex many voters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For most, it was the first EVM experience and for many, the experience was not pleasant.

While promoting the EVM (electronic voting machine) use in the Dhaka city polls, the Election Commission said it would be convenient, less time-consuming, and free from manipulation.

The EC had used the machines on limited scale in previous polls but yesterday's one was the first major all-EVM election.

Witness accounts and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

UNWANTED HELP -- PAGE 3

## AS WE SAW

These are the snapshots of the election day based on what journalists of The Daily Star witnessed in two Dhaka city corporation areas. It is, however, not the whole picture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yesterday's Dhaka city polls may appear to many a re-run of the national election held on December 30, 2018, because of some aspects.

Stepping out of their homes in the morning, voters saw only campaign posters and supporters of the ruling party candidates.

At the voting centres, finding trace of polling agents of BNP candidates was a real challenge. As if an invisible force swept away opposition leaders and activists from the field of voting.

Voters' queues remained static at times at some centres. At some others, individuals were seen "helping" voters use the electronic voting machines (EVMs).

These were the features of the election day The Daily Star found visiting 207 out of 2,468 polling centres in Dhaka city.

**FESTIVITY OUTSIDE, CENTRES ALMOST EMPTY**

The Daily Star visited 207 polling centres in Dhaka south and north city corporation areas, but found help desks set up by BNP men at only three places -- Mohammadpur, Khilgaon and New Market.

Voters were provided with their serial numbers at those desks.

At the desk in Mohammadpur, BNP men were barred from distributing slips among voters.

"We are not being allowed to hand the slips to our supporters as they

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

## Ghosts around machines?

SYED ASHEAQUIL HAQUE

Unlike any polls in the past, eligible city dwellers yesterday were free to exercise their right to vote through machine, for the first time, at all centres across Dhaka.

February 1, 2020 should have gone down in the history of this democracy-craving nation as a very special day, the day when about 55 lakh voters were supposed to elect their mayors for two city corporations. This digitisation could have laid to rest all the ghosts in the electoral system. The long culture of ballot-stuffing, fake-voting or wrong-counting would have come to an end, for good. And the Election Commission would have become the toast of Bangladesh.

So, how did the day go for real?

Machine proved to be vulnerable, digital ghosts emerged and the EC ended up as the biggest loser.

The wintry morning set a perfect stage for fair polls. The climate was also very

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda looking a little puzzled after the EVM kept failing to recognise his fingerprint at IES School and College in Uttara. He eventually used his national ID number to cast his vote. Inset, another man faces the same predicament at Banani Bidyaniketan School.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, PRABIR DAS

**3 journos**  
beaten up  
Many others obstructed from discharging duties



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the absence of rival party activists, journalists covering the Dhaka city election at various polling centres yesterday were apparently a thorn on the side of ruling party candidates and their supporters.

They were attacked, confined and intimidated at some centres while many of them were obstructed from discharging their

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

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# 'It's outrageous'

## PM slams foreign missions for 'including local staff as foreign observers'

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sharply criticised some foreign missions in Dhaka for picking Bangladeshi nationals as "foreign election observers".

She also blasted the Election Commission for accepting those locals as foreign election observers.

"They didn't do the right thing. There are many Bangladeshi nationals who work at foreign missions here. They are Bangladeshi citizens... they are doing jobs there...they [foreign missions] have appointed them as foreign election observers...what they have done is outrageous," the PM said.

She was talking to reporters after casting her vote at Dhaka City College polling centre in the capital's Dhamondi at 8:00am.

Hasina, also the Awami League chief, questioned how a Bangladeshi national could become a "foreigner" and a "foreign election observer" as the person only worked for a foreign mission in Bangladesh.

The PM said the foreign missions in Bangladesh could express their concern as the country's past history was not good.

She said after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975, everyone witnessed how a game was played by snatching the people's voting rights. "But we have gradually overcome that situation and there is nothing to be worried about it."

She also mentioned that those who have expressed concerns over the polls know about the examples of the elections in their own countries. "We know about some instances of the elections in their countries."

Hasina said some people among those picked as foreign election observers have a hostile attitude

towards Bangladesh. "I know some of their fathers were involved in the August 15 massacre or were anti-liberation people."

She questioned the EC's judgment as they accepted local Bangladeshi people as foreign election observers. "I don't know how they accepted the country's nationals as foreign election observers. They didn't do the right thing by accepting that."

The PM also said Bangladeshi nationals doing jobs in foreign missions could visit polling centres as voters, but not as election observers.

She hoped the AL candidates would win the mayoral polls to two Dhaka city corporations.

Talking about the Electronic Voting Machine, Hasina briefly described the process of casting votes with it. She said she cast her vote with an EVM very quickly and easily.

"I think the Election Commission will be able to introduce this EVM gradually in the entire country so that people's voting rights are ensured, and nobody can snatch other's voting rights and capture polling centres," she said.

Responding to a question about the BNP's allegations that Awami League was trying to capture polling centres, the PM said a party tries to take other paths after it loses confidence in the people.

"This is the character of the BNP. They had started vote rigging; they cannot keep their confidence in the people, and they cannot trust the digital system."

She said the BNP must try to gain people's trust. Trust and confidence are the main sources of power and the AL has been in power for three consecutive terms with those, she added.

The AL chief also said the people were witnessing the remarkable progress of the country.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's fingerprint is being authenticated by an EVM at a polling booth in Dhaka City College.

PHOTO: PID

# AL says 'better than ever'; BNP rejects 'farcical' polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League yesterday claimed that elections to the two Dhaka city corporations were held much more peacefully and better than ever in the past, while BNP said that elections were nothing but a farce.

Briefing at midway of voting hours at Awami League president's Dhanmondi office, party joint general secretary and information minister Hasan Mahmud said, "A festive environment is prevailing, and voters are exercising their franchise freely. Polls environment is much better than ever in the past."

He also criticised BNP for "trying to make the election questionable."

Responding to a query about this

presence of voters, Hasan blamed winter and holiday for the low turnout.

At another briefing after the end of voting hours, the party's other joint general secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said yesterday's election through EVM has been "more free, fair and peaceful than any election held in the last 100 years."

At the press conference, AL presidium member Jahangir Kabir Nanak said there is no need for polling agents during an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)-only election.

"EVM is a scientific voting system where there is no need for polling agents of any party, as the machine itself works as the guard. If the fingerprint doesn't match, you can't

vote," he said replying to a query on BNP's allegations of driving out their agents from polling centres.

"The EVM is such a sturdy system that it works as polling agents of all parties," he added.

**NO REFLECTION OF PEOPLE'S OPINION: FAKHRUL**

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir at a briefing after polling hours at the party's Nayapaltn said "a farce was staged" in the name of elections to two Dhaka city corporations.

"What was held in the name of elections to Dhaka south and north city corporations was nothing but a farce. There was no scope for reflection of the people's opinion in the election

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

# Diplomats observe polls but without local staff

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign diplomats visited different polling centres during yesterday's Dhaka city polls without their local staffers, following a government directive not to include Bangladeshi employees of their missions in election observer teams.

The Daily Star could confirm that envoys of the US, the UK, the European Union, Canada, and Japan went to polling centres in various parts of the city.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R Miller visited Rampura Ekramunnesa High School, Shaheed Monu Miah Government High School in Tejgaon, and Banani Bidyaniketan School and College centres.

He spent around 15 minutes at Rampura Ekramunnesa High School and observed the voting process. The envoy then went to Shaheed Monu Miah Government High School and stood on the school playground for a while.

"This is a beautiful day," the ambassador said, looking around and up in the sky, reports UNB.

He also inquired about the school and when it was established. When he saw 72-year-old Mohammed Shahjalal was proceeding towards the polling centre with the support of his relatives, the diplomat suggested a television journalist that the moment be captured.

"The ambassador did not talk to any media as per the Election Commission's regulations," said a diplomatic source.

British High Commissioner Robert Chatterton Dickson visited several polling centres, including Banani Bidyaniketan School and College and Azimpur Girls School and College. He also refrained from talking to any media.

Besides the US and the UK diplomats, those from the foreign missions of Canada, Japan, and the European Union visited various stations.

An official of an embassy in SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



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2

# OF QUEUES AND CHAOS

1. Police drive out hooligans from a polling centre in Habibul Model School and College in Uttara. 2. The polling centre proper wears a deserted look, owing to low voter turnout yesterday. 3. This long line of voters is actually full of those who are there only to make up the numbers and not actually vote. Whenever they see journalists, they make sure the line looks bigger. 4. A scuffle breaks out among supporters of two mayoral candidates at a polling centre of Ward-30. 5. A policeman, who was allegedly voting for others, being taken inside the centre for Ward 29 to be questioned. 6. A motorised rickshaw-van used to bring voters to a polling centre in Ashkona. 7. An elderly man all smiles after successfully voting. 8. Happy polls day participants decked out in the national colours.

PHOTO: STAR



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8



## Voters keep off

FROM PAGE 1

236,512 votes, according to results from the 1,150 polling stations in the DSCC.

In Dhaka North City Corporation, AL mayor candidate Atiqul Islam secured 447,211 votes. His rival Tabith Awal of the BNP bagged 264,161 votes, show results from the 1,318 voting centres in the DNCC.

Before the announcement of results from the returning officer's office, both Atiqul and Taposh met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban around 9:30pm.

Meanwhile, the BNP rejected the results and called a daylong hartal today in the capital.

"We are totally rejecting the city elections. A dawn-to-dusk hartal will be observed in the city on Sunday," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said at a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office last night.

Earlier, the party submitted a written complaint to the Election Commission, alleging "irregularities" in the city elections.

As in the previous polls, the BNP could not put up a fight in this election as well. Though the party could assemble a good number of leaders and activists in the run-up to the election, the polling agents of the BNP candidates were largely absent on the election day. This showed their incapacity to stand against the ruling AL.

Fakhru alleged that all agents of the party's mayoral candidates were either barred from entering the polling

stations or driven out of those.

"Presiding officers and members of law enforcement agencies played the role of mere spectators."

The BNP has been in a tight spot after its humiliating defeat in the December 30 national polls in 2018. Since then, the party could hardly carry out any meaningful political programme except for some meetings and rallies.

**'EC COULDN'T EARN TRUST'**

The poor turnout in the city polls speaks volumes of apathy that has developed among voters regarding the electoral process.

Reports from our correspondents indicate that voters' presence was thin at most of the polling centres where over 54 lakh voters were supposed to elect the city's custodians. And this, according to experts, indicated people's diminishing confidence in the country's electoral system.

Many people were deprived of their voting rights in some of the previous elections, they said. Also, the Election Commission has failed to create enthusiasm among the voters to go to polling centres.

"It is probably the outcome of the previous elections. Voters did not have confidence that they would be able to cast their votes without any fear, and their vote would make a difference," Prof Nizamuddin Ahmed, an expert on local governance system, told The Daily Star.

Given the intensity of the candidates' campaigns, the voter turnout should have been higher, he said. "But the poor presence of voters indicates that the Election

Commission could not earn the trust of the voters."

Echoing this view, Brig Gen (ret'd) Shakhawat Hossain, a former election commissioner, said people are losing trust in the electoral system because of the EC's poor management.

"The election was apparently peaceful with an abnormal voter turnout," he told this newspaper.

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda predicted that the turnout would be less than 30 percent.

"It was a good election," he told the reporters last night. According to the EC's data, the voter turnout was 18.08 percent in the DNCC and 21.27 percent in the DSCC as of 2:00pm yesterday.

In the previous 2015 elections, the average voter turnout in the two city corporations was 43.92 percent -- 37.29 percent in north and 48.4 percent in south.

**RESEMBLANCE TO DEC 30 POLLS**

Yesterday's polling was quite peaceful. But the city residents found some uncanny resemblance between this election and the 11th parliamentary polls. As in the December 30 polls, there was a one-sided overwhelming show of strength this time too.

Both the BNP mayor aspirants as well as some BNP-backed councillor candidates alleged that the ruling party men drove out their polling agents from the polling centres. In elections, polling agents play a vital role in checking fake voting.

About the allegation, the CEC said, "The [polling]

agents must have the strength to stay put... They shouldn't leave [the centres] if anyone asks them to do so."

There were a lot of speculations centring yesterday's election as it was the first EVM-only polls.

The EC used the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) at all the 2,468 polling stations despite reservations from opposition political parties and concern among many voters about how to use the machines.

Many voters complained that they were unable to cast their ballots as the EVMs could not recognise their fingerprints. They also said what made them uncomfortable was that confidentiality in casting ballots was compromised.

Besides, they alleged that inside the booths there were many "helping hands" who cast votes through EVMs on their behalf.

On the issue, Shakhawat said he heard that there were cases where voting through EVMs was manipulated by the people behind the machines.

"Even EVMs could not stop vote manipulation," he said. The first election to the undivided Dhaka City Corporation was held in 1994 and the second one in 2002. The government in 2011 split the DCC into two but there was no election.

The two city corporations went to polls in 2015. The AL-backed candidates won the mayoral posts with the BNP-backed candidates boycotting the election halfway over allegations of vote rigging.

## Ghosts around

FROM PAGE 1

inviting for voters to come out from their homes on a day, declared a public holiday to cast votes amid festivity.

Largely peaceful was the climate around all polling centres. Still, the polls ambience, as seen by our 48 correspondents at 120 of 2,468 centres, was eerily quizzical. It was emptiness everywhere. Empty road, empty voting centre, empty polling booth, empty presence of opposition parties and empty look in the faces of polling officials. As if the word empty personified the city elections.

The turnout less than 30 percent only reflected how lowly the EC had actually fared in the trust scale of majority of voters who chose to forgo their right to elect.

Historically, Bangladeshis were most enthusiastic about their voting rights. Where did the enthusiasm go or how voters of today developed this mass apathy towards their once-cherished rights could be a grim soul-searching for our political system. But this symptom they certainly did not develop overnight. Ghosts in our electoral process have contributed to voters' gradual loss of interest.

However, irrespective of who won or lost in the city polls, the single biggest loser is the EC for sure. A strong 'no vote' was cast against the EC and election process, with majority of voters not turning up at polling centres. The erosion in voters' confidence started a long ago, with the EC appearing more and more compromising with the powers that be while holding elections in the past.

Apart from the overt bias of allowing the ruling party to violate the election code of conduct, the EC remained nonchalant to common concerns of parties out of power and experts about the prospect of getting EVMs malfunctioned and mishandled. Their strongest concern was: 'if machine is made by men, it can be hacked by men as well.'

The EC neither came forward to dispel their fear nor give parties the confidence about men around the machine during the polls. It maintained the same stance while moving on to conduct the city elections.

Coming out of polling centres yesterday, almost all voters complained to our correspondents about the presence of too many 'helping hands' around the machine.

Who were they? Helping hands for voters or ghosts that actually ran the machine? An independent investigation may clear the air around machine. But what's more urgent now for the EC is to clear its name and win back voter's confidence in elections.

## US author Mary Higgins Clark dies

AFP, Washington

Best-selling American author Mary Higgins Clark, known by her fans as the "Queen of Suspense", has died aged 92, her publisher confirmed Friday.

She was still producing a book a year at the age of 90, with her page-turners earning her a legion of fans across the world -- and even making her one of the top-selling fiction authors in France.

Clark's publisher Simon & Schuster announced her death, tweeting she died peacefully "surrounded by family and friends".

With sales of more than 100 million in the United States alone, she achieved success in her 40s after a series of personal tragedies.

Her father died from a heart attack when she was 11 years old and, with her mother struggling with three children, Clark was obliged to work from 15.

## Not smooth sailing at all

FROM PAGE 1

most of the voters The Daily Star talked to at different polling centres yesterday cast a grim picture.

Many complained of not being able to vote as the fingerprint scanners failed to identify them, unwanted "helpers" cast their votes instead, and no privacy in the polling booths. The Daily Star got many of these complaints from over 100 centres its reporters visited.

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda's fingerprint did not match the one in the database when he tried to cast his vote at a polling station in Uttara yesterday morning. He eventually voted using his national ID card number.

The CEC was lucky to have been able to cast his vote. The Daily Star got many complaints from voters who were unable to cast their votes due to fingerprint mismatch. This paper's executive editor was one of those who were not allowed to vote as the machines failed to read the fingerprints.

"I could not cast my vote. Someone cast it for me," a voter told this correspondent in front of Gandaria High School polling centre around 11:30am.

This correspondent, also a voter at that centre, then went into the polling centre, which is in Dhaka-6 constituency where EVMs had been used in the 2018 national polls.

When this correspondent reached the polling booth on the third floor, he saw five people standing in line to cast their votes.

As a voter approached the booth, an unwanted "helper" sporting a card around his neck with the symbol of boat and Dhaka South Awami League candidates' pictures, entered the booth before him.

The voter and the "helper" were seen and heard exchanging heated words.

"What's the point of this kind of farce? I should not have come to vote," the man was heard saying as he left.

Apparently disheartened by seeing a fellow voter's vote being cast by the unwanted "helper", some of the voters who were in the queue started leaving without casting their votes.

Asked, one of them said, "I will not allow someone else to cast my vote against my will. It is better to not vote."

After completing his biometric clearance, a voter in his 40s engaged in a heated exchange with the "helper" and at one stage told officials that he won't cast his and left fuming.

No sooner the voter had left, the "helper" went inside the booth and cast the votes.

Ahead of a five-person queue was an elderly philanthropist of the area. Following 10 minutes of trial and error, he got biometric clearance to vote.

But when he was casting his vote, the unwanted "helper" was keeping an eye over the barely shoulder-height black curtain at the booth.

When this reporter went to cast his vote, a leader of the ruling party's youth front shouted from a distance. "He is a big brother of our neighbourhood. Let him cast his vote."

A first-time EVM voter shared his experience to this correspondent afterwards.

"I told him [unwanted "helper" inside the booth], 'Let me cast my vote'," the voter said.

"Of course, I'm here to help you choose the ones to vote for," the voter quoted the man as saying.

At Kids International School in PC Culture Housing, Adabor, a woman complained that a polling officer cast her vote pretending to fix a broken machine.

"After I selected the first candidate, the machine stopped working. The polling officer then entered the booth and said 'let me help you and cast the votes'," said the woman, adding that the officer stole the next two votes on the ballot pretending to fix the machine.

The privacy required for casting votes seemed to be scarce.

Most of the voters said they felt embarrassed.

When a voter cast their vote, it remains on the screen for quite a while allowing people in the station to sneak a peek.

Around noon at Ideal School and College of Rampura, a heated exchange ensued after a woman protested AL supporters' illegal interference. The woman told The Daily Star that the AL supporters were peeking into the booth to see who she was voting for.



A cat tries to take a catnap beside the booth at Sir Salimullah Medical College polling station in Old Dhaka yesterday as voter show was poor there.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Agents must be

FROM PAGE 3

whenever anyone asks them to leave."

The CEC told the polling agents to ask for assistance from presiding officers and members of law enforcement if they were threatened or driven out.

Returning officers will take steps if they receive allegations, he said, adding "We will stop voting if the situation in a centre goes beyond control."

At the briefing, he, however, said the voter turnout till then was not satisfactory and hoped that it would pick up soon.

The CEC expressed his satisfaction over the overall election situation.

Former election commissioner Brig Gen (Ret'd) Shakhawat Hossain told The Daily Star that being a CEC, Huda should not make such comments.

"What is he implying by this? Will polling agents remain in the polling stations through a show of force? Then what is the role of EC?" he wondered.

The constitution empowers the Election Commission (EC) to do anything and everything to ensure a free and fair election.

It is constitutionally oath-bound to ensure free and fair elections to the office of President of the Republic, and to Jatiya Sangsad and local government bodies.

The EC, according to experts, must then work to create a congenial voting atmosphere, where such needs to resort to "strength" and put up "resistance" should not even be a question.

## Unwanted help

FROM PAGE 3

"Midway through voting, a man with a 'Boat' symbol ID peeked into my voting booth. I asked what he was doing there and he said, 'No, I'm making sure that you are voting right'."

At this point, the voter asked him to leave, but the man had noticed that he had not voted for 'boat'.

"He looked at me sternly and said, 'Oh, so you voted for that symbol? Get out of here.' He then exited the curtained area. I followed him out and saw him pointing at me and screaming at others present, 'Didn't you see this [profanity] cast her vote for that symbol? Who let her in? Make sure this symbol gets no vote in this station'."

"I asked why he was screaming profanities but he refused to engage with me, and instead coerced the officers to give my four-digit number and then walked inside the curtained area. When I questioned this and asked everyone there why he went in there with my number, they just told me to leave."

The voter tried finding the presiding officer, but failed, and alleged that the guards too did nothing.

## 3 journos beaten up

FROM PAGE 1

professional duties. A handful of journalists alleged that police and the presiding officers did not cooperate them and even drove them out of the centres in some cases.

Mostafizur Rahman Sumon, a crime reporter at online news portal Agami News, was attacked while taking photos of a gathering of Awami League activists in Rayerbazar area in the morning.

Followers of AL-backed councillor candidate Md Hossain Khokon swooped on him wielding sharp weapons and snatched his phone, his colleagues said.

Sumon was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he had to have six stitches on his head, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in-charge of DMCH Police outpost.

Lying on a hospital bed, Sumon told reporters that he was attacked when he tried to capture a procession where some youths were carrying firearms and sharp weapons on Sadeque Khan Road around 11:00am.

"They pushed me down on the road and beat me up ..." he added.

While visiting Banani Bidyaniketan School and College centre in the afternoon, Inspector General of Police Mohammad Javed Patwary instructed police to take necessary actions against the attackers.

A correspondent of Press Bangla Agency was also beaten up by Awami League activists while he was filming irregularities at Nikunja Jan-e-Alam School around 10:30am, Ibrahim Sarker, a special correspondent of the agency, told The Daily Star.

He was later taken to Kurmitola General Hospital, Ibrahim said.

Followers of AL-backed councillor candidate of ward no. 4 Md Jahangir Hossain attacked Chief Photographer of Bangla daily Kaler Kantha Sheikh Hasan at Madartek School, said SM Azad, chief crime reporter at the newspaper.

The attackers also took away the memory card of his camera, he said.

## BCL men follow

FROM PAGE 3

Earlier in the morning, a mobile court led by an executive magistrate removed at least 60 men who made fake lines in front of the Curzon Hall centres. However, they returned soon after the magistrate left.

At around 9am, eight agents of BNP were threatened and asked to leave polling stations at Curzon Hall and Udayan School, alleged convener of DU white panel teachers, Prof ABM Obaidul Islam.

"The situation of other four centres I have visited so far are the same," he said around 10am.

Later, the pro-BNP teachers submitted a written complaint to the presiding officer of University Laboratory School centre, said Prof Obaidul. He alleged that BNP agents were not allowed at any of the centres.

Agents of Islami Andolan Bangladesh and AL were seen present at the centre since morning.

Meanwhile, voter turnout was sparse till 10am. However, the turnout saw a little rise as the day progressed.

Abdul Motaleb, presiding officer of University Laboratory School told The Daily Star that only three votes were cast at his centre till 9:40am, over an hour and a half after voting began.

Some 80 out of 2,354 votes were cast at the Buet polling centre till 12 noon, said Presiding Officer Bashudeb. This reporter, however, found the premises of the centre empty at the time.

Only 61 votes were cast out of 1,879 at Motaher Hossain building, 57 out of 2,271 at Curzon Hall, and 128 out of 2,400 at DU Gymnasium centres till 10:15 am, according to respective presiding officers.

Udayan School presiding officer said he did not see BNP agents at the polling stations, and was trying to hold the elections smoothly. Presiding officers in other centres echoed him.

Contacted about the allegations, BCL central unit president Al Nahean Khan Joy said he did not hear anything about forming of fake queues or assaulting a voter, adding that he would look into it.

**দিলকুশায় অফিস স্পেস ভাড়া হবে**

**রাজ ভবন, ২৯ দিলকুশা বা/এ, ঢাকা-১০০০**

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সেন্ট্রাল EXHUST SYSTEM সহ আধুনিক টয়লেট সুবিধা। \* ব্যাংক, বীমা ও আর্থিক  
প্রতিষ্ঠান ভাড়াট্টা হিসাবে অধুনা।

**৪যোগাযোগঃ**

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## Welcoming month of language with alphabet procession

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The month of February is marked with heroic tales of patriots laying down lives for the mother tongue. This month of language inevitably causes one to reflect on the martyrs of Language Movement in 1952, their valour, selflessness and love for motherland.

Imbued with its spirit, "Barnamalar Michhil" (a procession of Bangla alphabets) was organised in Sylhet city yesterday. Sammito Natya Parishad Sylhet brought out the parade from Sylhet Zila Parishad premises in the morning, which ended at Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar.

Afterwards, Chhanda Nrityalaya presented dance with inspirational songs of the Language Movement.

People of Sylhet have been organising the event for the last six years to recall the supreme sacrifice of the country's language heroes, said Rajat Kanti Gupta, general secretary of Natya Parishad.

Meanwhile, a 17-day theatre festival in light of the Language Movement, organised by the parishad, began yesterday at Kabi Nazrul Auditorium in Rikabibazar area of the city.



UPHOLDING THE SPIRIT OF AMAR EKUSHEY... Holding placards depicting Bangla alphabets and garlands, youths usher in the month of February at Central Shaheed Minar in Sylhet city yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## PM to inaugurate Ekushey book fair

Monthlong fiesta begins today

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the month-long Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela -- the marquee event of booklovers and publishers -- today.

The monthlong fair is arranged every year in February, commemorating the sacrifices of eight people who laid down their lives on February 21, 1952 to establish Bangla as the state language of erstwhile East Pakistan.

The fair will be held at Bangla Academy and its adjacent Suhrawardy Udyan till February 29.

The Bangla Academy Literature Award will also be handed at the opening ceremony.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the occasion.

In his message, President Abdul Hamid appreciated dedicating this year's book fair to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on the occasion of his birth centenary.

"He was the first person to begin the movement for establishing Bangla as the state language in 1948. Later, Bangabandhu inaugurated national 'Bangla Literature Conference' for the first time on the premises of Bangla Academy in 1974," the president said.

In her message, the prime minister said, "I am glad to know that 'Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2020' is being organised like every year, and I send my greetings and felicitations to Bangla Academy, local and foreign publishers and all concerned."

## Yaba peddler flees from police station

Three cops suspended in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three law enforcers were suspended after a female yaba peddler fled from police custody at Patiya Police Station under Chattogram district early yesterday.

The three suspended police members are: Assistant Sub-Inspector Samsuddin, and constables Rijaz and Mamtaj.

"The three were suspended for their negligence in duty, as a drug peddler managed to flee from their custody after arrest," Additional Superintendent of Police Afruzul Haque Tutul told The Daily Star.

Chattogram Metropolitan Police sources said Patiya police arrested a drug peddler named Laiju Begum from the post office area of Patiya on Friday noon.

She was coming from Cox's Bazar, carrying yaba pills in her abdomen, they added.

"After detaining her, we confirmed that she was carrying the pills through an X-ray," said the official.

"The accused was then given medicine prescribed by doctors, and 1,900 yaba pills were seized from her later," the additional superintendent of police told this correspondent.

The police official added, "Afterwards, she was taken to the interrogation room just beside the officer-in-charge's room at the police station."

"She was kept under police custody with two constables keeping watch on her," he said.

"Around midnight, the accused said she wanted to use the bathroom. After going to the toilet, she fled through the vent of the toilet, dodging the on-duty police personnel," ASP Tutul said.

Asked why the accused was not kept in the female lockup after arrest, Tutul said, "The question paper of ongoing SSC examination was kept at the female lockup for security purposes."

For that reason, they had to keep the accused with police constables inside the interrogation room, the police official added.

"We are trying to arrest the accused and find out if she had any accomplice," he added.

A drug case was lodged with the police station in this connection.

## Journo Mithun Mahfuz no more

CITY DESK

Mithun Mahfuz, senior reporter of Daily Amader Somoy, passed away at a hospital in the capital yesterday. He was 52.

Mithun was undergoing treatment at Birdem Hospital and breathed his last at 10:30am. He left behind his wife, daughter and a host of well-wishers.

Mithun's first namaz-e-janaza was held at his office, and another at DRUI.

He will be laid to rest today at his village home in Khulna's Paikgacha.



## JU staff Nurul Islam passes away

CITY DESK

Nurul Islam, local newspaper agent of Jahangirnagar University, passed away of old age at his residence on Thursday. He was 78.

He was also a senior staffer of JU's chemistry department. He left behind his wife, five children and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

JU teachers, students and staff offered condolences to the family. Nurul had been working as an agent of the university since 1971.

## Wazi Uddin laid to rest with state honours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Wazi Uddin Khan, veteran politician and prominent freedom fighter, was laid to rest with state honours yesterday. People of all walks of life, including members of different political parties, joined his funeral in Pabna.

The 85-year-old former lawmaker, also chairperson of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Association, passed away around 9am on Friday.

He was given state honours in front of Muktijoddha Sangsad district unit's building in Pabna city around 9am. Later, his body was taken to Baluchar field in Chatmohar upazila around 11am for his first namaz-e-janaza.

His second janaza was held at Pabna police lines premises around 2pm the same day, and he was buried in the city's Arifpur graveyard.

Born in 1936, Wazi Uddin entered politics in the 60s and played a vital role in all revolutionary movements. Later, he became president of Pabna district unit AL. He was elected lawmaker of Pabna-3 in 1986 and 1996.

## ROAD ACCIDENT

## Workers block highway after rumour of fellows' death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Garment workers yesterday blockaded Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Bagherbazar point of Gazipur for around half an hour following a rumour that four of their co-workers died in a road accident.

Witnesses said four workers of Golden Refit Garments Ltd were crossing the highway around 2pm when a speeding motorbike hit them, leaving them injured.

Locals rescued and took them to Al-Hera Hospital. But a rumour spread among workers that the four had died. Workers took to the street and blocked the highway.

Vehicle movement was halted and the blockade caused long tailbacks. Later, police

went to spot and defused the situation after talking to the workers, said OC Manjural Islam of Mawna Highway Police Station.

Vehicle movement resumed around 2:30pm, said the OC.

Of the four victims, Sharmin Akhter's (35) condition was critical, said MA Hasan, administrative manager of Al-Hera Hospital. The other injured are Rubina Begum (30), Salma Akhter (30) and Sabina Akhter (30).

As Sharmin's condition kept deteriorating, she was referred to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Talking to journalists, Golden Refit Manager Moniruzzaman said the authorities had halted operations of the factory for the day considering the untoward situation.

## Dilapidated city streets spell misery for Khulna commuters

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Dilapidated roads in Khulna are causing immense sufferings to city dwellers, who say 60 percent of roads are in poor condition due to lack of reconstruction and repair after development projects.

During visits to different roads last week, this correspondent saw potholes causing traffic disruptions. Commuters -- including students, officegoers and patients -- and drivers shared the suffering while using those.

The roads -- including Sonadanga-Notun rasta, BIDC, KDA Avenue, Daulatpur Sabujanga Math, Islampur, Dolkhola Lane, Miapara, Tutpara Central, Rupsha Bridge, Bagmara Main, Nirala, Raipara and BK Main -- are in dilapidated condition.

Sankar Kumar Mollick, assistant professor of BL College, said, "Due to craters on roads, students sometimes lose interest to go to classes."

Vehicles, especially heavy ones, have to struggle to pass through the roads, often taking longer than usual.

Tank lorry driver Arman Sheikh, who uses a road in Khalishpur to load oil from three state-owned oil depots, said, "Commuters falling off rickshaws or easy bikes is a regular occurrence."

Locals termed BIDC Road a "deathtrap" in terms of its severity. Thousands of people use the road. Four state-owned jute mills and three state-owned oil depots are situated by



Vehicles getting stuck on roads has become a common situation in the city. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

the road. Commuters stay in constant fear of accidents at any time.

Milon, a resident of Khalishpur, said, "Khulna Wasa is working on some of the roads for over three years. Those were in poor condition previously; they have made the roads worse."

"The potholes are filled with rainwater during monsoon and dirt during dry season," he added.

Sornali Golder, a student of Khulna Government Girls' College, said a ride from Notun rasta to Boyra Bazar by rickshaws or easy bikes is unbearable.

"Wasa has been working to improve drainage but they are making the situation worse by leaving debris by

the roads," said Palash Das from Boyra. "There is no good coordination between Wasa and Khulna City Corporation [KCC] to repair the dug up roads," he added.

Kamaluddin Ahmed, deputy managing director of Khulna Wasa, denied the allegations, saying Wasa has repaired some roads, and paid KCC more than Tk 9 crore to fix the rest.

Admitting the facts, Md Liaquat Ali Khan, chief engineer of KCC, said repair works are going on.

Asked about the other roads in bad shape, he said Tk 600 crore was allocated for a mega project, feasibility study for which is going on.

## Death anniv of Mizanur Rahman

CITY DESK

Today is the 14th death anniversary of Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury -- former



prime minister, noted politician and a Liberation War organiser.

Today is also the 11th death anniversary of his eldest son Abdullah Mizan, said a press release.

Born on October 19, 1928 in Chandpur, Mizanur was a close associate of Bangabandhu. In 1966, he was elected the organising secretary of Awami League.

He discharged the duty of acting general secretary of AL in 1966-67 after the arrest of Bangabandhu, Tajuddin and other top leaders.

In 1984, he joined Jana Dal and later Jatiya Party of HM Ershad and became the prime minister in 1986. He joined AL again on August 27, 2001 and was a member of the party's advisory committee till his death.

A qukhawni and milad mahfil will be held today on the occasion, at his ancestral home in Chandpur.

## GAS EXPLORATION IN BHOLA

## BSD concerned over deal inked with Russia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Protesting the government's move of signing a contract with a Russian company for gas exploration in Bhola, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) formed a human chain in front of Ashwini Kumar Hall yesterday.

The protesters claimed that such a move will be against the country's interest and the government should have assigned a local company for it.

Bazar office in the capital on January 28. One was on strategic cooperation and other on conducting 2D/3D seismic surveys in Bhola in search of gas and oil.

There are two gas fields in Bhola at present covering an area of around 8,000 square kilometres.

During a visit to Russia in 2010, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged her counterpart to aid Bangladesh's gas exploration and development activities.

In 2012, a turnkey agreement was



PHOTO: STAR

They also claimed that Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company (Bapex) is capable of carrying out the activity by itself.

Imran Habib Rumon, convener of the district unit of BSD, presided over the event, addressed by Dr Manisha Chakraborty, co-coordinator of the unit, among others.

**GAZPROM, BAPEX TO SEARCH FOR OIL, GAS**

Russian energy giant Gazprom and Bapex signed two deals at Petrobranga's Karwan

signed with Gazprom as contractor to drill 10 wells to extract gas under areas of Bapex, Bangladesh Gas Fields Company and Sylhet Gas Fields.

Wells were drilled at Srikail of Cumilla and Shahbazpur of Bhola. Gas was discovered in the latter and extraction has been ongoing for the past 10 years. Three more wells were planned to be drilled there.

In 2017, Bapex discovered another gas field in Bhola. The government decided to take help from Russia's Gazprom to assess reserves there.

## National food safety day today

UNB, Dhaka

National Food Safety Day will be observed today across the country, with a call to prevent food adulteration and ensure safe food for all.

This year's theme of the day was "Sobai mile hat melai, nirapod khaddo nischt chai" (Let us all join hands; we want assurance of safe food).

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the occasion.

In his message, the president said there is no alternative to safe food to build the present, and make sure that the future generation becomes healthy and skilled.

He urged all agencies concerned and people to join the movement for safe food in the country.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, "There is no alternative to safe food to continue the trend of development and grow our present and future generation healthy and active."

Highest safe standard of food production, import and marketing must be ensured for protection of lives and health, she said in a message, adding, "I hope that the Food Safety Authority will take the country forward by achieving professional skills."

Different government organisations, food processing companies, traders, importers and other stakeholders will organise various programmes marking the day.

Food adulteration has been the biggest hurdle towards ensuring secured and safe food for the people of the country.

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# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY FEBRUARY 2, 2020, MAGH 19, 1426 BS

## Extraordinarily low voter turnout

*The EC must answer for the disillusionment of the people*

THE Dhaka city corporation elections held yesterday only reiterated what is increasingly becoming a disturbing trend in elections in the country—low voter turnout. In sharp contrast to the loud and wasteful campaigning that characterised the run-up to the elections, voter turnout in most polling centres on February 1 was abysmal, signifying a general disillusionment and frustration among the public regarding the electoral process.

And why wouldn't the people be disillusioned? What did the Election Commission (EC) do during the national elections in 2018, and upazila and DNCC elections in 2019 to gain people's trust that it would hold a free and fair election—one in which their choices and voices would matter? Was the EC able to ensure a level playing field for all candidates and create a conducive environment where voters can exercise their democratic right without fear of coercion or harassment? If anything, the EC has been consistent in its complete disregard for any concerns raised by opposition parties, civil society and the general public regarding discrepancies and favouritism in the electoral process. This election, unfortunately, was no exception. The EC has deliberately ignored dissenting voices, even when it originated from within the commission itself. Rather than accept responsibility for the low turnout rates, the EC has, once again, and in a characteristic style, blamed the candidates for their failure to draw the voters. In their haste to pass on the buck, they have perhaps forgotten that the onus lies on them to assure the voters that their votes do count.

The controversial manner in which the EC took the decision to install EVMs in all polling centres in the city—without addressing opposition concerns and building public confidence in a new technology—perhaps only made voters more nervous. Our reports suggest that the public had good reasons for concern. For one thing, many reported that their fingerprints didn't match with the database and hence they were unable to cast their votes. Yet others noted the almost complete lack of privacy in choosing a candidate and the direct and indirect intimidation of ruling party polling agents in the booths. In many reported instances, taking advantage of people's confusion regarding how to use EVMs, polling agents cast the vote on their behalf. In more severe instances, supporters of opposition parties, who were "caught" voting for other parties, were harassed. Similar allegations had also been made during the national elections in 2018 and we had warned the EC that such incidents could happen again if they did not take enough precautions. Unfortunately, they did not, and they also failed to educate people on how to use EVMs so that they could not be easily manipulated.

Meanwhile, the EC has not only downplayed the allegations of harassment and intimidation of BNP polling agents but the Chief Election Commissioner Nurul Huda has gone so far as to suggest that polling agents should have the strength to stay put at polling centres. It is of grave concern that instead of investigating these allegations seriously, the EC would rather encourage polling agents to engage in a turf war at the polling booths. We are further troubled by reports of harassment and violence against journalists while discharging their professional duties. For instance, a crime reporter from an online portal was attacked and seriously injured, reportedly for trying to take photographs of a procession where some youth were allegedly carrying firearms and sharp weapons. Yet other journalists, including from *The Daily Star*, were attacked and harassed when they tried to take photographs and driven out of the polling stations. Why were journalists attacked and driven away if, as the EC claims, the election was free, fair and peaceful?

In the end, perhaps we should not be surprised that the elections turned out the way they did. When an Election Commission fails to stay neutral and dispense its responsibilities and obligations according to its constitutional mandate—allowing parties to become bigger than the people—disillusionment in the political process is only inevitable. We must acknowledge how serious this apathy can be and find a way to restore the faith of voters in democracy. We can and must do better.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net



### Mobile gaming poses serious risks

Online multiplayer battle royale games have taken the world by storm in recent years. One particular game, considered to be one of the best-selling and most-played video games of all time, has millions of players across the globe. In Bangladesh, a large percent of the youth are active players of that game and many are even addicted to it. Many students neglect their studies to play it and are unable to concentrate on anything else.

According to reports, the World Health Organization (WHO) termed "gaming disorder"—impairing a person's capacity to function normally in their daily activities due to their severe gaming habits—as a form of mental disorder. The amount of time the players spend looking at the screen is unsafe for their eyes, not to mention the bad posture that is harmful for the spine. There are many more threats to the human body from prolonged gaming. I think there is nothing wrong in playing online video games as long as it is under control. In order to ensure the future generation remains healthy and active, parents must monitor their children's activities and also make sure they remain active in real playgrounds and not just the virtual ones.

Yasin Al Jim, East West University



C. R. ABRAR

WITHIN a week of the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that provisionally recognised the group identity of the Rohingya and the unremitting persecution that the community has endured over decades, Bangladesh government announced that it will grant access to education to the Rohingya children. The decision has been enthusiastically welcomed by the refugee community as well as rights groups at home and abroad. Under the scheme, Rohingya refugee children up to the age of 14 will receive education following the Burmese curriculum, and children above that age will get skills training. Announcing the plan, the newly appointed foreign secretary of Bangladesh noted that "the government has felt the need to keep Rohingya children's hope for the future alive with extending education and skills training to them."

Long before the August 2017 influx, the government had for years stood by its decision to not allow refugee children access to education, presumably on grounds that it would create opportunities for the refugees to permanently settle in Bangladesh and may also work as an incentive for those still living in Arakan to cross the border. The recent decision is of major significance for the lives of tens of thousands of refugee children. Access to education will not only help them realise their innate potential, it will also empower them to make a distinction between right and wrong and thereby protect them from the machinations of promoters of violent extremism (something that the government and the international community are pretty concerned about) and human trafficking. Education will help the refugees to pursue livelihood opportunities upon their eventual return to Burma and also in cases of third-country settlement. The policy change is also in sync with the government's obligation under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that affirms that every child has a right to education.

There is little doubt that effective implementation of the policy will entail, among others, mobilisation of a huge amount of resources, developing comprehensive curricula and infrastructure, identifying and securing the services of qualified teachers, and careful balancing of the educational needs of the children of the host community with those of the refugee children. No less important will be maintaining the quality of education and having the curricula accredited by the appropriate authority. This bold decision of the Bangladesh government demands an active engagement of the international community in sharing the responsibility of educating all children in the affected areas.

In an otherwise hostile global environment for the refugees, Bangladesh's granting of sanctuary to the persecuted Rohingya and rendering various kinds of assistance to them, albeit with international support, have earned it a towering moral standing. The ICJ ruling vindicated the correctness of Bangladesh's position. It is now incumbent on the

world community, particularly the powerful states, to live up to their obligations and shore up efforts to bring about an end to the genocidal practices of the Burmese state against the Rohingya and help create an enabling environment in Arakan for them to return with safety and dignity as bonafide citizens of Burma. It is also the time for Rohingya strategists in Bangladesh to reflect on policies that need to be amended or framed in light of the emergent reality.

One of the first issues to address is recognise the group as "refugees". By all calculations, the Rohingya in Bangladesh fulfil the criteria to be termed refugees. They fled their country of origin (Burma) due to well-founded fears of persecution, are unable to get the protection of that county, and owing to fears, are unwilling to return. By all counts, like their preceding cohorts of 1978 and 1991-92 who came to Bangladesh and were granted refugee status, this group also qualifies as refugees. But so far, for reasons not explained, the concerned authorities of Bangladesh chose not to grant the same status to this group that endured severe conditions fleeing

soon create conditions for their return, then time has come to revise the decision, acknowledge the sufferings of these people (which received due recognition at the highest court of the world) and term them "refugees".

No one disputes that dealing with neighbours, particularly recalcitrant ones, is a difficult task. Over decades, on the vexing Rohingya issue, Bangladesh has been extremely tolerant and flexible in engaging with its eastern neighbour. It tried to address the return of a "residual caseload" of 25,000-35,000 registered refugees from the 1991-92 influx through bilateral discussions with little progress. Out of deference to the Burmese, it did not alert the international community to the steady inflow of refugees in small bands or large groups fleeing persecution and violence in Arakan state since 1992 until August 24, 2017 (that eventually numbered about 300,000)—considering that it would complicate the ongoing repatriation talks over the "residual caseload" and cast negatively on bilateral trade and connectivity initiatives. Respecting the Burmese desire for years (quite erroneously, one would argue),



FILE PHOTO: REUTERS/DANISH SIDDIQUI

Rohingya refugees stretch their hands to receive aid distributed by local organisations at Balukhali makeshift refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, on September 14, 2017.

mass atrocity crimes including killing, rape, maiming and arson. For reasons still unknown, Bangladesh government preferred to call them "forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals", a slightly improved version from the initial tag of "illegal intruders".

The term "forcibly displaced" undermines the gravity of the crimes that this group has been subjected to. Refugees are people who flee persecution or war. They are seeking asylum somewhere outside of their home country because returning home is too dangerous. Quite unlike the "forcibly displaced", refugees enjoy specific protections under international law, including that they should not be sent back to their home country. Under the principle of burden sharing, the international community is obligated to ensure protection of the refugees. Surely, all members of the Rohingya community meet the above conditions and thus are eligible to be recognised as such. If the decision not to term the Rohingya "refugees" was taken to placate the Burmese authorities with the underlying hope that Naypyidaw would

Bangladesh even refrained from terming the community "Rohingya", denying the group its rightful claim to identity (which was unequivocally reaffirmed in the ICJ ruling), and till this day continues to brand the refugees as "forcibly displaced" people. Even after experiencing the huge flow of refugees after August 25, 2017, instead of viewing the Burmese policy in Arakan as genocide—the mother of all crimes (as the ICJ has provisionally deemed)—Bangladesh appeared to have been on board with the Burmese who presented the Rohingya issue "essentially as a border, law and order and human mobility question."

Notwithstanding all the above efforts of Bangladesh, instead of positively responding to the good neighbourly gestures, the Burmese state deemed those as weaknesses and persisted with its genocidal agenda, discreetly banishing the Rohingya from Arakan, freeing up the land for a plethora of mega-development projects, being aided and abetted by its international partners including those who sit and aspire to sit as permanent members in the Security Council. In

## Will the new Bodo accord give peace a chance in Assam?



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

THE signing of the tripartite peace agreement among different factions of National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), the Indian government and the Assam authorities on January 28 has set the stage for an end to one of the longest-running insurgencies in the northeastern state of India. According to Home Minister Amit Shah, the nearly four-decade-old Bodo insurgency has claimed 4,000 lives.

This was the third peace accord with the Bodo outfits since the movement and insurgency for a separate Bodoland to be carved out of Assam had begun in late 1960s. The first two agreements were signed in 1993 and 2003, but unlike the January 28 one, they did not cover all the Bodo groups. That was the reason why Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the latest accord "stands out." That was why Shah termed the accord as "comprehensive" as it brought under its ambit four splinter groups of NDFB, All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and United Bodo People's Organization. As per the accord, a total of 1,550 militants of the NDFB would lay down their arms and their armed units would be dismantled. The militants will be given a lump sum payment of ex-gratia, as per the accord.

The movement for a separate Bodo state began in 1967-68 and gained

momentum in 1987 under the banner of ABSU. Subsequently, the armed militant group Bodo Security Force came into being with Ranjan Daimary as its top leader. It was later rechristened NDFB, which later suffered splits. However, the demand for a Bodo state was the common thread that ran through all factions of the Bodos.

The January 28 peace accord has been arrived at without any mention of the demand for a separate state to be carved out of Assam. Amit Shah said the territorial integrity of Assam has been assured with the accord because every single Bodo group has come on board. However, when asked about their demand for a Bodo state, ABSU President Promod Boro said, "the issue would be discussed at the right time." Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma insisted the demand for a Bodo state has ended with the latest accord.

The messaging of the peace accord with all the Bodo outfits without compromising the territorial integrity of Assam is considered significant for the state's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, which is facing the heat of protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). In fact, Assam was initially the hotbed of anti-CAA protests and five persons perished in police firing on protesters and violence. In the 2016 assembly elections, the Assamese people had given a major mandate to the BJP. With unrest still simmering among the majority Assamese-speaking people over the CAA, the BJP hopes to benefit from Bodos—who have a sizable presence in the four districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri in Assam—in the fresh assembly polls due next year.

Many provisions of the latest peace agreement are reworked versions of the earlier two ones. For instance, granting more legislative, executive and financial powers to the existing Bodoland Territorial Council. Another highlight of the January 28 accord is that it provides for the establishment of a commission to reconstitute the existing Bodo Territorial Areas District (BTAD) by including new Bodo-dominated villages and excluding villages with

*The January 28 peace accord has been arrived at without any mention of the demand for a separate state to be carved out of Assam. Amit Shah said the territorial integrity of Assam has been assured.*

non-tribal majority population. Also, the BTAD will be renamed Bodoland Territorial Council. The accord comes with promises of packages for promoting education through the establishment of a National Institute of Technology, sports through Sports Authority of India, and development of bamboo, handloom and dairy industries in Bodo-dominated areas and setting up of a railway coach manufacturing factory.

To showcase the third Bodo peace

the final week of August 2017, the regime went for the "final solution" by unleashing a reign of terror on unarmed Rohingyas. The scale of barbarity of the operation and the subsequent hypocrisy of the Burmese state in stalling the bilateral repatriation plan over the last two years are well-known.

Such a backdrop provides the rationale for Bangladesh to review its Rohingya strategy. The Burmese reaction to the ICJ ruling gives an indication that the country is yet to acknowledge the crimes it has committed against the Rohingya and is in no disposition to create an enabling condition for the refugees to return. The hope that has been raised by the ICJ ruling, and the opportunity it has created for ensuring justice and making the Burmese state accountable, should be harnessed to its fullest extent. The condition demands that Bangladesh takes a firm stand against its rogue neighbour and actively engages with the ICJ process. Whether the country should file a separate case in the ICJ or be a party or act as intervener in the existing case is a matter of further debate and consideration.

In the current world of brazen realpolitik, The Gambia, a small nation in a far-away land, totally unaffected by the Rohingya genocide, has played a formidable role for ensuring justice for the voiceless Rohingya victims and survivors. However, jurist John Packer has directed our attention to a major weakness of the case—that it entirely rests on that small, weak country, which may shy away from its current stance under unforeseen circumstances (such as a change in government). The situation demands that others (of the 150-odd countries that are party to the Genocide Convention) file either separate cases or become parties to the existing case to bolster the process of justice and accountability. The ICJ ruling should induce at least a few more states, particularly those who champion world peace and human rights, and also those who advocate the cause of Islamic Umma, to live up to their commitment and uphold the lofty principles. Here again, Bangladesh, as the most injured third party, can play a decisive role in banding together a coalition of the willing.

On the Rohingya question, so far Bangladesh has been unable to secure any tangible support from the much-celebrated friendly states. Time has come for the political leaders of Bangladesh to convey its people's extreme disappointment and displeasure to the concerned states for backing the wrong side on this critical issue. Bangladesh's expectation that henceforth those states would pursue an objective and balanced Rohingya policy vis-à-vis Bangladesh and Burma should be clearly communicated.

At a time when hopes for justice and accountability for the Rohingya were fading and frustration was creeping in among those who cherish right over wrong, fairness over injustice, the ICJ ruling has opened up a new vista of optimism. It has created a big opportunity for Bangladesh, a country that has garnered a colossal moral capital. Time has come to make a wise investment of that capital and play a proactive role in addressing the Rohingya genocide. Rohingya strategists in Bangladesh may also be well-advised to refrain from taking any step internally that may undermine this elevated standing.

C. R. Abrar is an academic and rights worker.

accord as a big achievement, the BJP has called a rally in Kokrajhar on February 7. But challenges to peace remain. The first two peace accords with Bodo outfits failed to end the militancy by them. One just has to recall that 90 people died in serial blasts set off by Bodo insurgents in Assam in October 2008, and 40 Bangla-speaking Muslims were killed in Baksa district in 2014. It remains to be seen how the third agreement works. A key question following the agreement is how the fault lines between Bodos and non-Bodos in the four districts shape up. The competition for land in the area is the main bone of contention between Bodos and non-Bodos, and has the potential to spark ethnic tensions afresh. That, in turn, could add to the cauldron of unrest caused by the anti-CAA protests in Assam and reignite militancy by the anti-talks faction of United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) headed by its fugitive supremo Paresh Baruah.

It is not without a reason that Assam's finance minister, who was present in New Delhi at the time of the signing of the January 28 accord, talked about a more inclusive peace effort in Assam by roping in outfits which are yet to join the negotiations. Both Sarma and Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal are keen to have ULFA (I) at the negotiations table. Paresh Baruah reportedly told a TV channel in Assam that his group was ready for talks if its demand for "sovereignty" is on the agenda.

Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent for *The Daily Star*. He writes from New Delhi, India.



## POLLS TALK

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

# Voting in an intimidated and monopolised space



IFTEKHARUZZAMAN

By all credible indications, voting in the two city corporations of the capital has taken place in an uneven playing field—an electoral space that has been intimidatingly patrolled to ensure its monopolisation.

To be sure, the elections have been held in a context that had hardly any reason to create any reasonable amount of trust among voters. So they didn't think their efforts to cast their vote would make any sense.

At the core of the factors that led to this lack of trust amongst voters is not only the experiences they have gone through during the last national election and a series of local elections held before and after that, but also the unprecedented impotence of the Election Commission (EC), which has subjected itself to self-inflicted humiliations through loss of dignity and credibility. The EC is a constitutional body currently headed by a CEC and Commissioners whose

potential to deliver anything near a free and fair election has been questioned from day one. The internal tensions and differences of opinion among the commissioners on various issues have been craftily manipulated to transform an official of the commission, who is supposed to be reportable to the Commissioners, into the most powerful factor in decisions, actions and interpretations of the EC.

Against this backdrop, with the full-fledged introduction of electoral voting machines (EVM), as much as it could be viewed as an opportunity to take the challenge to restore some semblance of trust, the Commission has acted just the opposite, demonstrating an all-round insensitiveness to a series of complaints of violations of electoral rules and codes since the announcement of schedules till date. The potential gains of EVM have not only been overshadowed by well-designed and strategic moves to monopolise the electoral space, but also by creating an atmosphere of subtle and not-so-subtle intimidation and deterrence against voter turnout, polling-centre patrolling and booth capture, including the supposedly covered space meant to ensure the confidentiality of the voter while voting.

The low voter turnout is a symbol of lack of trust in the capacity of the EC that has eroded the value and dignity of people's right to vote, and apathy to a political culture where only a handful of the high and mighty—not the voters—determine who goes to power.

The restrictions on media and other stakeholders who wanted to observe the election only demonstrate a rather brazen example of how the space was designed to be manipulated and a sheer lack of confidence that a free and fair election is not affordable.

In an apparent dead-end where there is no indication of a light at the end

realise that what is happening is not only unsustainable but also shutting down all prospects of a peaceful transition of power, which can in the end only be counterproductive to themselves and to the democratic future of the nation.

The main burden of failure to conduct genuinely free and fair

There is no doubt that the difference is made by the wrong people being entrusted with state functions that are too important. This must change—the EC must be headed by people competent enough to understand the sanctity of the power they are entrusted with, deliver their job without fear or favour, and at least not let the commission be dictated by its biased and partisan staff. They must be courageous enough to realise that it is the degree of trust and credibility of the EC that determines the rate at which people are motivated to come to the polling centre.

No less important is the bigger issue of depoliticisation of the law enforcement agencies and administration that play a crucial role in elections. Finally, despite growing intimidation and a shrinking space, the media, civil society, and people in general must raise their voices loud and clear about the constitutional right of the people as the source of all power. The media, in particular, cannot enter into its shell, nor can it allow itself to be co-opted, compromising their fundamental principles. Professional integrity, transparency and accountability are the best available capital in the hands of the media and civil society to successfully and effectively navigate in the abiding context and catalyse change in the public interest.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman is Executive Director, Transparency International Bangladesh.

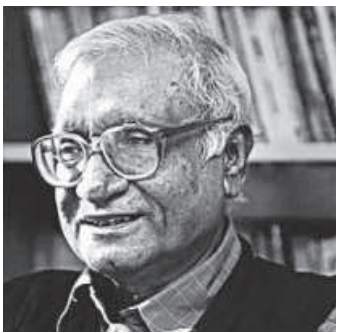


PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

of the tunnel, it is the political parties who must first transform themselves in a paradigm shift under which they have to recognise that the mandate to obtain the lease of state power lies with the people, and not with manipulations, however crafty they may be. They must

elections lies with the EC. The electoral laws, despite some deliberately created deficits, are still good enough to deliver nationally and internationally acceptable elections as shown in the not-so-distant past when the present regime came to power to start with.

## Low voter turnout was inevitable



PROF SERAJUL ISLAM CHOWDHURY

That voter turnout in Saturday's election would not be satisfactory was a foregone conclusion, given that people in general have lost confidence in the electoral system. The manner in which the last general election as well as some of the local elections in recent years were held has, in fact, significantly eroded people's trust in the idea of an election. So, people did not go to the polling centres, not in large numbers anyway. They already knew their opinion would not be reflected in the election.

Generally, people do not seem to give much importance to the city corporation elections. But what was worse this time is that they didn't have much idea about the candidates either. In the past, aspiring ward councillors and their supporters would keep the electioneering scene vibrant by going from door to door and providing the voters with voting slips. I don't think the candidates did it this time. In fact, many people were confused. They

did not know which candidate belonged to which party even as they went to the polling centres.

Electioneering was almost dominated by the candidates of one party. In the area where I live, I haven't seen much activity from the opposition candidates. There were no posters of the opposition candidates and people could see that there was no level playing field. It was evident that an environment in which people would be inspired to vote willingly, for the candidates of their choice, could not be created.

It's not just that they did not go to vote due to their lack of trust in the system, they were also annoyed at the way the campaigns were held. The wastefulness of the campaigns was visible everywhere you turned. While the mayoral and councillor candidates made promises to improve the city's environment if elected, during their campaigns they did things that were completely opposite to their pledges. The way posters, especially laminated ones, were hung all over the streets and loudspeakers were used was harmful to the environment. It continues to be. We need to understand that Dhaka has become unliveable and those who will be elected should be committed to making the city liveable again. Sadly, through their campaigns the candidates have given the public an impression that they are not capable of taking up that challenge.

Moreover, people had doubt

about the use of EVM in the election. They did not have prior experience of using the technology. There was also doubt about the efficacy of EVM—whether proper machines were bought, whether there is any mechanism to oversee it, etc. EVM came with a questionable reputation, and the Election Commission has made sure that question mark was never erased. The manner in which the EVM issue was handled from the start raised questions in people's minds, which could potentially be a reason for the low voter turnout.

Overall, I would say, the performance of the EC was very unsatisfactory. It was clear that the EC was not functioning properly. The rules of electioneering were not maintained by the EC and they also made some irresponsible comments. They did not take into account violations of the electoral code of conduct by candidates and their supporters. No one was held accountable for the violence during the campaigns and for attacking some of the candidates.

People expect the EC to work independently, without the influence of the government. The EC should take responsibility for everything involved with the election and the administration should listen to them and provide all kinds of assistance. Sadly, they failed to do their duty and lost people's trust.

Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury is Professor Emeritus, University of Dhaka (Interviewed by Naznin Tithi)

## No confidence vote for the EC



ZOBAIDDA NASREEN

Since the 2015 mayor elections, we have seen a steady decline in voter turnout in elections in Bangladesh. The latest Dhaka City Corporation elections are expected to have the lowest turnout yet—the culmination of a trend that clearly shows that people have lost their confidence in the Election Commission (EC) and the electoral process. The past few elections have given people the impression that they may be faced with harassment at the polling centres when they turn up to vote, and if they do not, it is highly likely that someone else may cast it for you. The strength of a democracy is demonstrated through free and fair elections, and one with low voter turnout and different kinds of irregularities is bound to create doubts around the legitimacy of the polls and those in charge of ensuring it goes well. Despite that, every time there is an election, the EC says it has been the best one yet, and there seems

to be no end to this denial on their part.

However, there have certainly been a number of irregularities in yesterday's elections. Firstly, voters were given very little information by the EC on how exactly to use the newly introduced electronic voting machines (EVM). While the media and candidates themselves tried to make the information available, those in charge of doing so failed to make it available to the masses. We have seen that the Chief Election Commissioner himself was not able to vote with only his fingerprint and had to use the national ID instead. Did the common voter have this sort of access? For voters who were not able to use the EVM, the EC had no plan or alternative arrangement in place for them. Many are reported to have left without being able to exercise their right to vote.

We have also heard reports of opposition party polling agents being kicked out of voting centres. When questioned on this, the EC came back with a ridiculous question—why did the polling agents leave when they were asked to? I think it is quite obvious that they were not "asked" to leave, but that is completely beside the point. If the Election Commissioner is of the opinion that polling agents have to stand their ground when faced with abuse and harassment, instead of condemning the situation where they are faced with harassment

in the first place, then it is very clear that they have failed to fulfil their obligations of creating an environment that is conducive to fair elections. In the past, elections in Bangladesh came with a festival feeling and people spontaneously turned up to vote. This environment has now been replaced with one of fear. This has been so easily achieved because of the EC and their willingness to turn a blind eye.

We know the reality of why voters are not turning up to exercise their democratic rights. The EC is responsible for creating a space where voters feel safe and included; where they are not afraid of their democratic rights being taken away from them. However, the EC has evaded this responsibility and instead said that the candidates are responsible for bringing in voters, while the candidates have said the EC is responsible. In this back and forth, one thing is quite clear—no one has really thought about the needs of the voters, despite voters being the core characters in the electoral process. Unless the EC can find a way to place voters at the centre of elections and create a neutral space where they are able to vote without fear of harassment and coercion, there will always be a question mark attached to any polls that are organised under their mandate.

Zobaidda Nasreen teaches anthropology at the University of Dhaka.

(Interviewed by Shuprova Tasneem)

## WHAT'S NEXT AFTER BREXIT?

Britain left the European Union on Friday, ending more than four decades of economic, political and legal integration with its closest neighbours. But things will feel the same for many months, owing to a transition period intended to allow both sides time to agree the terms of their future partnership. Three Brexit deadlines came and went before the British parliament finally ratified the divorce agreement. Britain left the European Union 43 months after the country voted for Brexit in a June 2016 referendum. Nothing will change for most people in Britain thanks to the transition period intended to allow both sides time to agree the terms of their future partnership. It lasts at least until December 31, 2020. But Britain will lose its representation and voting rights in the EU institutions. This includes having no British members of the European Parliament. Here are the key moments ahead:

**FEBRUARY/MARCH: TRADE TALKS BEGIN:** Britain says it is ready to start trade talks on February 1, but EU members states are still discussing what they want from the negotiations. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is to flesh out his ideas for a free trade agreement along the lines of a recent EU deal with Canada, in a speech in early February. The EU mandate could be approved by national ministers on February 25, officials in Brussels suggest, which would mean talks could begin around March 1. Britain is hoping to open trade talks with the United States and other non-EU countries around the same time. Trade is not the only issue that must be resolved with Brussels, however. Britain and the EU closely cooperate on security and law enforcement, education and energy among many other issues.

**JULY 1: EXTENSION DEADLINE:** The transition period is scheduled to last until December 31, 2020. Britain can ask to extend this for one or two years, but must inform the EU of its request by July 1. Johnson insists he will not do this, saying that Britain must be free of EU rules and regulations as soon as possible.

**DECEMBER 31: TRANSITION ENDS:** Without an extension or a trade agreement, relations between Britain and the EU will be severed at the end of 2020. A new deal would allow the two sides to embark on a new partnership. Failure to agree would see cross-Channel trade, transportation and a multitude of other ties severely disrupted overnight. SOURCE: AFP



A Palestinian demonstrator uses a sling shot to hurl rocks at Israeli security forces during clashes at the northern entrance of the West Bank city of Ramallah, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Trump lifts ban on landmines

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump's administration on Friday lifted US restrictions on landmines, saying new technology made them safer, outraging campaigners for the abolition of the explosives that maim thousands of civilians each year.

In the latest reversal of a policy of his predecessor Barack Obama, Trump gave the green light to a new generation of "non-persistent" landmines that can be switched off or destroyed remotely rather than staying active in the ground forever.

Obama in 2014 banned the use of anti-personnel landmines with the exception, under pressure from military planners, of the Korean peninsula where the explosives dot the last Cold War frontier with North Korea.

The White House said the US military will now be free to deploy landmines around the world "in exceptional circumstances."

In rescinding the White House directive, the Trump administration said policy would now be set by the Pentagon, which said it was still prohibiting traditional landmines that cannot be turned off or destroyed remotely.

The new mines are set to self-destruct within 30 days but can be destroyed in as little as two hours if necessary, Vic Mercado, the Pentagon official in charge of the policy, told reporters.

More than 160 countries, including most of the Western world, are party to the 1999 Ottawa Convention that aims to eliminate anti-personnel mines. A study found that 6,897 people worldwide were killed or injured by mines or leftover explosives from war in 2018.

## Maldives back in Commonwealth

AFP, Colombo

Commonwealth nations yesterday welcomed back the Maldives 40 months after it angrily quit the organisation over criticism of its human rights record under strongman president Abdulla Yameen.

The move is a new step in ending the international isolation that the Indian Ocean holiday destination suffered under Yameen's rule from 2013 to 2018.

The group of mainly former British colonies said an application to return made by the Maldives had been approved after "due diligence" including a country assessment.

The country has sought to repair its image after Yameen suffered a shock defeat in a 2018 election to Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.

The Maldives government said Solih telephoned Commonwealth secretary general Patricia Scotland to state that renewed membership was "symbolic of this administration's commitment to both engage with the international community and to deliver on our domestic pledges to citizens in good faith."

The Commonwealth said reforms underway in Maldives were in line with the group's values and they encouraged Solih to pursue the measures.

"Together we will support Maldives to realise its ambitions," Scotland said.

## Arab League rejects Trump's plan

Warns Israel against force; Palestinians cut all ties with the Jewish state, US

AGENCIES

The Arab League has completely rejected US President Donald Trump's Middle East plan during an emergency meeting in Egypt's capital, saying it would not lead to a just peace deal.

In a statement yesterday, the pan-Arab bloc said it "rejects the US-Israeli 'deal of the century' considering that it does not meet the minimum rights and aspirations of Palestinian people."

Arab states also agreed "not to ... cooperate with the US administration to implement this plan," adding that Israel should not to implement the initiative by force. They insisted on a two-state solution that includes a Palestinian state based on borders before the 1967 war, when Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

They also called for East Jerusalem to be the capital of the future Palestinian state.

Arab leaders also vowed "not to ... cooperate with the US administration to implement this plan". They insisted on a two-state solution that includes a Palestinian state based on borders before

the 1967 Six-Day War -- when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza -- and with east Jerusalem as its capital.

The US plan suggests that Israel would retain control of the contested city of Jerusalem as its "undivided capital" and

### MIDDLE EAST PEACE ROADMAP



annex settlements on Palestinian lands. Trump said the Palestinians would be allowed to declare a capital adjacent to Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas yesterday announced a cut of all ties with

Israel and the United States, including security cooperation.

"We are informing you that there will be no relations with you (Israel) and the United States, including on security cooperation," Abbas said at an extraordinary meeting of the pan-Arab bloc in Cairo.

The Palestinian leader said he would go to the United Nations Security Council soon to call for an international conference to re-launch negotiations with Israel.

He added that the US plan was in "violation of the (autonomy) accords" launched in Oslo in 1993 by Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel will have to "bear responsibility as an occupying power" for the Palestinian territories, Abbas said, adding that Palestinians will press ahead with their legitimate struggle using peaceful means.

This struggle will be under the auspices of the diplomatic Quartet comprised of the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia, Abbas said.

"But we will not accept the US alone. We have tried it already," he added.

## Britain embarks on its future outside EU

Johnson plans full border checks on EU goods

AGENCIES

Britain began an uncertain future outside the European Union yesterday after the country greeted the historic end to almost half a century of EU membership with a mixture of joy and sadness.

There were celebrations and tears on Friday as the EU's often reluctant member became the first to leave an organisation set up to forge unity among nations after the horrors of World War II.

Thousands of people waving Union Jack flags packed London's Parliament Square and sang the national anthem to mark that reality as Brexit became law at 11 pm (2300 GMT) -- midnight in Brussels.

In an address to the nation, Prime Minister Boris Johnson hailed a "new era of friendly cooperation" acknowledging there could be "bumps in the road ahead" but predicting the country could make it a "stunning success".

The Daily Telegraph newspaper reported that Johnson was preparing to impose full customs and border checks on all European Union goods entering Britain from next year, in an attempt to increase pressure on the bloc in trade talks.

"We are planning full checks on all EU imports - export declarations, security declarations, animal health checks and all supermarket goods to pass through Border Inspections Posts," Saturday's Telegraph quoted a senior government source as saying.

"This will double the practical challenge at the border in January 2021," the source added.

Brexit has exposed deep divisions in British society and many fear the consequences of ending 47 years of ties with their nearest neighbours.

Brexit has also provoked soul-searching in the EU about its future after losing a country of 66 million people with global diplomatic clout and the financial centre of the City of London.

French President Emmanuel Macron described it as a "historic warning sign" that should force the EU and its remaining nations of more than 440 million people to stop and reflect.

In Scotland, where a majority voted to remain in 2016, Brexit has revived calls for independence.

In Northern Ireland -- soon to be a new EU frontier -- there are fears Brexit could destabilise a hard-won peace after decades of conflict over British rule.



Activists attend an anti-Conservative government, pro-Scottish independence, and anti-Brexit demonstration outside Holyrood, the seat of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Readying coronavirus vaccine will take months'

AFP, Paris

No manufacturer will have a coronavirus vaccine ready for use before the middle of 2020, despite an intensive global effort, a biotech executive told AFP on Friday.

Stephane Bancel is chief executive of Moderna Therapeutics, one of several entities involved in an all-out international effort to create a vaccine as soon as possible for the deadly SARS-like virus, also known as nCoV-2019 that has already killed more than 259 people.

Moderna is working in coordination with the US National Institutes of Health, while Inovio Pharmaceuticals and the University of Queensland in Australia are pursuing alternative tracks.

Bancel said: "once we have managed to master the technology that works on humans, things could go very quickly because

it is always the same manufacturing process... for messenger RNA against the flu or against the coronavirus, it is the same method of manufacturing, the only difference is the order of letters that code the proteins.

"Our teams near Boston are making a vaccine now, and as soon as it is ready, it will be sent to the NIH which will carry out clinical phase 1 trials" Bancel said in reference to initial safety tests on humans.

Asked if a vaccine could be developed in time to respond to the epidemic, he cautioned that "the vaccine will have to undergo several clinical trials.

"The challenge is that it could quickly be given to millions of people. The responsibility for its safety is therefore very important. Even going quickly with technology like mRNA, no manufacturer will be able to have a vaccine ready by the summer, or even by the autumn."



## China slaps restrictions on weddings, funerals

AFP, Beijing

China has asked couples to delay their nuptials from a popular wedding date and families to scale down funeral services to help slow the spread of the country's viral outbreak.

The appeal came as the death toll from the new coronavirus soared to 259 and the total number of cases neared 12,000 nationwide.

"Where marriage registrations have been announced or promised for February 2 this year, you are advised to cancel it and explain the situation to others," a civil affairs ministry statement said.

February 2 this year is being considered a lucky date for wedding ceremonies because the sequence of numbers "02022020" reads the same backwards as forwards. Beijing, Shanghai and other cities had earlier decided to offer wedding registry services on the date, despite it falling on a Sunday when offices are usually closed.

The ministry said it would temporarily halt marriage counselling services and asked the public not to hold wedding banquets.

It also said funerals should be held in a "simple and expeditious manner to avoid gatherings of people" and the bodies of any victims of the coronavirus should be cremated as soon as possible.

Officials in Hubei yesterday announced that they would suspend all marriage registrations from Monday until further notice.

## Trump's travel ban targets Myanmar, 5 other countries

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump issued an expanded version of his travel ban on Friday that targets prospective immigrants from Myanmar and five other countries, a move that could affect thousands of people and reignite debate on whether the policy is discriminatory.

Of the six countries added to the ban, four are African nations and three have Muslim-majority populations. Democrats and immigration advocates accuse the Trump administration of seeking to expand its original 2017 ban that targeted Muslim-majority countries and of disproportionately focusing on African countries.

Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf said during a call with reporters that the six countries failed to meet US security and information-sharing standards, which necessitated the new restrictions.

Belarus, which had been under consideration for inclusion, took steps to remedy deficiencies in recent months and will not face visa restrictions, Wolf said.

The United States will suspend the issuance

of visas that can lead to permanent residency for nationals of Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar and Nigeria, a presidential proclamation said. Temporary visas for tourists, businesspeople, students and workers from those nations will not be affected, it said.

The US government also will stop issuing "diversity visas" to nationals of Sudan and Tanzania, the proclamation said. The visas, which Trump has criticized, are available by lottery for applicants from countries with low rates of immigration.

The original travel ban barred nearly all immigrants and travelers from seven countries with majority Muslim populations. The policy was revised amid court challenges, but the US Supreme Court ultimately upheld it in June 2018.

The existing version of the ban includes Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. North Korea and Venezuela also face visa bars, but those measures affect relatively few travelers. Those restrictions will remain in place.

The new travel ban will take effect on Feb 21, according to the proclamation.

WHAT'S ON

**Group Art Exhibition**  
Title: Three Worlds  
Venue: Shilpangan Gallery,  
Lalmatia, Dhaka  
Date: January 31 –  
February 11  
Time: 3 pm – 8 pm

**Winter Festival**  
Title: Heem Utshab  
Venue: Jahangirnagar University  
Date: February 6-7  
Time: 10 am onwards

**Book Fair**  
Title: Amar Ekushey Boi Mela  
Organiser: Bangla Academy  
Venue: Bangla Academy  
Premises  
Date: Feb 2 - 29  
Time: 3 pm onwards

**Group Art Exhibition**  
Title: Breaking Ground: Modern Art  
in Transition  
Venue: Subir Choudhury Exhibition  
Hall, Bengal Shilpalay, Dhamondi  
Date: Dec 17 – Feb 15  
Time: 1 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)

**Group Art Exhibition**  
Title: 7  
Venue: Galleri Kaya, Uttara  
Date: January 24 –  
February 7  
Time: 11:30 am – 7:30 pm



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Ekushey Boi Mela begins today

The month-long Ekushey Boi Mela will commence today. Thousands of new books are published and released by authors from around the country, in one of the most

anticipated events of the year. This edition of the fair was rescheduled to accommodate the mayoral elections that took place yesterday.

## Shamir Montazid takes flight with 'Urche Heisenberg'

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Shamir Montazid, an online educator at 10 Minute school, is currently pursuing his PhD at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom. An avid writer, Shamir's previous publication *Heisenberg Golpo* was one of the best-sellers at the Ekushey Boi Mela, last year. This time, he is all set to narrate his travel experiences from 23 cities across 12 countries, through his book, *Urche Heisenberg*, a collection of personal stories delivering basic instructions while planning a trip, be it the best places to eat or the major sites to visit.

Shamir developed a liking towards science since he was a child as he grew up watching documentaries and science shows on Nat Geo and Animal Planet. "Taking up genetic engineering at the University of Dhaka (DU) was one of the hardest decisions I had to take," he mentions. "It was even harder to juggle my CGPA and work at 10 Minute School as sometimes, I had to work continuously for 15 hours a day."

During this time, one of his teachers from DU got the opportunity to pursue a research with Oxford. "While scrolling my teacher's Facebook posts, I fell in love with the city," he adds. "My passion for science compelled me to apply to Oxford for my PhD."

Getting into Oxford was not an easy journey, and to add to his list of difficulties, he failed to commence his research in 2017 due to insufficient funding, despite receiving an offer letter. Later that year, his supervisor from Oxford insisted him to visit the university as an academic visitor. "I decided to reapply in 2018 with better



PHOTO: AVIPSU DAS GUPTA

credentials, and finally received full funding from Bangabandhu Fellowship Trust," he shares.

Speaking about his life in Oxford, the research lab is very intense and he often

has to work for 10-12 hours a day, including tasks like designing various experiments, and executing them to generate new observations.

Currently, he is working on naked mole rats, as these animals are resistant to cancer and ageing. "I want to investigate the difference in their stem cells that prevent them from cancer and ageing, he says. "Studying the underlying mechanism can be further replicated in humans for treatment purposes."

Despite his busy schedule, Shamir manages to take a long weekend off every other month to visit different cities in Europe. "My hard-work pays me with these small trips, and wander-lusting has now become an addiction", he shares. Also, since the naked mole rats are exclusive to African regions, he often has to fly to South Africa to carry out his experiments.

The 20 chapters of *Urche Heisenberg* features Shamir's breathtaking tales of bungee-jumping in Tibetan border, paragliding in Nepal, diving with sharks in London, catching wild animals in the African savannah, rafting in Bhutan, snorkeling and canoeing in Thailand. The book will be available at Tamrolipi stall and is intended to take the readers to an adventurous journey around the globe.



## Summit's 'Hamiduzzaman Sculpture Park' in the making

ZAHANGIR ALOM, back from Gazipur

Summit Power Limited (SPL), the largest independent power producer in the country and a leading infrastructure developer and operator in South Asia, has set up 'Hamiduzzaman Sculpture Park' located at Summit Gazipur 464 MW Power Plant's Premises at Kodda, Gazipur to promote art. The bond of love and friendship between Muhammed Aziz Khan, Chairman, Summit Group, and renowned sculptor Hamiduzzaman Khan has inspired them to take up this initiative.

The park, stretching over 2 acres of land, was inaugurated by Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, BB, Honourable Advisor to the PM on Energy, Power and Mineral Resources, and the adviser of Summit Power. He also played the role of a catalyst into shaping the park.

A press-meet, in the presence of Summit's board of directors and Hamiduzzaman Khan was coordinated at the park, by Mohsena Hassan, Head of Public Relations & Media, Summit Corporation Limited, recently. "My fond memories and interactions with Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin and sculptor Hamiduzzaman Khan has changed and enriched my perception towards art. Bangladesh has been progressed immensely and we have developed financially, however, only art and culture truly broadens our mind," says Muhammad Aziz Khan. "We want to embellish all our power plants

premises with art and sculptures gradually." As a tribute to the Hamiduzzaman's work and life throughout the last five decades, the park was named after him. "I am blessed to have Hamiduzzaman's friendship. He enjoys his artistic freedom to the fullest while I execute whatever he plans for," he adds. "There is a mutual respect and understanding between us, which we cherish every day."

Focusing on the importance of electricity in modern civilization, Hamiduzzaman Khan has created a 400-feet mural incorporating the forms of turbine, wheel, wire and more. The dynamic movement of the vast works and its compositional beauty seizes attention.

The park contains around 20 sculptures, including simple folk forms inspired birds, waiting mother, remembrance of 71, Ekattor Smorone, strong geometric formed metal sculptures and more. "Open-air sculptures in natural settings enhance the beauty of this place," says Hamiduzzaman Khan. "True growth can be achieved when there is a balance between work and art." The dormitory at the premises also evokes visitors with its unique blend of architecture and sculpture, interestingly incorporating art when necessary.

From the primitive age to the modern era, art has developed and evolved in various courses and dimensions. To symbolically represent various significant histories of Bangladesh, the sculptor has been working for the park for the last two years. The artist needs a couple of more years to complete the

park. The artist has installed a metal sculpture, titled *Signal* attached to the wall of the dorm building which he plans to later transform into an art museum. The work symbolises primitive vocabulary and language. Other works installed in the park include 'The seed' and 'Wheel of civilisation'. Keeping greenery beneath the sculptures, the installation technique not only takes care of colours but also offers the blue endless sky as its backdrop. "I had a dream of building a sculpture park, and for which I bought an acre land in Kashimpur, Gazipur. However, the generous proposal of Muhammad Aziz Khan gave a wider canvas to my art," asserts Hamiduzzaman. "I would like to install sculptures into the nearby waterbody, for which I am closely interacting with the site and trying to adapt to the environment. With metal, stone, granite, steel wire and more, I would like to transform this sculpture park into an international standard in the days to come."

The park was informally launched in February, last year. However, many more installations will be added to make the area fully ready to welcome visitors. As it is set up inside the power plant area, Khan has tried to incorporate scientific aspects alongside artistic incorporations. "Work is natural to humanity, so is nature. Thus, we believe, the urge to innovate, build and create brings peace and happiness," concludes Muhammad Aziz Khan.



PHOTO: STAR

## SULTAN FAIR concludes at Narail

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN, Ju

Marking the 97th birth anniversary of the legendary art maestro S M Sultan, a twelve day long international Sultan Fair and art exhibition concluded at Narail, recently. The Avant-grade artist was born in 1923. The festival was organised by Narail district administration, in collaboration with the local S M Sultan Foundation.

This year's celebration was dedicated to the 100th birthday of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. An international art camp was hosted near the banks of Chitra river's campus of Narail Government Victoria College with the presence of foreign artists across the world.

The art camp created opportunities for the Bangladeshi artists, where they exchanged their thoughts and presented the culture of Bangladesh to the foreign artists.

All of the artists participating in the exhibition expressed their gratitude towards S M Sultan. The great artists' work had an influence in their lives.

Zimbabwean artist Hazvineyi Bridget Mutasa, Indian artist Rupali Roy and Rajoshri, Bangladeshi artist Topu Khan, Fahmida Khatun, Shamim Reza, Elias Hossan, Samir Boiragi, among others created beautiful artworks.

Hazvineyi Bridget Mutasa's piece exposed an African baby's face with white-

pink-red texture representing her own country culture and society. "I discovered S M Sultan's work on the internet, thus I came here to visit his house and attended the fair because he inspired me a lot," she said.

Artist Shamim Reza, Associate Professor and Project Director, Jahangirnagar University (JU), with patchwork and Bangladeshi Katha design, added new dimensional artworks on the exhibition. His artworks highlight vibrant colours and different kinds of handmade beads.

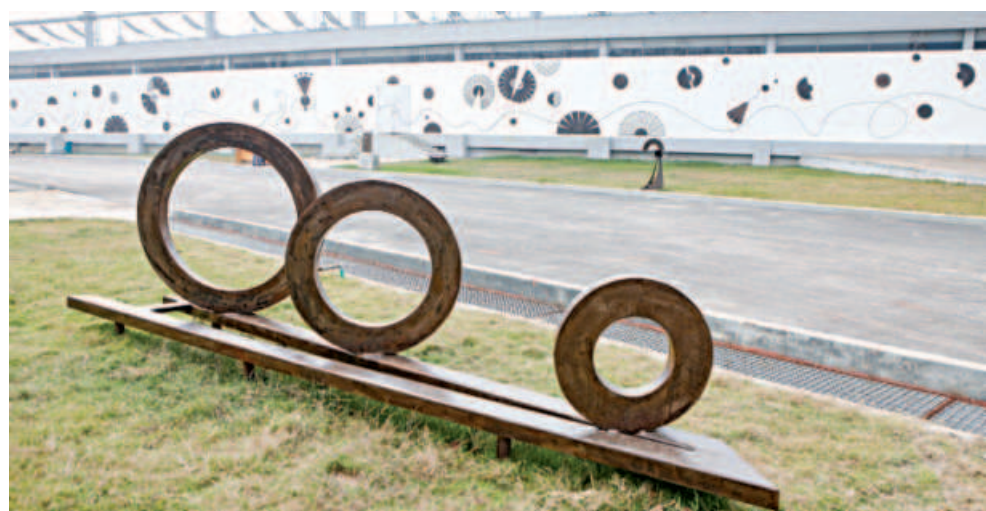
Artist Fahmida Khatun's Bengali bride, playing with colours like yellow and blue often expressing the mixed emotion of both happiness and sadness of a bride in our society.

Terracotta artist Tupo Khan beautifully engaged local culture and life with terracotta works.

Artists Elias Hossain, Hazvineyi Bridget Mutasa, Rupali Roy, among others, were honoured with 'Best Sultan Award' form the exhibition.



Hamiduzzaman Khan and Muhammad Aziz Khan view 'Remembrance of 1971'.



A jolly Hamiduzzaman Khan with his creation.





Staff members take down the United Kingdom's flag from outside the European Parliament building in Brussels on Brexit Day, January 31, 2020. Britain leaves the European Union at 2300 GMT on January 31, 2020, 43 months after the country voted in a June 2016 referendum to leave the block. The withdrawal from the union ends more than four decades of economic, political and legal integration with its closest neighbours. PHOTO: AFP

## Man stabbed to death in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was stabbed to death in the capital's Mohammadpur area last night.

The dead is Suman Sikder, 25. No details about him could be known as of filing this report at 1:00am today.

Md Wahiduzzaman, additional deputy commissioner of Tejgaon division of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, confirmed the matter to The Daily Star.

"We would investigate if there was any political motive behind the murder," he said.

Morgue sources said police brought the dead body with stab injuries around midnight.

## Poland inks \$4.6b deal for US fighter jets

AFP, Warsaw

Poland on Friday finalised an agreement to buy dozens of F-35 fighter jets from the US in a multi-billion dollar deal aimed at revamping its air force and further strengthening close ties with Washington.

The United States in September approved the \$4.6-billion (4.2-million-euro) contract to deliver a total of 32 aircraft to NATO ally Poland.

The first batch is expected to be delivered within four years and will replace old Soviet models.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo praised Poland's "smart decision" to buy what he termed the "world's most advanced fighter aircraft," in a Twitter post on Friday, adding this would "further our partnership and bolster its (Poland's) collective & self defence."

Poland's air force already has around 50 US F-16 fighter jets.

The agreement signed by Polish Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak and US ambassador to Warsaw Georgette Mosbacher includes pilot training, flight simulators and logistical support.

"This is an important day for Polish military aviation, Poland's security and also the security of our part of Europe," Polish President Andrzej Duda said at the ceremony.

The liberal opposition has slammed the purchase, claiming the fighter jets are too expensive and unsuitable for Poland's military and critics say the army is not able to make full use of the capabilities of the state-of-the-art aircraft.

The opposition has also denounced the right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) government for choosing the F-35 without a call for tenders and for agreeing to a deal without an industrial compensation programme.

Warsaw, which considers Washington its staunchest ally, has been investing in the relationship in the hopes of securing an expanded US troop presence in Poland.

Last year Poland finalised a deal to buy American mobile rocket launchers worth \$414 million, while in 2018 it signed a \$4.75 billion contract for a US-made Patriot anti-missile system.

## AL says 'better than ever'

FROM PAGE 2

the way it was held," he said, adding that the election was not free and fair at all.

BNP yesterday also submitted a written complaint to the Election Commission over irregularities centring the polls.

A BNP delegation led by the party's standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury handed over the complaint to the commission.

**PEOPLE HAVE NO FAITH IN ELECTION SYSTEM: DR KAMAL**

After casting his vote at Viqarunnisa Noon School and College yesterday morning, Gonoforum President and Jatiya Oikya Front Convener Dr Kamal Hossain expressed his dissatisfaction over the low number of voters, and hassles of casting votes through EVM.

Talking to reporters there, he said the low turnout shows that voters have no confidence in the election system.

**ONLY ONE PARTY ON THE FIELD: EC MAHBUB TALUKDAR**

Election Commissioner Mahbub

Talukdar yesterday in a statement said the no party except for one was seen on the voting field.

"The reason behind other parties' absence in the voting filed is unknown to me," he said, adding that he was shocked at the violation of the electoral code of conduct after the election schedule was declared.

There is no point of having a code of conduct if no action is taken against its violations, he said in the statement.

He said, "I visited 12 polling centers between 10am to 2pm. I did not find any agent of any other mayor candidates other than those of the ruling party-nominated mayor candidates at any of these 12 centres. Around 10 percent votes were cast since 8am to 1:30pm at these polling centres".

Mahbub Talukdar, however, said the election was very peaceful, as no clash or bloodshed other than some isolated incidents took place.

The biggest achievement is that 100 percent votes were not cast in

the election, and there was not scope to seal ballot boxes the night before election day -- due to the use of EVM in this election, he said.

**GOVT HAS FAILED TO HOLD PARTICIPATORY POLLS: CPB** Besides, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Mujahidul Islam Selim and its General Secretary Mohammad Shah Alam yesterday said in a statement that the Election Commission and the government have completely failed to hold a participatory election of people in Dhaka city.

"Most people could not get to polling centres and could not cast their votes, as the ruling political party has created panic among the people in various ways. City dwellers have witnessed another new farce staged in the name of voting," they said.

In their statement, the CPB leaders said the ruling party men have created a fearful environment at most of the polling centres, and frightened people so that they lost their enthusiasm to go to polling centres.

## Diplomats observe

FROM PAGE 2

Bangladesh said they were in serious confusion until the last moment if they would include their Bangladeshi employees in the election observer teams.

"There was a meeting today [yesterday] morning and it was decided that local staffers would not be kept with the observer teams," the official told The Daily Star.

"There was dissatisfaction over the issue, but they [diplomats] did not express it," he said, wishing anonymity.

The EC approved the names of 74 officials -- 46 foreigners and 28 Bangladeshis -- from 10 foreign missions in Dhaka for inclusion in foreign observer teams.

The officials are from missions of the US, the UK, the European Union, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Japan, Denmark, Norway, Australia, and Canada.

On Thursday, the foreign ministry wrote to the missions in Dhaka, saying it would be highly appreciated if they do not include their local employees, who are Bangladeshis, in teams of

foreign observers.

The ministry said it was a violation of electoral code of conduct to include the local employees in the international observer teams.

As the confusion ran wild, Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda on Friday evening said Bangladeshis working at foreign missions in Dhaka and international organisations would be able to work as local observers, not as foreign observers, in the elections to Dhaka south and north city corporations.

## 312 return from virus-hit Wuhan

FROM PAGE 16

Earlier on Friday, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said a total of 361 Bangladeshis would be flown back as part of a voluntary evacuation.

Foreign ministry officials, however, said 49 Bangladeshis did not want to return.

Later in the evening, the health minister told journalists that they had managed to complete every arrangement inside the camp.

"We have served necessary things for the returnees. Our team would solve all other problems," the minister said.

**SUSPECTED CASES ROSE TO 10** With the eight admitted to hospitals yesterday, the number of suspected case of novel coronavirus infection has

rose to 10, according to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

On Thursday, a Chinese national was admitted to a hospital with fever while a Bangladeshi software engineer with symptom of fever was sent to Kurmitola General Hospital after he returned from China.

The IEDCR has collected samples from the new eight suspected returnees for test yesterday.

ASM Alamgir, principal scientific officer of IEDCR, told The Daily Star, "We would take two to three days to know the test result."

The IEDCR has the only coronavirus test facility in the country.

Asked whether it was enough, Alamgir said when such a pandemic

case was found in 100 to 200 cases, it meant transmission to locality. In such a situation, there would be no need to test every case.

He urged relatives of the returnees to keep patience and not to gather in front of the camp.

We would brief about their health status daily in a particular time, he added.

Besides Kurmitola General Hospital and CMH Dhaka, the authorities have designated five beds to each government hospital across the country.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths from the coronavirus epidemic in China rose to 259 with 137 proven cases of transmission in around two dozen countries.

## 14-year-old girl

FROM PAGE 16

several on-duty policemen present there.

Hearing the girl's screams, the law enforcers rescued her and arrested Shimul on the spot, they said.

After being rescued, the victim was first taken to Lama Upazila Health Complex and then referred to Bandarban Sadar Hospital.

Aung Shwe Prue Marma, civil surgeon of Bandarban, said, "The victim said she was raped. We are examining her and giving her treatment."

He did not disclose further. Asked, Oppela Raju Naha, officer-in-charge of Lama Police Station, confirmed that Shimul was arrested.

"The place where the incident happened is in Chakaria. So we handed the accused to Chakaria police," he said.

A case was filed by the manager of the hostel with Chakaria Police Station, said its OC Habibur Rahman.

Locals claimed Shimul was an AL activist, but the party's local unit said it had nothing to do with him.

After the incident, panic gripped

around 150 students, including 74 females, living in the hostel, said its superintendent.

The superintendent said they had to allow such political programmes in face of pressure from ruling party leaders.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Minister Bir Bahadur U Shwe Sing, among others, was present at the programme on Friday, said Mostafa Jamal, vice president of the AL in Lama upazila.

"It is unfortunate that an unexpected incident has happened there," he said.

## 'I was scared of Harvey'

Weinstein accuser tells court relationship was based on fear

AFP, New York

An actress accusing disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein of rape told a court Friday she had only stayed in contact with him out of fear.

Jessica Mann said she had been naive when she first met Weinstein and then so scared of him that she would agree to massage him, fake an orgasm or stay in contact with him even after he allegedly raped her.

Dozens of women have accused Weinstein of sexual abuse but only the cases of Mann and fellow actress Mimi Haley have led to criminal charges in a New York court.

Three other women -- Annabella Sciorra, Dawn Dunning and Tarale Wulff -- have testified that Weinstein sexually assaulted them, but their cases are not the subject of the trial, which was sitting for the eighth day of testimony.

Weinstein denies the predatory assault charges and maintains that all his relationships were consensual.

Mann, 34, grew up on a farm in Washington state and was on the streets for a while before becoming an actress. She was the only Weinstein accuser who had not heard of him before they met, seven years ago.

She began weeping Friday even before prosecutor Joan Illuzzi-Orbon's questioning started and,

at times, was so emotional she had trouble speaking.

She described her first encounters with the producer as a mixture of seduction, humiliation and manipulation.

Then, in a hotel in Los Angeles, she said she agreed to give him a massage. "He'd make me feel stupid, saying it was not a big deal," she said.

Later, when she was with one of Weinstein's assistants, he called her into a room and tried to kiss her. She said she tried to resist but he succeeded in performing oral sex on her.

"I started to fake an orgasm to get out of it," she said, adding that she escaped as soon as she could.

"I was confused about it," she said when asked about her later relations with Weinstein.

"I made the decision to be in a relationship with him," she added. "It was extremely degrading."

Several weeks later, in March 2013, when she was already in a relationship with another man, Weinstein ambushed her in a Manhattan hotel, forced her into a room and raped her, she said.

She did not tell anyone about the encounter.

"I was scared of Harvey," she told the court. "I was pretty concerned about protecting the actor I was dating."

## As we saw

FROM PAGE 1

[AL men] have threatened to drive us from here if we do so," Al Amin, a BNP activist, told The Daily Star there. "They've already broken our desk on Nurjahan Road."

For the AL men, the scenario was totally different.

There was a good number of party supporters, mostly youths, in front of each polling station. They were wearing badges with photos of "boat", the party's electoral symbol.

With banners of AL candidates, rickshaws and some motorised vehicles were seen transporting people.

Supporters and followers of the mayor and councillor candidates were also seen eating snacks, and even playing cricket outside polling centres at places.

The situation inside the centres, however, was not so lively. Long queues of voters -- a common sight on election day -- was hardly seen.

Inside some centres, AL men made fake queues of voters, to pretend to have a higher number of voters.

At the Dhaka University Laboratory School polling centre, supporters of Fazle Noor Taposh, AL mayor candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), formed one such queue, one of these correspondents saw first-hand.

At Adarsha High School centre in Mirpur-10, supporters of Atiqul Islam, the party's mayor candidate for the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), also made a fake queue after locking the centre's main gate. This was seen by another correspondent who was present there.

At Cherry Grammar School centre in Kafur's Ibrahimpur, many voters expressed their frustration as they had to wait long to go in.

Talking to The Daily Star, they said although the centre was mostly empty, voters were not being allowed in. "One or two voters could go inside in every 10 minutes," one of them said.

Voters at many other centres alleged they could not cast their votes.

A man in his late 60s said he was obstructed by ruling party men from voting for a candidate of his choice. This centre was on Green Road.

**BNP AGENTS' THIN PRESENCE**

The Daily Star correspondents found agents from the BNP at only 20 of the 207 centres. The number of the agents was also very low.

There were a few agents of Islami Andolan Bangladesh.

But agents of the AL candidates were everywhere.

There were some complaints that agents from the ruling party forced agents from the BNP and other parties out of many centres.

One of these correspondents saw 10 polling agents of Tabitha Awal, BNP's mayor candidate for the DNCC, around 8:10am at a centre at MDC Model Institute at Mirpur's Pallabi.

When a reporter of this newspaper went there again around 2:00pm, there were only two of the agents left.

"We were two female and eight male polling agents. But the males were driven out around 8:30am," said Liton Hawlader, one of the male polling agents.

Around 2:30pm, The Daily Star found a polling agent of Tabitha at Motherland International School centre at Shewrapara in Mirpur.

The agent, named Mofidul, said, "Four of our men were supposed to come to this centre. But three did not show up for reasons unknown to me."

Contacted after the vote count, Mofidul said he was at the centre until the end and the candidate who hired him won at the centre.

Visiting 24 centres in Rampura,

Badda and Gulshan areas, these correspondents found no agents of BNP candidates at 13 centres.

Asked about the absence of the agents, Touhidul Haq, presiding officer of a centre at Rampura's Ideal School and College, said, "I don't know why they've left."

Wishing not to be named, some of the assistant presiding officers there said polling agents of BNP candidates were driven out.

**'UNWANTED' AID**

In the absence of polling agents from the BNP, those from the AL went inside many secret voting rooms, in the name of helping voters with EVMs.

The polling agents "helped" voters in several ways. Some agents snuck inside the curtain and told voters which polling symbol to vote for. Pretending to teach how to vote using the machine, some even pressed the buttons themselves.

Some were even standing inside the secret rooms to welcome voters.

**LOW TURNOUT OF YOUNG VOTERS**

The turnout of young voters appeared to be low yesterday.

Of the roughly 54 lakh voters, 48 percent were aged between 19 and 36 years. A further classification showed that nearly one-fourth of total voters were aged between 19 and 23 years, according to Election Commission officials.

"Turnout of young voters was too low to mention," said one of The Daily Star correspondents who visited seven centres in Uttara area under the DNCC.

Our correspondents, who visited nine centres in Dhanmondi, Mirpur, Mohammadpur Lalbagh, Nawabganj, and Azampur areas, also reported a low turnout of young voters.

There were, however, a huge presence of youths outside polling centres. Almost all of them were supporting ruling party candidates.

**FOOD DISTRIBUTED BY AL MEN**

While visiting Kalachadpur Government School and College, which housed six centres, around 2:00pm, The Daily Star correspondents saw some people, wearing AL badges, distributing water and food among polling agents and polling officials.

Polling officials were not supposed to take them.

Some voters expressed surprise at such distribution of food.

"This doesn't send a good message to people. It proves all the centres are dominated by Awami League men who are going in and out the booths at will."

Polling officials refused to make comment on the matter.

## Fourth death as protests grow in Chile

AFP, Santiago

A man died of carbon monoxide poisoning after a supermarket was torched in Chile's capital Friday, and another succumbed to injuries sustained in clashes with police, bringing the death toll in a new wave of unrest to four.

Protests that flared up in October -- initially over a rise in metro fares -- had appeared to have calmed down during the summer holidays in Chile.

But there has been a spike in violent protests this week.

A mob looted and then set fire to the supermarket in southern Santiago in the early hours of Friday.

When firefighters arrived they found a dead man aged 30 to 40 and two other people suffering from signs of asphyxiation.

# Senate likely to acquit Trump

FROM PAGE 16  
John Bolton, acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and others.

Senate Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer called it a "grand tragedy."

"America will remember this day -- a day when the United States Senate did not live up to its responsibilities, turned away from truth and instead went along with a sham trial," Schumer said.

Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic speaker of the House of Representatives, which impeached Trump on December 18, accused Republicans who voted against allowing witnesses of being "accomplices to the president's cover-up."

"He is impeached forever," Pelosi said. "There can be no acquittal without a trial. And there is no trial without witnesses, documents and evidence."

Democrats had been eager to hear from Bolton following reports that he claims in an upcoming book to have been personally told by Trump that military aid to Ukraine was tied to Kiev investigating Joe Biden, his potential Democratic rival in November's presidential election.

The charge is the crux of the case which led to Trump becoming just the third president in US history to be impeached by the House of Representatives.

Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Trump ally, said House prosecutors, known as "managers," had already presented enough evidence to make their case and there was no need for further witnesses.

"A majority of the US Senate has determined that the numerous witnesses and 28,000-plus pages of documents already in evidence are sufficient to judge the House Managers' accusations and end this impeachment trial," he said.

"There is no need for the Senate to re-open the investigation," he said. "Never in Senate history has this body paused an impeachment trial to pursue additional witnesses."

McConnell said the Senate would resume as a court of impeachment at 11:00 am (1600 GMT) on Monday to allow House prosecutors and White House lawyers to deliver their final

arguments. Each side will have two hours to speak.

The Senate will then vote at 4:00 pm on Wednesday on the two articles of impeachment passed last month by Democrats in the House.

- 'Partisan nature' -

With the focus shifting to the final vote, all eyes will be on whether any Democrats facing potential tough re-election battles in November will vote to acquit the president.

Democratic Senator Doug Jones, for example, is facing what is shaping up to be a tough re-election fight in Alabama, a state which voted overwhelmingly for Trump in the 2016 election.

Democrats had been hoping to sway enough Republicans to support the call for further witnesses but efforts collapsed when Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski said she would vote "no" to new testimony.

"Given the partisan nature of this impeachment from the very beginning and throughout, I have come to the conclusion that there will be no fair trial in the Senate," Murkowski said.

"I don't think the continuation of this process will change anything," she added.

Republican Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, who had also been considered a possible swing vote, also said there was no need for more evidence.

"It was inappropriate for the president to ask a foreign leader to investigate his political opponent and to withhold United States aid to encourage that investigation," Alexander said.

"But the Constitution does not give the Senate the power to remove the president from office and ban him from this year's ballot simply for actions that are inappropriate," he said.

Before the Senate vote, Adam Schiff, the leader of the House impeachment prosecutors, made an impassioned last-ditch argument for witnesses.

"A trial without witnesses is simply not a trial," the California lawmaker said.

"This trial is supposed to be a quest for the truth," he said. "Let's not fear what we will learn."

# China's isolation

FROM PAGE 16  
Alex Azar said.

Australia said it was barring entry to non-citizens arriving from China, while Australian citizens who had travelled there would be required to go into "self-isolation" for two weeks.

Vietnam suspended all flights from mainland China and Hong Kong effective from Saturday. Taiwan also initially appeared on the list of banned routes but references to the self-ruled island were later removed.

Similar expansive restrictions have been announced by countries including Italy, Singapore, and China's northern neighbour Mongolia.

The United States, Japan, Britain, Germany and other nations had already advised their citizens not to travel to China.

Britain yesterday said it was temporarily withdrawing some diplomatic staff and their families from across the country, a day after the US State Department ordered embassy employees to send home family members under the age of 21.

Beijing insists it can contain the virus and called Washington's advice against travel to China "unkind".

"Certainly it is not a gesture of goodwill," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said.

The US emergency declaration also requires Americans returning from the ground zero Chinese province of Hubei to be placed in mandatory 14-day quarantine, and health screening for American citizens coming from other parts of China.

The virus emerged in early December and has been traced to a market in Hubei's capital Wuhan that sold wild animals.

It spread globally on the wings of a Lunar New Year holiday rush that sees hundreds of millions of Chinese people travel domestically and overseas.

In a bid to stop the contagion, the government has extended the holiday through this weekend and urged people to avoid public gatherings.

Many provinces and cities have called on companies to remain closed for another week after the holiday ends on Monday.

The economic fallout continued Saturday as Apple announced that "out of an abundance of caution" its China stores would be closed until February 9.

With public anger mounting in China, Wuhan's top official admitted late Friday that authorities there had acted too slowly.

"If strict control measures had been taken earlier the result would have been better than now," said Ma Guoqiang, the Communist Party chief for Wuhan.

Wuhan officials have been criticised online for withholding information about the outbreak until late December despite knowing of it weeks earlier.

China finally lurched into action last week, effectively quarantining whole cities in Hubei and tens of millions of people.

Unprecedented safeguards imposed nationwide include postponing the return to school, cutting bus and train routes, and tightening health screening on travellers nationwide.

But the toll keeps mounting at an ever-increasing pace, with health authorities on Saturday saying 46 more people had died in the preceding 24 hours, all but one in Hubei.

Another 2,102 new infections were also confirmed, bringing the total to nearly 12,000 -- far higher than the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak of 2002-03.

SARS, which is caused by a pathogen similar to the new coronavirus and also originated in China, killed 774 people worldwide -- most of them in mainland China and Hong Kong.

# Bangabandhu's

FROM PAGE 16  
Speedy return of Bangladeshi refugees

John Kelly, the special representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Bangladesh who has been in Bangladesh since August 1971, describes the quick implementation of the programme of the home-coming of refugees as an outstanding achievement. "It is remarkable," he observes.

The United Nations Relief Operation Dacca (UNROD) is currently assessing the relief needed for the rehabilitation of the returnees.

Those returning are coming back through the recognised routes and are provided with two blankets per family, 14 days' food and a cash amount to meet the travel expenses from the transit centres in Bangladesh to their destinations. As many as 280 transit centres have been set up for them. The returnees are brought to the centres by buses and lorries from the camps in India. They are inoculated and registered at transit centres where they are also offered food until they are sent to their respective destinations.

Indonesia recognises Bangladesh

Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, recognises Bangladesh. Indonesia is the first Muslim nation to recognise the new-born country.

This decision by Indonesia disproves Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai's today's claim -- "The fact that none of the Muslim countries have so far recognised the 'so-called' Bangladesh shows that the Muslim world is condemning 'Indian aggression'."

Prague buys jute on cash

Czechoslovakia has agreed to buy jute on cash payment from Bangladesh pending the conclusion of a barter trade agreement between the two countries. The Czechoslovakia trade team in Dhaka has agreed to purchase about 21,000 bales of jute.

Nationalisation programme on the cards

Syed Nazrul Islam, minister for industries and natural resources, declares that all key and heavy industries will be nationalised soon. However, the government has no plan to nationalise small and cottage industries. The objective of the government is to expand home, cottage and small industries at the village level, he adds.

The importance of the cottage industries, he says, has enhanced because hundreds of women who have become widows during the Liberation War can be absorbed in these industries. No new big industries will be set up where demands can be met by the products of cottage industries, he emphasises.

Sources: February 3, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, The Azad, Morning News and The Bangladesh Observer.

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**

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নং-১৩.০০.০০০০.০২৫.৩১.০১২.১২/০৩ তারিখঃ ৩০.০১.২০২০খ্রিঃ

**ই-টেন্ডার বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

খাদ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ে ১১ (এগার) টি Desktop Computer ক্রয়ের লক্ষ্যে ন্যাশনাল ইজিপি সিস্টেম পোর্টালে [www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) নিম্নোক্ত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা হয়েছে।

ক্র. নং	Invitation Reference No.	Tender Package No.	মালামালের বিবরণ	টেন্ডার আইডি
১	13.00.0000.025.31.012.12.20.01	02/2019	১১ (এগার) টি Desktop Computer ক্রয়	৪১৪৬৯৫

ইহা একটি Online টেন্ডার, কোন হার্ট কপি গ্রহণ করা হবে না।  
দরপত্র প্রকাশের (Tender publication) তারিখ ও সময়ঃ ০২ ফেব্রুয়ারি, ২০২০ সকাল ১০.০০ ঘটিকা।  
দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ (Tender last selling) তারিখ ও সময়ঃ ২৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি, ২০২০ সকাল ১১.০০ ঘটিকা।  
দরপত্র বন্ধের (Tender closing) শেষ তারিখ ও সময়ঃ ২৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি, ২০২০ সকাল ১১.০০ ঘটিকা।  
প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্য ও বিস্তারিত জানার জন্য ইজিপি সিস্টেম পোর্টাল ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) এবং e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)) ফোন নং- ০১৭৬২৬২৫৫২৮-৩১) যোগাযোগ করা যেতে পারে।

মোঃ কাউসার আহম্মদ  
উপ-সচিব (সেবা)  
খাদ্য মন্ত্রণালয়  
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জিডি-২১৩

# Iraqi president appoints Allawi as new PM

REUTERS, Baghdad

Iraqi President Barham Salih yesterday appointed Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi as new prime minister, State TV reported, after squabbling political parties failed to name a candidate in the two months since the former premier was ousted by popular protests.

Allawi would run the country until early elections can be held. He must form a new government within a month.

Former Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi resigned in November amid mass anti-government unrest where hundreds of thousands of Iraqis took to the streets demanding the removal of Iraq's political elite. Nearly 500 protesters have been killed in a deadly crackdown by security forces.

Allawi was quoted by State TV as saying he would resign if political blocs sought to impose candidates for different ministries.

He also called on protesters to continue demonstrating until their demands are met.

However, protesters are likely to oppose him as prime minister.

For demonstrators who demand a removal of what they say is a corrupt ruling elite, the former communications minister under ex-premier Nuri al-Maliki -- who presided over the fall of multiple Iraqi cities to Islamic State in 2014 and is accused of pro-Shi'ite sectarian policies -- is part of the system and therefore unacceptable.

Iraq is facing its biggest crisis since the military defeat of Islamic State in 2017. A mostly Shi'ite popular uprising in Baghdad and the south challenges the country's mainly Iran-backed Shi'ite Muslim ruling elite.

**বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড**

প্রিন্সিপাল ব্রাঞ্চ  
বিভিবিএল ভবন, ৮, রাজউক এডিনিউ, ঢাকা

**অর্থঞ্চন আদালত আইন, ২০০৩ এর ১২(৩) ধারার বিধান মতে বন্ধকী সম্পত্তি বিক্রয়ের নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

এতদ্বারা সর্বসাধারণের অর্থগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড, প্রিন্সিপাল ব্রাঞ্চ, জেলা-ঢাকা এর পঞ্চায়েতী প্রকৌশল মা মফস্বত বামার, মছলদপুর, কুড়া, নাসিরনগর, ব্রাহ্মণবাড়িয়া-এর প্রোগ্রাইটর ও পঞ্চায়েতী, জনাব জুনায়েদ ইসলাম, পিতা- বফিকুল ইসলাম, মাতা- শরীফ বেগম, বর্তমান টিকানাঃ ২৩২, আর্মিনা স্টেট, সেনাপাড়া পল্লী, মিরপুর-১০, ঢাকা-১২১৬, স্থায়ী টিকানাঃ গ্রাম- গয়েস্ট মেডা, পোঃ-বিজিয়া বি-বাড়িয়া, বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড হতে চুক্তি মুদখন (হাইপো) লিমিটেড হতে মোট ৪০,০০,০০০.০০ টাকা ঋণ গ্রহণ করেন। উক্ত ঋণের টাকা পরিশোধের জামানতরূপে প্রকৌশলের প্রোগ্রাইটরের মালিকানাধীন নিম্নতফসিল বর্ণিত সম্পত্তি রেজিস্ট্রিকৃত বন্ধক দলিলমূলে বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড-এর অনুকূলে বন্ধক প্রদান করবেন এবং বন্ধকী সম্পত্তি বিক্রয়সহ যাবতীয় ক্ষমতা প্রদান করে রেজিস্ট্রিকৃত আ-মোক্তাবনামা দলিল সহ সম্পাদন করে দিয়েছেন। উক্ত ঋণ গ্রহীতার ৩০-০৯-২০১৯ইং তারিখের হিসাব অনুযায়ী পাওনার পরিমাণ দাঁড়িয়েছে প্রায় ৪৮.১৩ লক্ষ (আটচল্লিশ লাখ তের হাজার) টাকা মাত্র এ হাল তারিখ পর্যন্ত সুদ পাওনা রয়েছে যা বারবার তাগিদ দেয়া সত্ত্বেও সফলিত হোদাদার পরিশোধ করছেন না। এই পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে, অর্থঞ্চন আদালত আইন, ২০০৩ এর ১২(৩) ধারার বিধান মোতাবেক আদায়কাল পর্যন্ত সুদ ও অন্যান্য অর্চসহ সমুদয় পাওনা আদায়ের নিমিত্তে নিম্নতফসিল বর্ণিত সম্পত্তি থেকে যে অর্থগ্রহণ আছে নিলামে বিক্রয়ের জন্য নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্তাদিতে সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

**শর্তাবলী**

০১। অর্থনীতি ক্রেতাগণ কর্তৃক আগামী ২০-০২-২০২০ইং তারিখে অপর্যাহ ০৩.০০ (তিন) ঘণ্টাকার মধ্যে বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড প্রিন্সিপাল ব্রাঞ্চ, বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড, ৮, রাজউক এডিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০-এ রফিকত দরপত্র বাস্রে দরপত্র জমা করতে পারবেন অর্থাৎ যাদের উপর "সম্পত্তি ক্রয় দরপত্র" লিখে রেজিস্ট্রি ডাকযোগে উক্ত টিকনায় দরপত্র প্রেরণ করতে পারবেন। তবে ডাকযোগে প্রেরিত দরপত্র ৫ দিন দুপুর ০৩.০০ (তিন) ঘণ্টাকার মধ্যে পৌঁছাতে হবে। ঐ দিন অপর্যাহ ০৩.৩০ (তিন ঘণ্টা ত্রিশ মিনিট) ঘণ্টাকার সময় দরপত্রদাতা কিংবা তাদের প্রতিনিধিদের সন্মুখে যদিনি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকেন। দাখিলকৃত স্থানে দরপত্র খোলা হবে।

০২। অর্থনীতি দরদাতাগণ তাদের নিজস্ব প্যাডে বা সাদা কাগজে স্পষ্ট অক্ষরে নিলাম ক্রেতার নাম, পিতার নাম, স্থায়ী ও বর্তমান টিকানা, ফোন নাম্বার, প্রদত্ত দর (অঙ্কে ও কথায়) উল্লেখপূর্বক স্বাক্ষরকৃত সীলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র দাখিল করবেন। দাখিলকৃত দরপত্রের সাথে জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র ও TIN- এর সত্যায়িত চিত্রাদি এবং জামানতরূপে নিলামে হারে তফসিলি ব্যাংক হতে ইস্যুকৃত ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/সে-অর্ডার বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড, প্রিন্সিপাল ব্রাঞ্চ-এর অনুকূলে দাখিল করতে হবে:

ক) অনূর্ধ্ব ১০.০০ লক্ষ টাকার ক্ষেত্রে উদ্ধৃত দরের ২০%;  
খ) ১০.০০ লক্ষ টাকার অধিক এবং অনূর্ধ্ব ৫০.০০ লক্ষ টাকার উদ্ধৃত দরের ১৫%; এবং  
গ) ৫০.০০ লক্ষ টাকার অধিক হলে উদ্ধৃত দরের ১০%।

০৩। দরপত্র গৃহীত হলে অনূর্ধ্ব ১০.০০ লক্ষ টাকার উদ্ধৃত দরপত্র গৃহীত হবার পরবর্তী ৩০ (ত্রিশ) দিনের মধ্যে, ১০.০০ লক্ষ টাকার অধিক এবং অনূর্ধ্ব ৫০.০০ লক্ষ টাকার উদ্ধৃত দর গৃহীত হবার পরবর্তী ৬০ (ষাট) দিনের মধ্যে এবং ৫০.০০ লক্ষ টাকার অধিক উদ্ধৃত দর গৃহীত হবার পরবর্তী ৯০ (নব্বই) দিনের মধ্যে সমুদয় মূল্য পরিশোধ করতে হবে। এতে বার্ষিক হলে জামানতের টাকা ব্যাংকের অনুকূলে বাজেয়াপ্ত হবে।

০৪। উপরোক্ত অনুচ্ছেদ-৩-এর অধীনে সর্বোচ্চ দরদাতার জামানত বাজেয়াপ্ত হলে, বাজেয়াপ্তকৃত অর্থ এবং দ্বিতীয় সর্বোচ্চ দরদাতার দরপত্রের মূল্য একত্রে সর্বোচ্চ দরদাতা কর্তৃক উদ্ধৃত দর অপেক্ষা কম না হলে, উক্ত দ্বিতীয় সর্বোচ্চ দরদাতাকে সম্পত্তি নিলাম বরাদ্দ করতে আহ্বান করা হবে এবং দ্বিতীয় সর্বোচ্চ দরদাতা অনুরূপ আহ্বানে সম্মত হলে তাকে উপরোক্ত অনুচ্ছেদ-৩-এর নিদারিত সময়সীমার মধ্যেই দরপত্রের সম্পূর্ণ অর্থ পরিশোধ করতে হবে, বার্ষিক দ্বিতীয় সর্বোচ্চ দরদাতা কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত জামানতের টাকা বাজেয়াপ্ত করা হবে।

০৫। দরপত্রদাতা এক বা একাধিক তফসিলের জন্য দরপত্র দিতে পারবেন। তবে একই তফসিলের সম্পত্তির জন্য আংশিক দরপত্র গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।

০৬। কম জামানত বা জামানতবিহীন ও শর্তযুক্ত/ক্রটিপূর্ণ দরপত্র গ্রহণীয় হলে তা সরাসরি বাতিল হবে। অফসল দরদাতার জামানত লিখিত আবেদনপত্রের ভিত্তিতে ফেরত দেয়া হবে।

০৭। সরকারি বিধি অনুযায়ী উৎস কর, জাট, সম্পত্তি রেজিস্ট্রেশন সফেক্স যাবতীয় বরচ ও ক্রমকৃত সম্পত্তির ট্যাক্স আদায়াভাবে দরপত্রদাতা কর্তৃক পরিশোধ করতে হবে। এতদ্ব্যতীত, তফসিলভুক্ত সম্পত্তির উপর সরকারি, আধা-সরকারি, স্বায়ত্বশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠান যথাঃ সিটি কর্পোরেশন, পৌরসভা, ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ, জ্বনি উন্নয়ন কর, বিদ্যুৎ, পানি ও গ্যাস সরবরাহ কর্তৃক ইত্যাদি হলে যে কোন পাওনাদারের কোন দাবী বা পাওনা থাকলে তা দরপত্রদাতাকেই বহন করতে হবে;

০৮। দরপত্রের সম্পত্তির গণ্ডাকৃত মূল্য অস্বাভাবিক, অপর্যাহ বা অপ্রকৃত প্রতীয়মান হলে, ব্যাংক তা গ্রহণে বাধ্য থাকবে না।

০৯। কোন কারণে দাবীনা ব্যতিক্রমকেই ব্যাংক কর্তৃক যে কোন/সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করে। এবং

১০। দরপত্রের মাধ্যমে নিলামে অংশগ্রহণকারী ব্যক্তিবর্গ বিজ্ঞপ্তি তথ্য অবগত হবার জন্য নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর অফিসে (অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে) যোগাযোগ করতে পারবেন।

**বন্ধকী সম্পত্তি তফসিল**  
**তফসিল-১ঃ**

জেলা- ঢাকা, থানা- উত্তরখান ও সাব-রেজিস্ট্রি অফিস উত্তরা অধীন ঢাকা কলেজের টৌজিভুক্ত। জে.এল. নং- সি.এস. ১৯৫, এস.এ. ১৭, আর.এস. ১৪ ঢাকা সিটি জরিপ-১৯, মৌজা- "উত্তরখান" স্থিত খতিয়ান নং- সি.এস. ৯৪৬, এস.এ. ১৪৫৫, আর.এস ৩৬৪ ঢাকা সিটি জরিপ ডিপি খতিয়ান নং-৪৫১, মিউনিসিপাল খতিয়ান নং-৩৪৩৩৩, দাগ নং- সি.এস ও এস.এ ২৪০৩, আর.এস ৫৫৬২, ঢাকা সিটি জরিপ-১৭৮৬৯, জমিক পরিমাণ-৮.৫৮ শতাংশ সম্পত্তি বন্ধককৃত বটে। ইহার উপর নির্মিত অবকাঠামো যথা কিছু আছে।

**যাহার টৌজিঃ**  
উত্তরেঃ পাকল আক্তার।  
দক্ষিণেঃ রাজা ও শেখ আব্দুল ওয়াজেদ।  
পূর্বেঃ আবুল কালাম।  
পশ্চিমেঃ আর সাগে বি.এম আলিক আহমেদ কামাল এর বিক্রিত জমি।

**তফসিল-২ঃ**  
জেলা- ব্রাহ্মণবাড়িয়া, থানা ও সাব-রেজিস্ট্রি অফিস বি-বাড়িয়া সদর অধীন বি-বাড়িয়া কলেজের টৌজিভুক্ত। জে.এল. নং- সি.এস. ২৫৯, এস.এ. ২৫৯, বি.এস.ডিপি- ৫৭, মৌজা- "মহুড়া" স্থিত খতিয়ান নং- সি.এস. ২৩৬, এস.এ. ২২৭, বি.এস. ডিপি-১১৭০, মিউনিসিপাল খতিয়ান নং-২১৩৬। দাগ নং-সি.এস. ও এস.এ. ৬২২, বি.এস.ডিপি-১২৭১। জমির পরিমাণ- ৬ শতাংশ সম্পত্তি বন্ধককৃত বটে। ইহার উপর অবকাঠামো যথা কিছু আছে।

**যাহার টৌজিঃ**  
উত্তরেঃ হানিক মিয়া গং।  
দক্ষিণেঃ হাজী পাড়া মসজিদ রোড।  
পূর্বেঃ সাবেক গিয়াস উদ্দিন।  
পশ্চিমেঃ হানিক মিয়া গং।

আপনার বিশ্বস্ত,  
**মোঃ শফিকুল ইসলাম**  
ম্যানেজার (জেনারেল ম্যানেজার)  
[shafiqul.islam01@bdbl.com.bd](mailto:shafiqul.islam01@bdbl.com.bd)  
বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড  
প্রিন্সিপাল ব্রাঞ্চ, ঢাকা  
৩০২-৯৫৪০২২৬

জিডি-২১২

**Eastern Refinery Limited**  
(A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)  
North Patenga, Chittagong-4204  
Bangladesh

**Invitation for International Tender**

ERL hereby invites offers from reputed suppliers/manufacturers for the supply of the following goods in accordance with the terms & conditions set out hereafter.

No.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources/ Energy and Mineral Resources Division.
2.	Agency	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation.
3.	Purchaser name	Eastern Refinery Limited.
4.	Purchaser district	Chattogram.
5.	Invitation for	Goods.
6.	Reference number	a) ER/PURIT-01/2020 b) ER/PURIT-02/2020 c) ER/PURIT-03/2020 d) ER/PURIT-04/2020
7.	Date	29 January, 2020

**KEY INFORMATION**

8. Procurement method International Open Tendering Method.

**FUNDING INFORMATION**

9. Budget and source of funds Eastern Refinery Limited (own fund).

**PARTICULAR INFORMATION**

No.	Tender document last selling date	(a), (b) & (c) 25 February 2020, 16:00 hrs. (d) 10 March 2020, 16:00 hrs.
11.	Tender closing date and time <td>(a), (b) &amp; (c) 26 February 2020, 14:30 hrs. (d) 11 March 2020, 14:30 hrs.</td>	(a), (b) & (c) 26 February 2020, 14:30 hrs. (d) 11 March 2020, 14:30 hrs.
12.	Tender opening date and time <td>(a), (b) &amp; (c) 26 February 2020, 15:00 hrs. (d) 11 March 2020, 15:00 hrs.</td>	(a), (b) & (c) 26 February 2020, 15:00 hrs. (d) 11 March 2020, 15:00 hrs.
13.	Offer validity <td>120 days (from the date of tender opening).</td>	120 days (from the date of tender opening).

**NAME & ADDRESS OF THE OFFICE(S)**

14. Tender document selling address  
i) Accounts Department, Eastern Refinery Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh. Phone: 880-31-2501261-7.  
ii) ERL Liaison Office, YMCA Bhaban, 2nd Floor, 1/1, Pioneer Road, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh. Phone: 880-2-8391990, 8391991.

15. Tender receiving address  
Purchase Department, Eastern Refinery Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh.

16. Tender opening address  
Purchase Department, Eastern Refinery Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh.

**INFORMATION FOR TENDERER**

17. Eligibility of tenderer As per tender data sheet.

18. Brief description of goods

Name	Price of tender document (non-refundable)	Tender security	Shipment validity
a) 3-Phase Explosion Proof Induction Motor (225 KW)	Tk 1000.00/-set or, USD 12.00/-set	Tk 180,000.00 or, USD 2200.00	90 days
b) Electric Motors (4 KW-55 KW)	Tk 1000.00/-set or, USD 12.00/-set	Tk 150,000.00 or, USD 1800.00	90 days
c) Annunciator System for Reforming & Utility Unit	Tk 1000.00/-set or, USD 12.00/-set	Tk 70,000.00 or, USD 850.00	90 days
d) Spares for Air Compressor KM- 6051 A/B	Tk 1000.00/set or, USD 12.00/-set	Tk 30,000.00 or, USD 360.00	90 days

**PURCHASER DETAILS**

19. Name of official inviting tender Kazi Mahabubur Rahman.  
20. Designation of official inviting tender Manager (Purchase).  
21. Address of official inviting tender Eastern Refinery Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh.  
22. Contact details of official inviting tender Telephone: 880-31-2501261-67, Ext. 382  
Fax: 880-31-250269  
Email: [managerp@erl.com.bd](mailto:managerp@erl.com.bd)  
[md-office@erl.com.bd](mailto:md-office@erl.com.bd)  
Website: [www.erl.gov.bd](http://www.erl.gov.bd)  
23. a) The purchaser reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.  
b) If it is not possible to receive/open the tender on the scheduled date for any unavoidable circumstances, the same will be received/opened on the next working day at the same time and same venue.

GD-215

# 62 million women's lives could be saved from cervical cancer

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Over the next 100 years, more than 74 million cervical cancer cases and 60 million deaths could be averted, and the disease eliminated in the 78 countries with the highest disease burden, according to two modelling studies published in *The Lancet*.

The first study modelled the progress that could be made towards eliminating new cervical cancer cases by introducing or increasing human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination coverage, or by combining high levels of vaccination with cervical screening once, or twice, in a woman's lifetime. The second study included cancer treatment in its models alongside other variables, and analysed the impact of vaccination, screening and treatment on reducing deaths. Both studies focused on 78 low-income and lower-middle income countries (LMICs).

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in LMICs and the most common cause of death from cancer in women in 42 LMICs. In high-income countries, vaccination against HPV has dramatically improved the outlook for cervical cancer prevention among women, but the uptake of HPV vaccination and cervical screening remains



very low in most LMICs. In 2018, 88% of 570,000 new cervical cancer cases worldwide and 91% of 311,000 deaths occurred in low, low-middle or upper middle income countries.

The disparity in the burden of disease between high income countries and LMICs prompted the World Health Organisation (WHO) to call for action in 2018 to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem. They proposed a threshold for which cervical cancer would be considered to be eliminated as a public health problem (4 per

100,000 women-years) and drafted a strategy to put countries on the path to achieving it, with three main targets for 2030: to increase vaccination to 90% coverage, to ensure 70% of women are screened twice in their lives around the ages of 35 and 45, and to ensure 90% of women diagnosed with cervical cancer receive the treatment they need.

The first of the current studies focused on whether and by when it might be feasible to eliminate cervical cancer cases in LMICs according to different scenarios and different definitions

of elimination. The scenarios modelled were HPV vaccination of girls, vaccination combined with screening of women aged 35, and vaccination combined with screening twice in a woman's lifetime.

The results predict that vaccination alone could reduce the number of cervical cancer cases by 89% over the next century, averting 60 million cases in LMICs. However, countries with an incidence today of more than 25 cases per 100,000 women could not eliminate the disease with HPV vaccination alone, using

WHO's proposed threshold of cervical cancer elimination (four or fewer cases per 100,000 women). For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, elimination would only be possible in 27% of countries.

If twice-lifetime screening is scaled-up in addition to HPV vaccination, then 100% of countries could reach elimination, reducing cervical cancer cases by 97% and averting 74 million cases by 2120. Such a strategy would also accelerate elimination by 11-31 years.

For the second modelling study, the authors analysed the impact of all three elements of the WHO triple strategy on deaths from cervical cancer, modelling the impact of scaling up cancer treatment as well as vaccination and screening. In 2020, there will be an estimated 13 deaths from cervical cancer per 100,000 women in LMICs.

By 2030, the triple strategy could avert around 300,000 deaths, a reduction of 34%. By 2070, it could avert 14.6 million deaths, reducing mortality by 92%, compared to a reduction of 62% (4.8 million deaths) with vaccination alone. By 2120, the triple strategy could avert 62 million deaths, reducing mortality by 99%, compared to 90% (45.8 million deaths) with vaccination alone.

## MENTAL HEALTH

### Do not forget psychotherapy for bipolar disorder

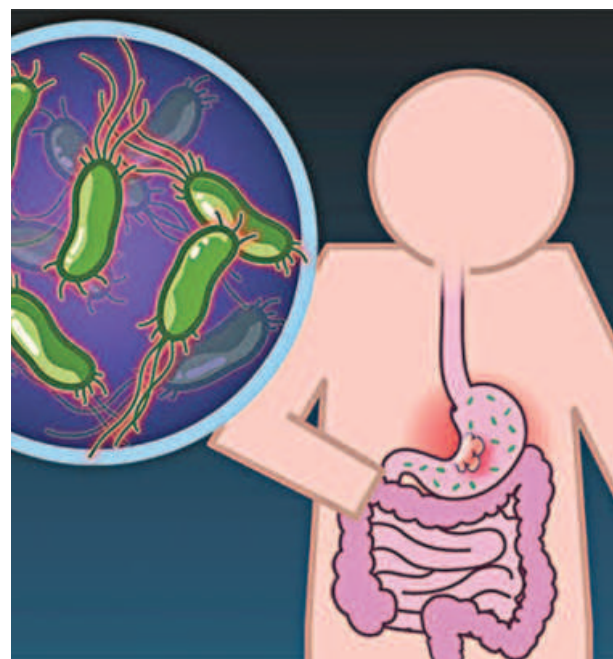
Family-focused therapy (FFT), which was developed as an adjunctive treatment for bipolar disorder, involves the family and patient in all aspects of treatment and includes education, practicing open communication, and enhancing problem solving. The group that developed FFT has now conducted a randomised comparison of 4 months of FFT (12 sessions) or enhanced standard care (6 sessions; education and a mood management plan for patients only) in 127 children with active mood symptoms (mean age, 13).

Patients had diagnoses of major depression or subthreshold bipolar disorder (insufficient number or severity of symptoms to meet full criteria for bipolar disorder), and all had relatives with bipolar disorder. Pharmacotherapy was prescribed independent of psychotherapy.

At a median follow-up of 98 weeks, the groups did not differ in median time to recovery (23-24 weeks) from the index episode. However, among 90 recovered participants, the time to develop a new mood episode was significantly longer with FFT than enhanced care. After recovery, rates were higher for depressive episodes than manic/hypomanic ones. Conversion from major depression or subsyndromal bipolar disorder to syndromal bipolar disorder occurred in about 14% of patients and was predicted only by baseline manic symptoms.

FFT does not seem to influence recovery from an acute episode, but by improving primary relationships, it can add to mood stability and increase the family's ability to recognise and respond to early signs of relapse. The greater frequency and duration of FFT sessions, compared with standard care, might also be important. Whatever the treatment, families should be involved, and patients should be followed closely after improvement, especially for emergence of isolated hypomanic symptoms.

## HEALTH bulletin



### Treating *H. pylori* cuts gastric cancer risk in those with family histories of gastric cancer

Patients with *Helicobacter pylori* infection and a family history of gastric cancer face a lower risk for gastric cancer themselves if their *H. pylori* is treated, according to a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Roughly 1,800 adults in South Korea who had first-degree relatives with gastric cancer and who screened positive for *H. pylori* infection were randomised to *H. pylori* treatment (amoxicillin, clarithromycin, and lansoprazole) or placebo for 7 days.

During a median follow-up of 9 years, the treatment group was significantly less likely than the placebo group to develop gastric cancer (1.2% vs. 2.7%).

## Coronavirus from China: know the unknown

DR ZUBAIR KHALED HUQ

Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that causes disease in mammals and birds. In humans, the virus causes respiratory infections which are typically mild but, in rare cases, can be fatal. A novel coronavirus is a new strain that has not been previously identified. Coronavirus is zoonotic, that means they are transmitted from animal to people. It has started from the Wuhan seafood market in the Hubei province of China and has spread to Thailand, Singapore and many other countries. Human transmission of the virus has also been proven.

Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface. The seven coronaviruses that can infect people are 229E (alpha coronavirus), NL63 (alpha coronavirus), OC43 (beta coronavirus), HKU1 (beta coronavirus), MERS-CoV (the beta coronavirus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, or MERS), SARS-CoV (the beta coronavirus that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS) and lastly 2019-nCoV (2019 novel coronavirus).

Symptoms of the novel coronavirus infection are having a cold, fever, shortness of breath, failure, headache, nasal irritation, cough, pneumonia, respiratory distress, kidney failure etc. If the symptoms start like the common cold and have transformed into respiratory distress one should immediately seek treatment. The matter of concern is that the

behaviour of the virus is unknown. Once the virus enters the human body it takes 14 days to express the symptoms. The virus may spread even during the incubation period. The long-term effect of this virus is not yet known. Children and senior citizens are extremely vulnerable to the new virus.

2019-nCoV has infected more than 12,000 people so far and more than 250 people are already dead. One contagious person on an average can spread this to 1-3 persons. If it is more than one that means the disease has become



independent. The virus will not be destroyed by itself. If anyone visits any country which has coronavirus cases, within 14 days have a fever (100° F/38° C), sore throat, cough, and respiratory distress, has the chance of being infected by the novel coronavirus.

One can get affected by the novel coronavirus by the infected person's cough, sneeze, touching the affected person, handshake with patients and from infected animals. The virus has no vaccine yet.

To prevent infection from the virus you should frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or washing hands with soap and water by rubbing for at least 20 seconds; when coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue - throw tissue away immediately and wash hands; avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough; if you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider; when visiting live markets in areas

currently experiencing cases of novel coronavirus, avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals; The consumption of raw or undercooked animal products should be avoided. Raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care, to avoid cross-contamination with uncooked foods, as per good food safety practices.

The writer is a gerontologist and a public health specialist.  
E-mail: zubairkhaledjoy@gmail.com



### The truth about coconut oil and cardiovascular risk

Proponents of the increasingly popular high-fat and purportedly natural diets often promote coconut oil as a heart-healthy ingredient. To examine the evidence for cardiovascular effects of coconut oil, investigators conducted a meta-analysis of clinical trials published by June 2019 that compared coconut oil, consumed for at least 2 weeks, with other vegetable oils, and that assessed cardiovascular risk factors.

Pooled results of 17 trials involving 730 participants indicated that, compared with other non-tropical vegetable oils, coconut oil was associated with significantly increased LDL by a mean of 10.5 mg/dL and HDL by a mean of 4 mg/dL. Similarly, in four studies comparing coconut oil with palm oil, another oil high in saturated fat, coconut oil was associated with higher total and LDL cholesterol. In a subset of studies that reported other cardiovascular risk factors, no association was found between coconut oil consumption and measures of adiposity, fasting glucose, or inflammatory markers.

This study confirms our dietary guidelines for the prevention of cardiovascular disease that recommend limiting saturated fat intake. However, although coconut oil increases cholesterol (both LDL and HDL), there are no data showing that this is associated with increased cardiovascular events. Coconut oil, despite being aggressively marketed and perceived as a "natural" and "healthy" fat source, is composed of 90% saturated fat. Although other sources of coconut fat (i.e., coconut milk) were not considered in this analysis, patients are to be counselled to consume all sources of saturated fat sparingly.

f b /StarHealthBD

## Corona Virus, Aware to Care

Can kill 65 Million Lives. Death toll in China is 259 with confirmed cases of 11,791 (up to 1 Feb).  
Let's aware ourselves to protect ourselves.

### How it spreads?

- Mainly through air droplets in the air
- Through sneezing and cough
- Touching the victimized person
- Touching your mouth or nose after in contact with any object that has presence of virus
- Unhygienic toilet/washroom



### Symptoms

- Cold
- Cough
- Fever
- Sinusitis
- Throat ache
- Headache
- Breathing Difficulty (loosing of sense in severe case)



People with weak immune system (eg. Children, Senior citizen) may face pneumonia and bronchitis

### Prevention

- Frequently wash your hands with soap or hand sanitizer
- Do not touch your nose or mouth with uncleansed hands
- Cover your nose or mouth while sneezing or coughing
- Avoid close contact with people suffering from cold or flu
- Properly cook meats and eggs
- Avoid contact with pets or animals with naked hands
- May use mask at outdoors

### When to Wash Your Hands -

- After sneezing or coughing
- After attending to a patient suffering from cold or flu
- Before and after preparing food
- After coming from washroom or toilet
- Whenever your hand feels dirty
- After in contact with feces pets or animals

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Pharma Ltd.

In Search of Excellence

Upon reveal of symptoms, drink lots of water and fluids, take adequate rest and seek advice from your nearest doctor.



Tobacco growers prepare to use fertiliser at their field of Sarpukur village in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila and inset, a farmer of Tupamai village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila spreads fertiliser at his tobacco field. Tobacco farmers often collect fertilisers at the government's subsidised rates, allegedly posing as growers of different food crops.

PHOTO: STAR

NILPHAMARI, LALMONIRHAT

## Subsidised fertiliser used in tobacco fields as preventive mechanism absent

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A good portion of the government subsidised fertilisers, meant for producing different food crops, is going to the wrong hands -- growers of harmful tobacco in Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat districts.

Our Nilphamari Correspondent reports: The attempts by the government's health and agriculture departments and different NGOs to discourage tobacco cultivation proves hardly effective as subsidised fertiliser is often purchasable for tobacco farmers.

"Fertilizer traders in local markets welcome tobacco farmers like me as we pay ready cash for it. We can do so as we get interest-free loan from tobacco companies while poor farmers of other crops often buy it on condition of paying the price later," said Mominul Islam, 45, of Dogachhi village in Sadar upazila.

On the other hand, president of district's fertilizer association Abdul Wahed Sarker said, "Tobacco farmers often cheat us, saying that they would use the fertilizer for cultivating Boro or other crops. It is not possible to verify the fact, going door to door."

In the ongoing Rabi season from October to March, the Department of

Agricultural Extension (DAE) set a target of cultivation of Boro paddy, maize, potato, wheat and other crops on 1.50 lakh hectares of land, said Aref Rabbani, sub assistant agriculture officer in Nilphamari.

"To meet the requirement of fertilizer for recommended crops, the government allocates 13.5 thousand tonnes of chemical fertilizers like triple super phosphate, di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), murate of potas and nitrogenated urea," he said.

The government gives up to 50% subsidy for the fertilizers, which is never meant for tobacco farming, said Sirajul Islam, additional deputy director of district DAE.

Shahin Jahangir Alam, managing director of local NGO 'Camp' that conducts awareness campaigns regarding tobacco, said, "Tobacco is being cultivated on 3,005 hectares of land in the district this year, which is around 50 acres more than last year's. Availability of fertilizer is a main reason for cultivation of the harmful crop in such a vast area."

Sunil Roy, 60, a farmer of Jaldhaka upazila, said he and many others grow tobacco as they incurred repeated loss by cultivating other crops while tobacco price is always satisfactory.

Investigation by this correspondent found that several tobacco companies provide farmers with technical support and interest-free loan for buying fertilizer, insecticide and paying the labourers.

Contacted, DAE Deputy Director in Nilphamari Nikhil Chandra Biswas said, "We motivate tobacco farmers to replace it with useful crops and forbid fertilizer dealers to sell the item to tobacco farmers."

Our Lalmonirhat Correspondent reports: Government subsidized fertilizer, especially di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), is often used by tobacco farmers in the district.

During the last tobacco farming season, they had to buy the non-urea fertilizer at Tk 25 per kg but they are now buying it at the government fixed rate of Tk 16.

The subsidised rate helps tobacco farmers to save a portion of the cultivation cost as they have to use 100 to 120 kg of DAP for producing the item on a bigha, said farmers.

"The tobacco company concerned give us 10 to 15 kg of DAP fertilizer free of cost for farming the crop on each bigha of land. And we can buy the rest of the requirement, around 100 kg, for low price. I have cultivated tobacco on 12 bighas of land this season although it was nine bighas

in the last season," said Nazrul Islam, a farmer at Sarpukur village in Aditmari upazila.

"DAP fertilizer is a must to get a good yield of tobacco. Perhaps the government does not know that we are using it in large quantities for tobacco cultivation," said Shafer Ali, a tobacco farmer in the same village.

The decrease in DAP fertilizer price this year helps companies as well as farmers to save cost of tobacco production, said a representative of a multinational tobacco company at Aditmari upazila, on condition of anonymity.

Abdul Hakim, president of Lalmonirhat District Fertiliser Dealers Association, said, "We sell fertilizer at government fixed rates. It is difficult to understand whether a farmer coming to buy DAP is a tobacco grower."

Aditmari Upazila Agriculture Officer Ali Noor said they suggest farmers to avoid tobacco cultivation.

Officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension in Lalmonirhat said tobacco has been cultivated on 6,920 hectares of land in the district this year.

Stakeholders, however, said the actual area of its cultivation would be much more.

## Murder accused killed by rivals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

An accused in a murder case was killed in an attack allegedly by his rival men in Muladi upazila on Friday.

The deceased, Mokles Khan, 40, son of Mojammel Haque of Char Alimabad village, was an accused in a case filed for murdering one Prince of the village over a land dispute in March 2018, police said.

Later, Mokles went into hiding after securing bail from the court.

He returned to the village last month and started grocery business at local Mollarhat Bazar, Officer in Charge (OC) of Muladi Police Station Fayeuddin Ahmed said.

Quoting locals, the OC said, a rival gang led by Shahin Hawlader intercepted Mokles while he was going to offer his Jumma prayer at a local mosque around 1:30pm of Friday.

They hacked Mokles with sharp weapons and fled the spot, leaving him critically injured.

Being informed, police rescued injured Mokles from the spot after nearly two hours of the incident and sent him to Barishal Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH).

He died at the hospital around 8:00pm due to bleeding profusely.

Police yesterday detained three women -- Ruma Begum, Shewly Begum and Nupur -- for their alleged involvement in helping the killers, the OC said, adding that a murder case was filed against 30 people including Shahin the same day.

BID TO RAPE THIRD GRADER

## Madrasa teacher held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Police on Friday arrested a madrasa teacher in connection with a case for attempting to rape a Class III girl student of his institution in Jashore's Sharsha upazila on Thursday.

The arrestee is Sheikh Liaquat Ali, 40, son of late Yusuf Moral of Benekhari village.

Victim's mother said, Liaquat, an assistant teacher of a local madrasa, took her daughter to an empty classroom on Thursday afternoon and tried to rape her there when none of the employees or students were present at the institution compound.

Hearing her screams, people living nearby the madrasa rushed to the spot and rescued the girl.

The culprit, however, fled the scene before villagers could catch him, she added.

Following a case filed by the victim's mother with Sharsha Police Station the same day, police detained Liaquat from his house on Friday night, Officer in Charge (OC) of the police station Aatur Rahman said.

Meanwhile, police produced the arrestee before a Jashore court yesterday afternoon that sent him to jail, the OC added.

## 2 injured in gun attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Two youths sustained critical bullet wounds when unidentified criminals opened fire on them in Jashore's Monirampur upazila early yesterday.

The injured, Monirul Islam, 35, and his brother-in-law Zahidul Islam, 25, of Sreepur village, were first taken to Monirampur Upazila Health Complex and then referred to Jashore General Hospital as their condition deteriorated.

Injured Monirul's brother Akhtar Hossain said the duo went to irrigate their land for Boro farming around 4:00am.

As they reached near the irrigation pump beside their cropland, a group of unidentified criminals opened fire on them in the dark, leaving them critically injured.

Monirul's father filed a case with Monirampur Police Station against 10 to 15 unidentified people in connection with the gun attack, Officer in Charge (OC) Rafiqul Islam of the police station said, adding that they were investigating the matter.

## Long-lost Munni reunites with family after 33 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Munni Begum was seven years old when she went missing.

After 33 years, she was reunited with her family at Solaipara village in Bagatipara upazila on January 12 this year.

Munni is the daughter of Nazma Begum and late Munshir Ali, a farmer of the village. She is second among three siblings.

The 40-year-old woman is now mother of two sons. Her husband is a banker by profession.

Family members said Munni along with her parents went to visit her grandfather's house at Abdulpur Milkipara village in Lalpur upazila 33 years ago and remained missing from there. Family members searched for her in every possible place, but



failed to trace her.

A kind-hearted man then found the girl sitting alone beside Gopalpur School in Lalpur upazila. He later took her to Mahabuddin Ahmed Sadhu, chairman of Gopalpur union parishad.

The chairman named the girl Achia Khatun and raised her like his own daughter. He later married off her with a

man, a banker by profession. A few days ago, a close relative of Munni who lives in Lalpur found her after seeing the mole and burn scar on her right eyelid and right hand.

"I am very happy to find my family. There is no joy greater than this," said smiling Munni.

"Today I feel very happy to get my daughter back after 33 years," said Munni's mother.



A woman collects water directly from a pond in Bagerhat's Sangdia village under Kachua upazila as pure drinking water is no longer available ever since the pond's sand filter, seen behind her, went out of order.

PHOTO: STAR

## Pure water without filtration device!

After money went down the drain on pond filters, more money would be spent to procure one lakh plastic water tanks -- without any filtration device -- for harvesting rainwater in coastal districts

PARTHA CHAKRABORTY, Bagerhat

A significant number of residents in six upazilas of coastal district Bagerhat -- where groundwater is unconsumable due to presence of high levels of arsenic and salinity -- are suffering from water-borne diseases this dry season as most pond sand filters (PSF) installed there have gone out of order.

However, the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) said the government is now planning to solve the water crisis through harvesting of rainwater. And with that objective in mind, it is considering to distribute about one lakh plastic water tanks for people living in coastal districts including Bagerhat, Khulna and Satkhira.

Consumption of untreated water, harvested during the monsoon and from ponds, are primarily causing the illnesses in Bagerhat Sadar, Rampal, Mongla, Morrelganj, Sharankhola and Kachua upazilas, according to health professionals.

Pulak Debnath, acting civil surgeon in Bagerhat, said this winter, most of the infected people in these areas are suffering from water-borne diseases. After tropical cyclone Sidr swept through the

coastal districts in 2007, DPHE and different non-governmental organisations built 2,500 PSFs in all nine upazilas of Bagerhat as a means to solve the scarcity of drinking water, said locals.

But almost none of those are currently functional due to the absence of proper maintenance, they alleged.

They somehow get by during the rainy season when they collect rainwater, but scarcity of water turns acute after the rains stop, said Sandhya Das, a homemaker from Sangdia village in Kachua upazila.

During the dry season they either have to consume water collected directly from the ponds or spend Tk 35 to 40 for a 20-litre jar of "purified water" available at local stores.

Risking the consequences such as stomach-aches, vomiting and diarrhoea, most people, without finding any affordable option, are consuming pond water, she said, adding that it would be helpful if they were provided with reservoirs for harvesting rainwater that they would be able to consume during six months of the dry season.

Rickshaw-van puller Shahidul Sheikh, from the same village, said, "Since most of the PSFs are not functioning, I fetch water from one

and a half kilometres away. If I had a rainwater harvesting tank, the water collected in it would be good for about next six months."

Many others in Kachua upazila said thanks to arsenic and salinity in the area, installing deep tube wells is not an option. So, tanks for harvesting rainwater would somewhat solve their problem.

Contacted, SM Shamim Ahmed, DPHE executive engineer in Bagerhat, said to facilitate rainwater harvesting, the Planning Commission of the government is considering to distribute one lakh plastic water tanks in coastal districts including Bagerhat, Khulna and Satkhira.

The water crisis situation will be greatly resolved once the water tanks are distributed, he said, adding, "The 65 ponds already dug in the six upazilas of Bagerhat over the last two years" will also come in handy.

When asked whether the rainwater collected in the plastic water tanks would be safe for consumption for next six months without any filtration device attached to those, he claimed, "As long as the lids on the tanks are kept closed, the water inside will not come in contact with air and thus, the water will be safe for consumption."



This water bus, meant for carrying passengers to Kuakata tourist spot in Patuakhali's Kalapara from different areas in the coastal region including the Sundarbans, Char Bijoy, Sonarchar, Fakirhat, Laldia, Fatrarban, and Payra sea port, saw its maiden journey on Friday. Introduction of the fast moving watercraft, with the capacity to carry a hundred people, aims at encouraging more people to visit the picturesque areas, said Hossain Amir, initiator of the project.

PHOTO: SOHRABHOSSAIN



## Tamim, Mominul soothe nerves

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh team management will be delighted with what transpired on the second day of the opening round of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) yesterday as stalwart Tamim Iqbal smashed an unbeaten double ton while Mominul Haque hit a century to help put East Zone in a commanding position in their match against Central Zone at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Tamim's double and Mominul's hundred could not have come at a better time, with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announcing a 14-member squad yesterday for the first Test against Pakistan, scheduled from February 7 in Rawalpindi.

Mominul was retained as skipper of the national side while Tamim returned to the national outfit after taking a break from the India tour in November last year.

Tamim, who has usually played the anchor role in recent times, was rather aggressive throughout his yesterday's innings as he produced a career-best score in first-class cricket. His 281-ball 222, laced with 30 boundaries, speaks volume of the aggressive nature.

According to his national and East Zone captain Mominul, who scored a 194-ball 111 and shared over four hours on the pitch with Tamim, the stalwart's innings was 'outstanding'.

"I don't know about you people, but I witnessed it and it was outstanding," Mominul said at the end of yesterday's

game.

Tamim ended the first phase of Tigers' Pakistan tour as the top run-getter in the three-match T20I series but his batting approach in the two matches that were played raised questions.

Yesterday's aggressive batting, however, will go some way to brushing off doubts about his approach and give the left-hander a much-needed boost ahead of the Test.

East Zone ended the day on top, piling up 395 for two and Mominul mentioned that he would like to see Tamim carry on to score a maiden first-class triple century today as East Zone look to stretch their 182-run lead further.

Meanwhile, in Chattogram, South Zone skipper Abdur Razzak returned impressive figures of four for 72, featuring six maidens, to help bundle out North Zone for 207. North Zone started the day on 46 for five and while overnight batsman Rony Talukdar scored a 143-ball 55 before being dismissed, it was an unbeaten 111-ball 58 from all-rounder Ariful Haque that helped North Zone stretch their score past 200.

After the exchange South Zone managed 40 for one before stumps.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

CENTRAL ZONE: 213 all out in 75.1 overs  
EAST ZONE: 395 for 2 in 95 overs (Tamim 222 not out, Mominul 111; Mukidul 1-51)

SOUTH ZONE: 262 all out in 67.4 overs and 40 for 1 in 22 overs (Nafees 19 not out; Taskin 1-12)

NORTH ZONE: 207 all out in 77.1 overs (Rony 55, Ariful 58 not out; Shafiqul 6-40, Razzak 4-72)



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal pulls one away during an aggressive knock that yielded his second first-class doublecentury. The southpaw hit 30 boundaries during an unbeaten 281-ball 222 in the Bangladesh Cricket League against Central Zone yesterday. His Test and East Zone skipper, Mominul Haque (Inset), also joined the party with a century.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## PAKISTAN-BANGLADESH FIRST TEST

# Ashraf, Bilal back in Pakistan squad

AGENCIES, Lahore

All-rounder Faheem Ashraf and off-spinner Bilal Asif have been recalled to Pakistan's Test squad for first of two Tests against Bangladesh, which will be played in Rawalpindi from February 7.

The duo gets a recall on the back of excellent performances in the Qaid-e-Azam Trophy, Pakistan's domestic first-class competition. Making way for them in the 16-man squad are left-arm spinner Kashif Bhatti and medium-pacer Usman Shinwari.

Ashraf, 26, showed a lot of promise in his debut Test against Ireland in 2018 when he scored 83 but then faced injury problems and was discarded after the South Africa tour in January last year.

Bilal, 34, played the last of his five Tests against New Zealand in December 2018 and was not selected last year.

"We have followed the horses for courses policy for the Test against Bangladesh," chief selector and head coach Misbah ul Haq said. "I know the two players who have been left

out will be disappointed, but they remain firmly within our plans for the red-ball cricket we are scheduled to play later this year.

"Bhatti has paved the way for Bilal Asif considering there are left-

any surprises for us."

Misbah said Pakistan would have to play at their best despite beating Bangladesh 2-0 in the three-match Twenty20 series, with one match rained off.

Bangladesh had agreed to tour Pakistan in three phases and after playing three Twenty20 internationals returned home earlier this week.

They will play the first Test and then return again for the sole one-day international (April 3) and second Test (April 7-11) -- both in Karachi.

Both the Tests are part of the ongoing World Test championship contested by the top nine teams.

India currently lead the championship with 360 points followed by Australia (296), England (146) and Pakistan (80).

The top two teams in the table will play the June 2021 final in England.

There is no guarantee that if a team doesn't do well in one format then it will not do better in the other format. They [Bangladesh] are a gritty team and will be under no pressure.

MISBAH-UL-HAQ  
PAKISTAN HEAD COACH AND CHIEF SELECTOR

handed batters in the Bangladesh top and middle-order, while Faheem Ashraf has been preferred over Usman Shinwari due to his all-round abilities. Following our convincing victory in Karachi, I don't envisage any major changes in the playing line-up but we have tried to cover all our bases just in case the wicket has

### SQUAD

Azhar Ali (captain), Abid Ali, Asad Shafiq, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Bilal Asif, Fawad Alam, Haris Sohail, Imam-ul-Haq, Imran Khan, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shan Masood, Yasir Shah.

## Selectors ring in changes for Rawalpindi Test

SPORTS REPORTER

Mustafizur Rahman found himself out of a Bangladesh squad due to indifferent performance for the first time in his career as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced a 14-member Test squad for the first match of a two-Test tour of Pakistan.

Rubel Hossain, Nazmul Hossain Shanto and Soumya Sarkar made a comeback to the Test team alongside star opener Tamim Iqbal, who last played a Test against New Zealand in March last year.

Pacer Rubel played his last Test in 2018, but the 30-year-old has not been in good shape in longer version cricket, having taken just 13 wickets in six National Cricket League (NCL) games.

Mominul Haque will once again lead the Tigers in Tests despite the thumping defeat in his first assignment -- the two-Test series in India last year -- but the left-hander is in god touch, having struck a hundred in the Bangladesh Cricket League yesterday.

Apart from Mustafizur, two openers Shadman Islam and Imrul Kayes along with all-rounders Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Mosaddek Hossain, who were all part of the Tigers' squad in India, missed out due to injuries. Bangladesh will also miss experienced wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur

Rubel [Hossain] has got the experience. He is ahead as the fourth fast bowler in the team.

Rubel also did well in the recently-concluded BPL. As he has the experience, we want to see him afresh. Soumya [Sarkar] was picked as he can bat both at the top order and also in the middle order. Soumya returned to the team because Shadman [Islam] is missing due to injury.

MINHAJUL ABEDIN  
CHIEF SELECTOR

Rahim who had earlier withdrawn from the Pakistan tour.

Mustafizur's place had come under question in recent times because of sub-par performances across all formats as 24-year-old had taken just one wicket in the only Test he played in 2019, and scalped just eight victims in five Tests since the start of 2018.

There has also been a suspicion that Mustafizur, once the boy wonder of Bangladesh cricket, is not as interested in playing Tests as he is the

shorter formats. However, Mustafizur was never dropped from the Test team in the past, including the previous one-off Test series against Afghanistan last year, when the selectors said the left arm seamer was rested after he was not included in the squad.

This time, however, chief selector Minhajul Abedin gave a clear message to the left-arm seamer, saying that Mustafizur was dropped for his poor performance.

"He [Mustafizur Rahman] is dropped. We have dropped him for his performance. His performance in the longer version was not up to the mark. We think there are better options than him in the team," Minhajul told The Daily Star yesterday.

The first of the two-match Test series against Pakistan will start from February 7 in Rawalpindi. The Bangladesh squad is scheduled to travel to Pakistan on February 4. The Tigers will travel to Pakistan again in April for the third and final phase of the tour to play the second Test.

### SQUAD

Mominul Haque (Captain), Tamim Iqbal, Saif Hasan, Nazmul Hossain Shanto, Mahmudullah Riyad, Md Mithun, Liton Kumar Das, Tajjul Islam, Nayeem Hasan, Ebadat Hossain, Abu Jayed Chowdhury, Al-Amin Hossain, Rubel Hossain, Soumya Sarkar.

## 'Not forgotten'

AGENCIES, Los Angeles

LeBron James spoke for everyone as the Los Angeles Lakers honored the memory of franchise icon Kobe Bryant on Friday, delivering a simple message: "Not forgotten."

At the apex of arguably the most painful week in franchise history, Bryant's memory permeated every corner of the house he built.

His legacy was felt everywhere -- from the trumpets on the corner of Figueroa to the knot in ageless Lakers PA announcer Lawrence Tanter's throat.

It resided on the shoulders of James, who pushed back tears to grab the mic and address a crowd broken with sorrow, reeling from the absence of the city's most beloved son.

James read the names of the nine people who perished on that fateful Sunday morning and then tossed the rest of his notes.

"I would be selling y'all short if I read off this, so I'm going to go straight from the heart. I know at some point we will have a memorial for Kobe, but I look at this as a celebration tonight.

"This is a celebration of 20 years of the blood, the sweat, the tears, the broken down body, the getting up, sitting down, the countless hours, the determination to be as great as he could be. Tonight we celebrate

the kid who came here at 18 years of age, retired at 38 and became the best dad we've seen over the last three years.

"We're going to continue his legacy not only for this year but as long as we can play basketball, because that's what Kobe Bryant would want. So in the words of Kobe Bryant: 'Mamba Out,'" James said, recalling Bryant's



sign-off when he retired. "But in the words of us: 'Not forgotten.' Live on brother."

No one will remember the final score or any specific performance. It wasn't one of those nights. But the 48 minutes of basketball were exciting and hard-fought. Worthy of the ultimate competitor.

Bryant also lingered on the concrete slabs

nearby, where hundreds of the Mamba faithful said their peace with ink and chalk. Such manifestations of pure love are only reserved for those in the pantheon -- a place to which Kobe punched his ticket long before the era of social media and fleeting fame.

His memory filled every gap this week, and could be seen in the giant teddy bear outside Staples Center and the countless balloons, candles, drawings and letters. It was present in the hair rising magic of the cello and the weight of Usher's rendition of 'Amazing Grace'. In the angelical voice of Charlie Puth and the powerful verse of Wiz Khalifa.

Kobe was already the property of the eternal, with his 8 and his 24 hanging in the rafters of the true mecca of basketball. Banners and jerseys, after all, do hang forever.

Bouquets of red roses held open two courtside seats in honor of Bryant and Gianna, while yellow roses sculpted the numbers of 8 and 24 in massive arrangements on the court.

We'll remember him in the purple and gold sunsets from the upper concourse balcony. In the M-V-P chants and the constant strive for perfection. In the smile of those who remember who brought a new era of greatness to Los Angeles.

Not forgotten. Never.



## DROPPED, NOT RESTED

We dropped him (Mustafizur Rahman). We dropped him because of his performances. His performances in longer-version cricket are not that good. We feel we have better options than Mustafizur and others are good compared to him.

MINHAJUL ABEDIN  
CHIEF SELECTOR

# What to WATCH

**SONY SIX**  
Australian Open Men's Final  
Live from 2:30 pm  
**STAR SPORTS 3**  
ICC U-19s World Cup  
9th Place Play-off  
Sri Lanka v England

Live from 2:00 pm  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
India v New Zealand  
Fifth T20I  
Live from 1:00 pm  
**English Premier League**  
Tottenham v Man City

Live from 10:30 pm  
**SONY ESPN**  
Serie A  
Atalanta v Genoa  
Live from 8:00 pm  
**TEN 2**  
Serie A

Juventus v Fiorentina  
Live from 5:30 pm  
Lazio v SPAL  
Live from 8:00 pm  
Udinese v Inter Milan  
Live from 1:45 pm (Monday)

## DAY'S EVENT

**Bangladesh Cricket League**  
Four-day Match, Day 3  
North Zone v South Zone

Time: 9:30 am  
Venue: ZACS, Chattogram  
Central Zone v East Zone

Time: 9:30 am  
Venue: SNBS, Dhaka



**Sofia Kenin of the US kisses the Australian Open trophy after beating Spain's Garbine Muguruza 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 in the final at Melbourne Park on Saturday.**

PHOTO: AFP

# Kenin stuns Muguruza in final

AFP, Melbourne

America's Sofia Kenin stunned two-time Major champion Garbine Muguruza to win the Australian Open on Saturday, completing a surprise run where she has come from nowhere to win her first Grand Slam title.

Despite making her debut in a Major final Kenin, 21, showed all her trademark aggression as she fought back from a set down to win 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 in 2hrs 3mins against the shellshocked Spaniard.

The 14th seed, who will now jump as high as seventh in the world and usurp Serena Williams as America's number one, was in tears at the end and headed straight for her father Alexander, who is her coach.

It was the final twist in a tournament of upsets, after Williams went out in the third round and Kenin upset Australia's world number one Ashleigh Barty in the semifinals.

"My dream officially came true, I can't describe this feeling," said Moscow-born Kenin. "It's amazing, dreams come true. If you have

dreams, go for it, it's going to come true."

Spain's Muguruza, 26, was unseeded for the first time at a Slam since 2014 having suffered a marked loss of form in the last 18 months.

She was resurgent in Melbourne over the past fortnight, but after grabbing the first-set lead, her serve failed her spectacularly.

She totted up eight double-faults in all, three of them in the final game -- including one on the second championship point, handing the title to her younger opponent.

Muguruza drew first blood at Rod Laver Arena, where the roof was closed for rain in Melbourne, getting the first break of serve.

Moscow-born Kenin, who ended the fairytale run of 15-year-old Coco Gauff on her way to the final, bounced her American stars-and-stripes racquet on the hardcourt in irritation.

The 2016 French Open and 2017 Wimbledon winner Muguruza took the first set in 52 minutes when the young American planted her forehead out.

But the aggressive Kenin upped the ante in the second set, breaking

Kenin vs Muguruza	
2020 Australian Open women's final, February 1	
<b>Sofia Kenin</b>	<b>Garbine Muguruza</b>
21	26
USA	Spain
1.85 m	1.82 m
170 cm	162 cm

Grand Slam titles	
Kenin	2
Muguruza	0

Head-to-head match record	
Kenin	2
Muguruza	0

Progress	
1st set: 1st Martina Trevisan (ITA) 6-2, 6-4	1st set: 1st Shelby Rogers (USA) 6-2, 6-4
2nd set: 1st Ana Ivanovic (SRB) 6-2, 6-4	2nd set: 1st Ajla Tomljanovic (CRO) 6-2, 6-4
3rd set: 1st Zheng Shuai (CHN) 6-2, 6-4	3rd set: 1st Elina Svitolina (UKR) 6-2, 6-4
4th set: 1st Coco Gauff (USA) 6-2, 6-4	4th set: 1st Sara Sorribes Tormo (ESP) 6-2, 6-4
5th set: 1st Ashleigh Barty (AUS) 6-2, 6-4	5th set: 1st Simona Halep (ROU) 6-2, 6-4

her more experienced opponent in the fourth game and easily holding to sprint into a 4-1 lead.

Kenin, who won their only previous encounter in three sets,

grabbed the second set in an emphatic 32 minutes. A rattled Muguruza was seen briefly by a physio for what appeared to be a lower-back problem.

Into the deciding set and the gutsy Kenin saved three game points in a pivotal fifth game, tossing the ball back over her head by way of celebration.

Kenin, who was overshadowed in the build-up to Melbourne by the likes of Williams, Osaka and Barty, adds by far the biggest title of her fast-burgeoning career to the three WTA crowns she won last year.

"The past two weeks have been the best of my life," she told Rod Laver Arena, as her father -- who left the Soviet Union in 1987 to give the family a better life -- filmed her victory speech on his phone.

"I love you guys from the bottom of my heart, thank you so much," she told the crowd.

At 21 years and 80 days, Kenin is 22 days younger than Japan's Naomi Osaka when she won the title last year.

Kenin is the youngest Australian Open champion since Maria Sharapova -- her idol -- won aged 20 in 2008.

# SETIEN WANTS UCL ON HIS TOMBSTONE

Quique Setien may have landed the job of his life when he was appointed Barcelona coach last month -- but he is already thinking about how he wants to be remembered in death. "I want my tombstone to say that I won the Champions League with Barca," the 61-year-old said in an interview with Catalan newspaper L'Esportiu on Saturday. "I have already told the players that I am getting on and I don't have much time to lose," added Setien.

-- REUTERS



# Can Thiem topple 'king' Novak?

AFP, Melbourne



"King" Novak Djokovic has won all seven Australian Open finals he has contested, he is on a 12-match winning streak and will become world number one if successful in the Melbourne Park decider on Sunday.

Against those overwhelming odds, few are giving Dominic Thiem much of a chance to wrench the title from his iron grip and clinch a maiden Grand Slam.

But the Austrian, remarkably, is the one with the recent edge. Djokovic is 6-4 in their career head-to-heads, but Thiem has won four of the last five.

Three of those were on his favoured clay, but he also came from a set down to beat the Serb on hardcourts at the ATP Finals in November.

Djokovic is the first to admit that the slick 26-year-old has successfully refined his game over the past 12 months to compete on all surfaces.

And he acknowledges it is just a matter of time before Thiem wins a Slam.

"I don't think he's really anymore 'next

feeling and playing. I thought ATP Cup went really well for me, got a lot of hours spent on the court, singles and doubles," said the 16-time Grand Slam winner.

"Obviously got a lot of positive energy from that competition. I dropped only one set so far up to the finals. Hopefully I'll be able to perform as well as I always have in the Australian Open finals."

Thiem, who has beaten four seeds to make the grade, including Rafael Nadal in the last eight, is no stranger to Grand Slam finals, making the last two at Roland Garros.

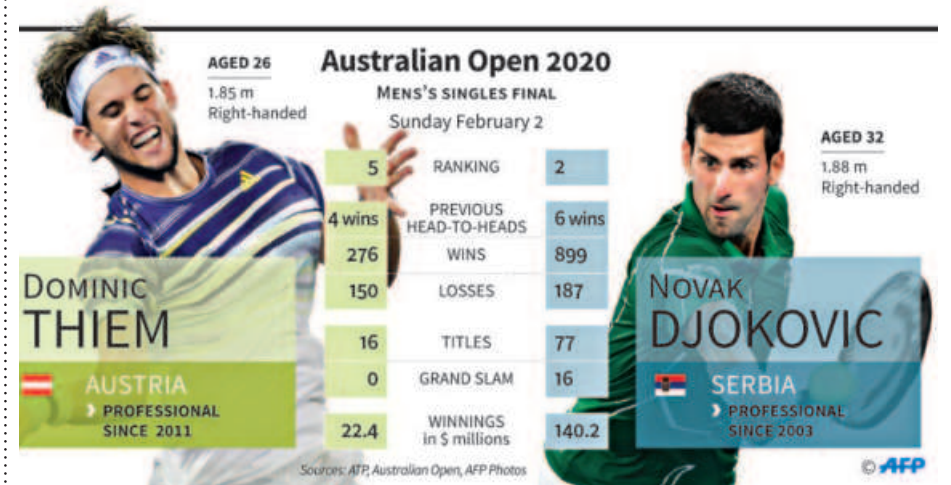
But this is his best effort outside of the French Open.

He lauded Djokovic as the "king of Australia" and insisted his recent successes followed him counted for little at the Serb's favourite tournament.

"It's true, I won I think more of the last encounters than he did. But I think it doesn't count so much. It's absolutely his comfort zone here," he said.

"He always plays his best tennis in Australia since many, many years. So I'm expecting that as well in the finals."

"All I can do is my best again, play great tennis again, and of course take a look at



generation'. He's been around for many years. Now already he's an established top-five, top-10 player," said Djokovic.

"It's just a matter of one match here and there that can potentially give him a Grand Slam title, that he can actually get in the mix of top three in the world," he added.

Despite the platitudes, Djokovic, 32, is banking on adding yet another chapter to his storied Melbourne Park career, and heads into the match with an extra day's rest after dispatching an injured Roger Federer in his semifinal on Thursday.

The world number two has been firing ever since arriving in Australia a month ago, and was unbeaten over six ATP Cup singles matches as he led Serbia to the inaugural title ahead of the Australian Open.

"Yes, I'm pleased with the way I've been

the last matches we had... try to repeat the good stuff that I did there."

Despite playing down his chances, Thiem has the weapons to trouble Djokovic.

He is supremely fit and regarded as one of the fastest movers on court, with a one-handed backhand that generates heavy spin and a power-packed forehand.

While the slower clay has always been his preferred surface, beating Federer in the Indian Wells final last year was a turning point for the Austrian on hardcourts.

"That victory gave me so much relief and so much confidence because finally I got my first Masters 1000 title on hardcourt," he said.

"I made this huge step forward. I really developed my game I think in the right direction."

# Liverpool move 22 clear

AFP, London



Liverpool surged 22 points clear at the top of the Premier League with a 4-0 win over Southampton as Leicester and Chelsea consolidated their place in the top four in a 2-2 draw.

Mohamed Salah scored twice as the champions-elect equalled a Premier League record with a 20th straight home win at Anfield.

Southampton believed they should have had a penalty early in the second half when Danny Ings went down in the box, but no spot-kick was given. Liverpool went straight up the other end to take the lead through Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.

"The game would have been going in a different direction," admitted Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp had the penalty been awarded.

"We had to change in the second half. That helped massively and when we are rolling it's difficult to stop."

Jordan Henderson doubled the European champions lead with a smart finish on the hour mark.

Salah then produced two cool finishes in the final 20 minutes as Klopp's men took their tally of points to a remarkable 100 from the last possible 102.

Chelsea stretched their advantage over Manchester United, Wolves and Tottenham to seven points, but offered further hope to the chasing pack in the battle for a Champions League place.

Frank Lampard's men have won just four of their last 13 league games and needed two goals from centre-back Antonio Rudiger just to claim a point.

"Not many people gave us the top four slot and I understand why, and it's probably the same now," said Lampard. "We've come to Leicester,

who everyone's raving about, quite rightly, and we've got a point."

All the goals came in the second half as Rudiger nodded Chelsea in front before two goals in 10 minutes from Harvey Barnes and Ben Chilwell turned the game around for Leicester.

A brilliant leap from Rudiger 19 minutes from time denied the Foxes all three points, but Brendan Rodgers's men maintain an eight-point lead over Chelsea in third.

"We should have won having gone 2-1 up. We gifted them two goals really, which we're disappointed with," said Rodgers.

Sheffield United are Chelsea's closest challengers as Chris Wilder's men moved into fifth with a 1-0 win at Crystal Palace thanks to a calamitous own goal from Eagles' goalkeeper Vicente Guaita.



**Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah found the back of the net twice as the Premier League leaders crushed Southampton 4-0 to stretch their record at Anfield to an imperious 20 straight wins.**

PHOTO: AFP

# Haaland makes it 7 in three

AFP, Berlin

Erling Braut Haaland made it seven goals in three games for Borussia Dortmund after scoring a double in Saturday's 5-0 Bundesliga thrashing of Union Berlin while Bayern Munich went top of the table.

The 19-year-old, who signed from Salzburg, scored either side of half-time at Signal Iduna Park after being handed his first Dortmund start by coach Lucien Favre.

His tally is the most by any Bundesliga player in their first three matches. Dortmund moved to third in the table, three points behind Bayern, who beat Mainz 3-1.

In Dortmund, 19-year-old England winger Jadon Sancho became the first teenager to score 25 goals in the Bundesliga when he started the rout with a looping shot past Union goalkeeper Rafal Gikiewicz.

Haaland added to his record run on 18 minutes when he was presented with a simple tap-in, before winning a penalty, which captain Marco Reus converted mid-way through the second half and Axel Witsel made it 4-0 on 70 minutes.

Haaland completed the rout when a Brandt backheel fell into his path and he drilled his shot past the despairing Gikiewicz.



**Real Madrid forward Karim Benzema celebrates after scoring the decider in a La Liga encounter against Atletico Madrid yesterday. The Frenchman now has 13 league goals this season, one behind chart-topper Lionel Messi.**

PHOTO: REAL MADRID

# Zizou inspires Real to Atletico win

AFP, Madrid



Zinedine Zidane's double substitution at half-time transformed the Madrid derby on Saturday as Real Madrid edged past Atletico 1-0 to move six points clear at the top of La Liga.

Karim Benzema scored the winner at the Santiago Bernabeu after Zidane's decisive intervention turned a contest that Atletico had dominated into another comfortable Real Madrid victory. Vinicius Junior, one of the substitutes, was a key to the goal.

Second-place Barcelona can cut the gap back to three points by beating Levante at

home on Sunday but Atletico now trail the leaders by 13 points.

This is Atletico's fifth game without a win. The worry is that on this form, they should worry not about the title race but about missing out on Champions League qualification.

Zidane's team are on a relentless run, now 21 games unbeaten, the latest due in large part to his changes.

The decision to ditch a failing system and revert to 4-3-3, with Vinicius Junior and Lucas Vazquez coming on for Isco and Toni Kroos, was both brave and effective.

Real's form is impressive and they have Eden Hazard, out since November, on the brink of a return.





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**SHAH CEMENT**



Some of the 312 Bangladeshis returning from China leave the airport in a bus; they head for the hajj camp in the capital's Ashkona. Inset, the convoy of buses carrying them. They will be tested for coronavirus at the camp, where they will be quarantined for two weeks.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## China's isolation grows with more travel bans

AFP, Beijing

China faced deepening isolation over its coronavirus epidemic yesterday as the death toll soared to 259, with the United States and Australia leading a growing list of nations to impose extraordinary Chinese travel bans.

With Britain, Russia and Sweden among the countries confirming their first infections, the virus has now spread to more than two dozen nations, sending governments scurrying to limit their exposure.

The United States toughened its stance Friday by declaring a national emergency, temporarily barring entry to foreigners who had been in China within the past two weeks.

"Foreign nationals, other than immediate family of US citizens and permanent residents... will be denied entry into the United States," Health Secretary

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### CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

**259** DEATHS (ALL IN CHINA)

**11,791** CONFIRMED CASES

# 312 return from virus-hit Wuhan

To be kept isolated at Haji Camp for 14 days; 8 of them admitted to hospitals

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

A total of 312 Bangladeshis, who were stranded in Coronavirus-hit Chinese city of Wuhan, landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital yesterday morning.

Family members of the returnees said they were relieved after their relatives' return, but a fear of the virus transmission gripped them.

Nasima, whose 19-year-old son Sadman Sakib was one of the returnees, said she was afraid that the virus might transmit to the returnees from one person as they were kept in a congested area.

"He [Sakib] was under better [medical] supervision in China," she said.

Nasima, along with her husband Sharifuzzaman, waited in front of Ashkona Hajj Camp throughout the day but failed to meet their son.

Of the returnees, 304 were kept quarantined in four rooms on the third floor of the camp where they would stay for the next 14 days under observation.

Rest of the seven were directly sent to Kurmitola General Hospital and another to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka cantonment from the airport. They had high body temperature.

Like Nasima- Sharifuzzaman couple, many guardians and relatives of the returnees were seen thronging on the camp premises to know about the situation of their loved ones.

Some of them alleged that the authorities concerned were not supplying enough food for the returnees. Quoting the returnees inside the camp, they alleged that the environment inside the camp was dirty with mosquito infestation.



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Shariar Sajjat, assistant health director of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, said a chartered flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines landed at the airport at 11:55am with the returnees.

Three infants, 12 children and 297 adults were among the returnees. None of them had flu symptoms while boarding the flight in Wuhan, he added.

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## 14-year-old girl raped in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Police arrested a man, said to be an Awami League activist, on charge of raping a 14-year-old girl from the Tripura community. The incident happened on Friday night in Cox's Bazar's Chakaria, which is adjacent to Bandarban's Lama upazila.

The victim, a ninth grader, was raped around 8:00pm after she went out of her hostel in Lama's Hebron Mission area to drink water from a tube well nearby, said locals.

They said a political programme, organised by the Bandarban-Lama AL unit, was underway in the area and that there were

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



### PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 2

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-15 5-52 7-15  
JAMAAT 6-05 1-15 4-30 5-56 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

### FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH

## Bangabandhu's nation-building challenges



Lt Gen Jagjit Singh Aurora calls on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Prime Minister's official residence (Feb 2, 1972).

FEBRUARY 2, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJAN

### BANGABANDHU MEETS AURORA

Lt Gen Jagjit Singh Aurora, C-in-C, Eastern Command of India, calls on Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his official residence. Aurora was accompanied by Maj Gen BN Sarkar.

Purchase of luxury items by govt offices banned  
Bangabandhu issues an order banning with immediate effect the purchase of luxury items such as new carpets, air conditioners and costly furniture by government departments and autonomous bodies. Referring to the present economic situation, Bangabandhu asks officials to use old items as long as they remain serviceable. The officials are also ordered to incur minimum expenditure on entertainment.



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## Senate likely to acquit Trump Wednesday

Votes down Democrats' call for new witnesses

AFP, Washington

The US Senate on Friday rebuffed Democratic calls for new witnesses at President Donald Trump's impeachment trial, paving the way for his acquittal next week of charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

Following the 51-49 vote, the Senate scheduled four hours of closing arguments by Democratic prosecutors and White House defense lawyers on Monday and a vote for acquittal on Wednesday.

A Wednesday vote will mean the historic trial will not have concluded before Tuesday, when Trump is scheduled to give his nationally televised annual "State of the Union" speech to a joint session of Congress.

Trump is all-but-assured of being acquitted by the Senate, where Republicans hold 53 seats to 47 for the Democrats and a two-thirds majority -- or 67 senators -- is needed to remove a president from office.

Two Republican senators -- Mitt Romney of Utah and Susan Collins of Maine -- joined 47 Democrats in voting to introduce further witnesses into the trial.

But Democrats failed to muster the four votes needed to allow testimony from Trump's former national security advisor

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



**SPRINT**

"Everyone thought I could never play football again, but now I am the captain of the national team."

**Jamal Bhuyan**  
Captain, Bangladesh National Football Team



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