

COVID-19 VACCINE
China joins Covax, boosting WHO-led programme
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"This is the first time I've been speechless... This is unbelievable."
WFP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAVID BEASLEY REACTS TO THE NEWS OF NOBEL PEACE PRIZE



"They cannot break the resistance of the Iranian nation with these inhumane actions."
IRAN'S PRESIDENT HASSAN ROUHANI SLAMS NEW US SANCTIONS ON BANKS



"The way it was done and the feeling that they're kicking you out is what hurt the most."
URUGUAY STRIKER LUIS SUAREZ ADMITS EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWN AT THE MANNER OF BARCELONA EXIT



ANTI-RAPE LAWS

Definition slanted against victims

Crucial changes need to be made to ensure higher conviction rate, say legal experts, activists

NILIMA JAHAN and ZYMA ISLAM

When the law minister on Thursday announced that the law would be reformed to provide for death penalty for rape, activists, researchers and lawyers pointed out that far more crucial changes need to be made with immediate effect.

To begin with, for example, "rape" itself is restrictively defined only as penile-vaginal penetration -- although rape in reality constitutes many types of violent actions.

"In 2000, even though we have brought the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act to modify the punishment for rape, what it did not touch upon is the substantive definition of rape," said Taslima Yasmin, assistant professor at Department of Law, University of Dhaka.

"For this definition, in section 2 of the Act, it is mentioned to apply the definition given in section 375 of The Penal Code 1860; and with that, we have continued the 150-year-old archaic definition of rape," she said.

Section 375 defines rape as sexual intercourse with a woman against her

will, without her consent, and adds that penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape. That is the extent of the definition.

Lawyers and activists say that the narrow definition of rape and some archaic provisions in laws relating to rape result in a low conviction rate, with a study last year estimating the rate to be three percent. Moreover, procedures -- such as the requirement of medical tests to find semen -- are also set up in a way that makes it hard to convict perpetrators and further adds to the trauma and scrutiny of survivors.

On October 5, when the Noakhali gang-rape survivor was first brought to the police station, the police filed a case under "attempt to rape" charges.

The charge was filed under Section 9(4) (B) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, which covers the issue of rape.

"She was not raped," said the Begumganj police, even though they had in probability seen the extremely violent video where the survivor was repeatedly raped using hands, as well as a stick.

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Demonstrators stage a rally in front of the National Museum in the capital's Shahbagh area yesterday afternoon protesting the growing incidents of rape, sexual harassment and violence against women in the country. They demanded justice for the victims and security for women.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

8 arrested in Ctg over gang-rape

More incidents of rape surface

STAR REPORT

At least 19 people were arrested on rape charges across the country in less than 24 hours since Thursday evening.

Of them, eight persons, including a female, were arrested in connection with the gang-rape of a 22-year-old housewife in Chattogram yesterday.

The gang-rape incident took place early yesterday when the victim was returning to her residence from adjacent Rangunia upazila.

She took a rickshaw from Bahaddardhat CNB area on her way back to home. A group of eight to 10 persons on CNG-run auto-rickshaw stopped her in Maulavi Pukurpar area.

Later, they dragged her beside a dustbin and gang-raped around 12:30am, police said.

Local police was informed about the incident by the One-stop Crisis Centre

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Stressed, bored

Pandemic taking its toll on mental health of children

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Lonely and bored, Mahdia Mahmud is now having trouble concentrating.

"When will I be able to play with my friends again?" the second grader of a reputed school in the capital's Mirpur hurls this question to her parents every now and then.

"I miss my friends. I want to play with them. How long will I have to do online classes?" she further asks.

Her mother Mousumi Julekha said the child is no longer that curious anymore and cries frequently. "My daughter hardly talks to anyone these days," she complained.

She also said, "It seems she has become too emotional and sometimes it's hard to manage her. We can do nothing but let her play games on our phones to keep her occupied."

Mahdia's case is not an isolated one. Closure of schools across the country for around seven months now has kept millions of children confined to their homes and away from their peers, resulting in growing monotony, boredom and stress, according to educationists and psychologists.

They also said these psychological problems, which came along with the school closure, may leave a long-lasting effect on the mental health of the children.

Children in urban areas are suffering more as most have to live in cramped conditions amid little space. The sense of being confined and having to stay away from friends is affecting these children's mental health

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COMBATTING HUNGER WFP wins the Nobel Peace Prize

REUTERS, Geneva

The United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) won the Nobel Peace Prize yesterday for its efforts to combat hunger around the world and improve conditions for peace in areas affected by conflict.

The Rome-based organisation says it helps some 97 million people in about 88 countries each year, and that one in nine people worldwide still do not have enough to eat.

"The need for international solidarity and multilateral cooperation is more conspicuous than ever," Berit Reiss-Andersen, chairwoman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, told a news conference.

She called the WFP a driving force in efforts to

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NEW INDIAN ENVOY IN TOWN Starts off with the vaccine diplomacy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

New Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami has started his assignment in Bangladesh distinctly with vaccine diplomacy.

At the first interaction with the press in Dhaka on Thursday, he looked eager and spoke his mind with great warmth to thaw whatever tensions reported in the Indian media recently.

"We are committed to ensuring the fastest possible partnership with Bangladesh on all aspects of [Covid-19] vaccine development," he told the media at his official residence, India House, just after presenting credentials to President Abdul Hamid in the evening.

Foreign relations experts said a priority collaboration for vaccine could serve as a strong catalyst to help India cement the cracks developed in its bilateral relationships with Bangladesh over time involving a host of issues, from water-sharing to geopolitics.

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Vikram Doraiswami

ANTI-RAPE PROTESTS Demand for justice gets louder

STAR REPORT

People from different walks of life, including teachers, students, politicians and right activists, yesterday took to the streets in the capital and demanded exemplary punishment of rapists and their patrons.

They also demanded the home minister's resignation for failing to ensure justice and stop rape and torture of women in the country.

Several hundred students held a protest rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club under the banner of Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakshan Parishad, which had led the quota reform movement.

Nurul Haque Nur, joint convener of the organisation and

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PABNA MENTAL HOSPITAL Service seekers at the mercy of brokers

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPUI, Pabna

Family members of patients with mental illnesses seeking treatment at Pabna Mental Hospital are being harassed by brokers outside who demand money to get them an appointment with a doctor inside or lure them to privately run so-called mental health clinics.

Long understaffed by doctors and facilities overstretched, services at the country's first specialised hospital for treatment of mental illnesses have further been diminished over the last few months due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Amidst the global pandemic fallout, World Mental Health Day 2020 is being observed today with the goal of increased investment in mental health programmes at the national and international levels.

The 500-bed public hospital is running with 350 general beds and

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A woman feeds lunch to her ailing husband on the premises of Pabna Mental Hospital in the district's Hemayetpur area on Monday. The patient had to wait for hours before visiting a doctor at the outpatients department. The hospital now admits patients on only one day in a week due to the Covid-19 situation and this causes the rush of outpatients.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPUI

SAUDI RETURNEES Troubles over Covid tests add to woes

Many struggle to get test reports before scheduled flights to KSA

RASHIDUL HASAN

Rush for tickets to Saudi Arabia went down to some extent after the number of flights was increased, but Bangladeshis seeking to go to the Arab country are not getting enough time to get tested for Covid-19 due to tight flight schedule.

In this situation, many fear that they might miss their flights. On Thursday, Moinul Ahsan, civil surgeon of Dhaka, said a record number of Bangladeshi expatriate workers -- 3,283 -- went to the Dhaka North City Corporation market sample collection centre the previous day to get their Covid-19 tests done.

He said many of them were migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. Samples of 2,137 migrant workers were collected from morning till evening on Thursday, the civil surgeon added. "Although it is a challenge for us to collect samples and carry out tests of so many expatriate workers within a specific period of time, we are trying our best so that no one misses flight for failing to get Covid-19 test report," he added.

Officials at the DNCC market sample collection centre said they could easily complete their tasks -- collection of samples and delivery of reports if they could get the minimum required time.

"But in several cases, people requested us to deliver their Covid-19 test reports within four to five hours as they had only six to seven hours in their hands to get to their

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BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,278
New cases in 24hrs



3,75,870
Total cases



5,477
Deaths



2,89,912
Recoveries



1,069,182
Deaths



36,934,836
Total cases

Stressed, bored

FROM PAGE 1
badly, psychologists said.
Many of these students lost their near and dear ones to Covid-19 and it is possible that they might develop post-traumatic stress disorder in case they fail to recover from their losses, they warned.

Against this backdrop, the country observes the World Mental Health Day today.

The past months have brought many challenges for students, especially to adapt to attending classes online from home, with little contact with teachers and friends, and amid anxiety about their future, the World Health Organisation said in its website ahead of the Day.

Given past experience of emergencies, it is expected that the need for mental health and psychosocial support will substantially increase in the coming months and years, it said.

On March 17, the government closed the schools to contain the spread of coronavirus. The shutdown was extended till October 30. The authorities have yet to decide when to reopen educational institutions.

Educational activities of about four crore students are being hampered due to the crisis.

"Due to the closure, many students are feeling suffocated, which is stressing them out," Azizur Rahman, an honorary professor at Dhaka University's psychology department, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"These students have become restless and uncontrollable... They can't concentrate on anything... This will negatively impact their mental and physical developments," he said, adding that many of these children might not be able to forget the miserable memories.

Lt Col Hafez Md Zonayed Ahmed, principal of Bishreshtha Munshi Abdur Rouf Public College, said they witnessed that many of their students were stressed and bored a few days after the coronavirus-driven shutdown was enforced.

Many got hooked to cell phone gaming, chatting and social media platforms.

But after the introduction of sessions between parents and psychiatrists and through online counselling, the

situation improved. "Students are feeling a bit more relaxed now," he said.

Prof Kamal Uddin, another teacher at the DU's psychology department, said children were being deprived of their normal academic and other activities with their peer groups and it would certainly leave a negative impact on them.

Kamal said teachers must communicate with their students online and talk to them frequently to keep them stress-free.

Noted educationist Rasheda K Choudhury too said the ongoing school closure could lead to mental and physical problems in children.

Students at different levels would face different problems, she said.

For example, primary students will simply miss their friends and schools while university students can be worried about their future, especially about jobs, said, Rasheda, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

She said there should be social campaigns on the importance of mental health of students. "Apart from the government, all social and voluntary organisations should come forward and help these students."

She also said the government should train teachers on taking care of students' mental health.

Contacted, Education Minister Dipu Moni said the government has taken various steps to reduce students' stress. Also, counsellors will be appointed at district level in this regard, she said.

"These counsellors will provide training on how to deal with mental health issues to at least two teachers, including a female one," she said.

Director General Syed Md Golam Faruk of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education said they have already started initiatives to appoint the counsellors.

"We will arrange views-exchange programmes in all regions and experts will sit with officials, teachers and guardians to discuss the mental health issue," he added.

Primary and Mass Education Secretary Akram-Al-Hossain said primary teachers were maintaining communications with students amid the pandemic.



With all educational institutions closed due to the Covid-19 outbreak, this classroom of a school in the capital's Kakrail area is now left empty for around seven months. The long period of closure has led to a major disruption to education. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Definition slanted against victims

FROM PAGE 1
"I was not raped during the incident seen on video," the survivor told the police, even though she herself described in the first information report that the perpetrators used their hands as instruments in carrying out multiple acts of insertion.

It may have been that the survivor used "rape" to mean penile-vaginal penetration, which was not committed during the incident portrayed by the video. The survivor was, however, allegedly raped multiple times before by the prime accused Delwar.

"Attempt to rape" and "rape" charges have vastly different sentences -- the charge of rape carries a life sentence, whereas "attempt to rape" commits perpetrators between five and 10 years. The different sentences were set to reflect on the supposed proportionality of the crime.

But is the brutality of being raped with a stick, or hands, or the violence exhibited in the video in any way less severe in proportion than penile-vaginal rape?

"If we look at the global modern rape laws, this type of penetration [with objects or other body parts] and penile penetration are equally punishable offences and deserve an equal degree of punishment," Yasmin said, adding that not considering this rape evaluates it as a "lesser degree offence".

She said this also plays out practically as the "weight of the case gets lighter".
Nina Goswami, senior deputy director of Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), said the lack of definition is a huge impediment to getting convictions in cases.

"This is why people give the highest priority to medical reports in rape cases, where there must be human semen. And that's why the perpetrators are not punished in most cases," she said.

"Without the presence of human semen, the victim's oral testimony and other witnesses' statements would be the major testimony but it is difficult to prove in reality, because getting the right witnesses is also difficult in rape cases. And this is how the cases become weak," she concluded.

The current conviction rate is unknown, although a statistic presented in an event called "National dialogue on action against sexual violence" organised last year by Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and the United Nations in Bangladesh stated it to be as low as three percent.

Earlier this year, this newspaper, quoting statistics of Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, reported that around three children are being raped in Bangladesh each day.

Nina Goswami pointed out that the narrow definition of "sexual intercourse with a woman" also makes it difficult to prosecute male rape.

"We have long been demanding this, as time has come to rethink and reform the definition. In fact, we cannot deal with the male child rape cases under this definition and these are dealt with by other laws as 'unnatural offences'," said Goswami.

The same goes for the rape of hijra or transgender individuals.

Furthermore, the law explicitly states that "Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under thirteen years of age, is not rape", thereby failing to criminalise marital rape. By not giving legal protection for victims of marital rape, the law ends up stating that marriage absolves an individual of the need to take consent before sexual intercourse.

But the definition is hardly the only section that needs reform, opined lawyers.

Rape survivors routinely have to

face being defamed at court by The Evidence Act 1872 -- according to the provision of law, the complainant's character is judged so as to understand the merit of the complaint. That means the "character" of the rape survivor is directly used to judge whether or not her allegation is real.

"Section 155(4) of the Evidence Act 1872, expressly allows defence lawyers to introduce character evidence against rape complainants during trial," stated a report published by Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST) titled "Between 'Virtue' and 'Immorality': Why Character Evidence Must Be Prohibited in Rape Cases".

In courts, defence lawyers try to establish a "lack of morality" in rape survivors by divulging details of their personal lives as a way of undermining their credibility, explains the report.

"Why does the raped woman need to prove her character in court?" said Salma Ali, eminent women's rights lawyer.

"In the Begumganj case, the survivor was separated from her husband for years. Will that be used against her as character evidence? In the context of our villages, it made her more vulnerable to rapists. Men consider themselves to be entitled to these single women," she said.

"If the character of the rape complainant can be proved immoral, it can impeach the testimony of the victim. And the victim then needs to prove her moral character. But what is the moral character, and up to who's standard? The character of a person cannot be relevant in a rape case, even if I'm a sex worker; I have the right to file a case for rape because the legal element is consent," said Taslima Yasmin.

As Salma Ali said, "The focus should be on more convictions. We need speedy trials and proper implementation of current punishments."

Troubles over Covid tests

FROM PAGE 1
flights," said the civil surgeon.

For example, Civil Surgeon Moinul said five Saudi-bound people reached the sample collection centre around 9:30am on Wednesday and said their flight was at 2:30pm.

"After checking their travel documents, we hurriedly collected their samples and sent those to the nearby National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine for Covid-19 testing," he said.

"While taking samples for the tests, we advised them to go to the airport [Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport] for completing formalities to board the flight. Otherwise, they might miss the flight."

The civil surgeon said they sent the Covid-19 test reports to the airport's health centre within four hours at 1:30pm and the five Saudi-bound people printed their reports from there.

Dr Moinul said they completed their tests under special arrangements. But if the arrangement did not work, the five had to miss their flight. "And in that case who will take the responsibility?" he questioned.

On September 27, he said they delivered a Covid-19 test report within just hours of sample collection to a Saudi-bound expatriate Bangladeshi worker.

The efficiency of the staffers set an example and helped Mir Abdus Salam catch his flight to go to Riyadh.

Moinul said usually, they are supposed to get 48 hours as per the guideline of the Saudi Arabian Airlines for a coronavirus test.

He said it might not be possible for them to carry out Covid-19 tests under special arrangement all the time. Public money would be lost as many kits are damaged while carrying out such rapid tests, he added.

The civil surgeon said the Saudi Arabian Airlines should issue tickets and set flight schedules in a way so that

people can get 48 hours to do their tests.

"But the Saudi Arabian Airlines are issuing tickets and setting flight schedules in such a way that we are not getting even 24 hours to carry out a Covid-19 test."

Tarik A Alowaidi, country manager of the airlines, could not be reached for his comments.

Moinul said they are scheduled to stop collecting blood samples after 2:00pm. But considering the plight of the remittance-earning workers, they have been collecting samples till the evening for the last two days due to huge rush of passengers.

Talking to this correspondent, several Saudi-bound workers blamed Saudi Arabian Airlines officials and travel agents for issuing tickets and confirming their flight schedules without not giving them the required time to do the coronavirus tests.

Saudi Arabian Airlines and Biman Bangladesh Airlines are now operating 19 weekly flights from Dhaka.

Around 55,000 stranded Bangladeshis workers have been waiting to return to their workplaces in Saudi Arabia since March due to the pandemic.

Many workers fear that they might lose their jobs if they fail to return to their workplaces in the gulf country by October 30 before the expiry of their visas and iqama.

The government initially designated 19 medical institutions and laboratories to do Covid-19 tests for overseas passengers following the scam of Regent Hospital and JKC health care in testing Covid-19.

At present, Covid-19 test is being carried out in Dhaka by three institutions -- National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Referral Centre, Institute of Public Health and National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine.

Dhaka North City Corporation Market is the only sample collection centre for expatriate workers.

WFP wins the Nobel Peace Prize

FROM PAGE 1
prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict, and said the Covid-19 pandemic, which the WFP says could double hunger worldwide, had made it even more relevant.

"Until the day we have a medical vaccine, food is the best vaccine against chaos," the Nobel committee said in its citation.

"There is an estimate within the World Food Programme that ... there will be 265 million starving people within a year, so of course this is also a call to the international community not to underfund the World Food Programme."

WFP runs a logistics service that has dispatched medical cargoes to over 120 countries throughout the pandemic to help governments and health partners fighting Covid-19.

It also has provided passenger services to ferry humanitarian and health workers where commercial flights were unavailable.

"At a time when we are living through a global pandemic, the need for food, humanitarian help has intensified," Reiss-Andersen told Reuters.

SPEECHLESS
WFP Executive Director David Beasley, travelling in Niger, posted a video statement on social media.

"It's because of the WFP family," he

said. "They are out there in the most difficult, complex places in the world, where there's war, conflict, climate extremes -- it doesn't matter. They are out there and they deserve this award..."

"This is the first time I've been speechless... This is unbelievable," he said. "And wow! Wow! Wow! Wow!"

In a written statement, he added: "Today is a reminder that food security, peace and stability go together. Without peace, we cannot achieve our global goal of zero hunger; and while there is hunger, we will never have a peaceful world."

In Geneva, WFP spokesman Tomson Phiri told reporters: "When everything went into shutdown mode, the World Food Programme was there. When everyone was leaving and we were going into lockdowns, the World Food Programme had to provide the logistical support that the world deserved, that the world needed."

At one point at the height of the pandemic, as airlines were cutting back flights, the WFP was running the largest operational airline in the world, he said.

Dan Smith, director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, said the Norwegian Nobel Committee had wanted to send a message of both hope and "support for international cooperation".

Service seekers at the mercy of brokers

FROM PAGE 1
150 paying ones, said the hospital director, Dr ATM M Morshed.

"Before, we would treat and release patients regularly and admit patients five days a week. Due to the pandemic, we have had to cut down indoor services in the hospital," he told The Daily Star.

Currently, new patients are only admitted every Monday and first taken to the isolation unit before being shifted to beds after one week to avoid the risk of Covid-19 spreading among existing patients, he said.

"So, the flow of patient admission has been slower over the last seven months."

This has led to greater pressure on outdoor patient facilities, where many admission seekers are being extorted by brokers for limited serial numbers to get an appointment.

Mid Aziz Matobbar, from Chandra in Faridpur's Bhanga upazila, came early Monday morning to get his 25-year-old son admitted but failed to get a serial number. That meant he could not try again until next Monday.

"My son Md Abdullah was born with a mental illness, which has now become severe. We cannot keep him free at home because of his violent tendencies, so we tie him up with an iron chain," Aziz said.

"After travelling a long distance, I was harassed outside the hospital as there are so many brokers who actually decide who gets to see a doctor."

The brokers tried to pressure him into admitting his son to a private

clinic, he said, but he declined because he cannot afford it.

After waiting all morning, Aziz managed to get an appointment with a doctor at the outdoor facility around noon.

"I was unable to get an appointment with a doctor though I came here early this morning," said Russel Sarkar, from Sirajganj's Ullapara upazila, who brought his mentally challenged brother Abdur Rahim.

He also had to face the brokers. "As I turned them away, I have had to wait for hours," Russel said.

Homemaker Shanjida Shahin from Magura also came to the outdoor patient facilities on Monday morning with her mentally challenged brother Atikul Islam, whose condition had been deteriorating due to a lack of medicine.

Through the brokers, she was able to get an appointment with a doctor at the outdoor facility early in the day, she said.

After prescribing some medication, the doctor asked her to bring her brother again next week and if necessary, he would be admitted to the hospital then.

At the outdoor unit of the hospital, this correspondent found a group of locals, agents of various private clinics and even some hospital staff bargaining with patients' families looking for access to services.

As many patients and their family members come from outside the district, they are often lured by these brokers who promise fast access or treatment elsewhere, hospital sources said.

Demand for justice gets louder

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protestors also staged a sit-in at Kakrail intersection for about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, teachers and students held a protest rally in Shahbagh under the banner of a newly formed platform -- "Bangladesh against Rape and Impunity". Tanzimuddin Khan, associate professor of DU's International Relations department, said people are victims of deception and the state is playing deceptive games with its people.

Speakers at the programme demanded ending all kinds of repression on indigenous women and forming an anti-repression cell

for women at each institution and organisation as per the High Court's directives.

They also urged the government to take steps to stop hate speech against women at all sorts of programmes, including religious ones, and stop exhibiting women as product in literature, drama, cinema and advertisement.

They also called for stopping mental torture on rape victims during investigation.

At the event, Bangladesh Chhatra Union General Secretary Anik Roy declared a weeklong protest programme. The organisation said it will hold

Starts off

FROM PAGE 1
The new envoy appeared to be spot-on with his tasks in hand, observed Prof Delwar Hossain of International Relations at Dhaka University.

India will surely try to draw its neighbours closer in the changed global geopolitics where rivalry between India and China flared up following the clashes between the troops of the two regional powers, he said.

Interestingly, both the high commissioners -- outgoing Riva Das Ganguly and Doraiswami -- chose to depart from and arrive in Bangladesh through land ports, seemingly to signify India's foreign policy priority on the connectivity with its closest neighbours.

Doraiswami arrived in Bangladesh on October 5 through Tripura border of India, three days after Riva Ganguly Das had left through Benapole border of Bangladesh after completing her one-and-a-half-year tenure here.

Asked about his priorities, Doraiswami on Thursday said he was hoping to bring the relationship back to where it was before the Covid-19 pandemic, which seriously hampered the peoples' movement and economic activities.

"I would like to see specifically the completion of the projects to enhance connectivity," he said.

The envoy said he would like to have more Indian businesses come to Bangladesh and do his best to sort out the issues that exist in the relationship and "fulfil your [Bangladesh's] expectations".

An air bubble agreement could be signed soon to begin flights between Bangladesh and India for the businesses, medical patients and officials as part of economic recovery, said officials.

Apart from Covid-19 vaccine cooperation, Bangladesh will expect the new envoy to push forward the unresolved issues, including water sharing of common rivers and border killings.

India is conducting phase-II trial of its own vaccine Covaxin, apart from eyeing the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine candidate as the likely first shot against Covid-19 to be available by the end of this year.

Doraiswami said when phase III trial of India's own vaccine starts in India soon, the country would like to work with Bangladesh, providing an opportunity for vaccine trial here.

"If it works for you in Bangladesh, we can look forward to partnership in co-production and delivery of vaccine," the diplomat said, adding that they want to do it in a way that ensures provision of vaccines at the most affordable prices and the way that Bangladesh is comfortable with.

During his visit to Tripura, where he visited a number of projects connecting the Northeast of India to Bangladesh, before coming to Bangladesh, he said the Northeast was "central" to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of stronger, resilient and modern India.

Talking to reporters after meeting Tripura Chief Minister Biplob Kumar Deb on October 3, Doraiswami said, "As we develop our relationship with Bangladesh, our most important neighbouring country, it is going to be of great value to both the countries if our connectivity, travel, trade and people-to-people ties grow. To achieve this, Tripura is critical, that's why I am here."

Upon arrival in Bangladesh on October 5, he visited Bangabandhu Memorial Museum on Dhanmondi-32 in Dhaka and paid rich tributes to the memories of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On Friday, he visited the National Memorial in Savar and paid tributes to Liberation War martyrs by placing a floral wreath at the monument.

"Your Liberation War remains an inspiration to the world. It will always be our abiding honour to have offered you our support, just as we in India offer your bravery our respectful salute, nearly fifty years later," he said.

Today, Doraiswami said, Bangladesh is equally respected for the remarkable improvements it has recorded in social indices and sustained economic growth at the fastest pace in South Asia.

The Bangladesh-India relationship is based on shared sacrifice, shared history and culture, and on the uniquely close ties of kinship, he said.

"I want to underline this point. There is not, and will never be, a diminution of the highest level of importance that Bangladesh holds in India," he added.

an anti-rape photo exhibition, cultural rally, film festival, women rally and cycle rally to press home its demand.

If the government fails to meet their demand, they will organise a long march to Begumganj of Noakhali from the capital's Shahbagh on October 16 and hold a rally in Begumganj the following day.

Meanwhile, a DU female student continued her hunger strike until death yesterday at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture, demanding the arrest of former Ducus VP Nurul and five others in connection with a rape case.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Papuan Frogmouth, Australia.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

FROGMOUTHS and Nightjars

In far north Queensland, Australia, there is a rainforest called Wet Tropics. Meandering through this forest is the Daintree River. Two years ago, I was on a boat on the Daintree with several others, looking for birds the area is famous for.

Our boat cruised close to the eastern edge of the wide river. At one point, Mark, our birding guide, motioned to the boatman to slow down and approach the bank. He then pointed to a tree on the bank. The tree had sparse leaves, so the bird should have stood out. I stared intently but could see nothing until I noticed a bump at the Y intersection of two main branches. A strange looking bird had just about blended in perfectly with the bare branches. It had camouflaged so well because its plumage was the exact same colour as the bark.

The bird was a Papuan Frogmouth. It had a bulbous bill, no neck between its head and its body, red eyes and a creamy eyebrow. It was almost two feet long, and the closest I could think of was the Large-tailed Nightjar I had seen in Bangladesh.

Indeed, Frogmouths and Nightjars are birds that belong to an order of birds called Caprimulgiformes. They are distinguished by wide mouths, almost no neck and large eyes. Other birds in this order include Oilbirds, Hawk-nightjars and the fantastic looking Potoos. Most of these birds are nocturnal and live on insects.

Another characteristic of these birds is their superb camouflage.

Take the Large-tailed Nightjar, for example. I was once at a friend's

country home in Gazipur, standing next to a grove of trees, camera in hand, looking for birds, when a staff pointed to a tree close to me: "Sir did you see that one?" It was only six feet from me, perched on a horizontal branch, yet I had missed it due to its camouflage. The Large-tailed Nightjar was asleep – it was daytime after all – and our waving and clapping would not wake it up. After taking several photographs, I came very close expecting it to fly, but it ignored me. It was only when I lightly brushed my fingers on the trunk of the tree that it woke up with a start – from the softest vibration – and noisily flew away, its wings almost touching my face. Those were my early days of birding; today I would not disturb a bird like that.

Bangladesh has four other Nightjar species, but they are rare and have eluded me. The Savannah Nightjar can be found in Chapai Nawabganj. The Indian and Grey Nightjars are found in our forests. The Great-eared Nightjar was seen in Mirpur Botanical Garden. The only other bird from Caprimulgiformes order found in Bangladesh is the Hodgson's Frogmouth, an extremely rare find.

The rest of Caprimulgiformes are not seen in Bangladesh and most are hard to find even in their native lands. Among them, the Oilbird deserves a special mention because it is the only bird I know of whose chick, at one point during its growth, weighs more than the adult.

www.facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow "ihtishamkabir" on Instagram.

Man claims wife died by suicide, family suspects murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mystery shrouds the death of a woman, who was found hanging in a house in Dhaka's Nikunja area yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Rafika Ruma Ety (26). Hailing from Bogura, she used to live on a ground-floor flat with her husband and son.

Her husband claimed that she hanged herself following a dispute over a trivial matter the night before, while the woman's family suspected that she was killed and then hanged.

Ety's husband Jamal Hossain also said following the altercation, she wanted to go out of the house in anger but he intercepted her.

"Later, we went to bed. Around 3:30am, I suddenly woke up and could not find her. Then I went to the balcony and saw her hanging from the iron bar with a scarf," he claimed.

She was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

Ety's brother Humayun Kabir said his sister was very strong mentally and she cannot have killed herself as she liked to take on any kind of problem as a challenge.

"Her husband says she hanged herself, but how were her knees touching the ground?" he questioned. "They had some family problems. We suspect that she was killed," he alleged.

Preparing an inquest report, Sub-inspector Abdus Samad of Khilkhet Police Station said there were no signs of external injuries on the body. However, a half crescent-shaped mark was found on her neck, he added.

The body was kept at the hospital mortuary for an autopsy, to determine the cause of death.

HELD IN RAPE CASE

Four children handed over to their parents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four children from Bakerganj in Barishal, who were arrested in a rape case, have been handed over to their parents yesterday after they were released from Jashore Children Development Centre in line with a High Court directive issued on Thursday night.

"Officer-in-charge of Bakerganj Police Station informed me at 8:30am today over phone that the four children were handed over to their parents. They were carried in a microbus with proper police protection. Local administration of Jashore has made the arrangement," said Supreme Court spokesperson Mohammad Saifur Rahman.

At 9:30pm on Thursday, two High Court judges operated a bench and directed Nari o Shishu Nirjaton Daman Tribunal of Barishal to instantly grant bail to the four, arrested on October 6 in a case filed on charges of raping a six-year-old at Bakerganj.

In a suomoto (voluntary) order, the HC directed the authorities to release the children – 10 to 12 years of age – from the custody of Children Development Centre at Pulerhat in Jashore on bail and hand them over to their guardians that night.

The OC was ordered to submit a report to the SC special officer in this regard.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Mohi Uddin

Shamim came up with the order following a report broadcast on a private television channel on the incident of arresting the children and inhumanly taking them to the centre, following rejection of their bail prayer. Court sources said the HC judges ordered Senior Judicial Magistrate of Barishal Enayet Ullah, who rejected the petitions, to appear before the bench on Sunday to place his explanation.

The HC bench also ordered the OC to appear before the bench along with the children and their guardians tomorrow and asked the registrar of Barishal Medical College Hospital to submit a medical report of the victim child. The HC will also hold a hearing on the issue tomorrow.

The tribunal granted bail to the children immediately after receiving the HC order.

The incident took place on October 4. According to the case statement, the four boys raped the girl in the pretext of playing. The victim disclosed the matter to her mother after she fell sick on Oct 6. Her father filed the case the same day.

Bakerganj police arrested them on October 7 and produced them to the court of senior judicial magistrate Enayet Ullah the same day. He rejected their bail petitions and ordered police to send them to the development centre.



The laughing face of a youth emerging from a pile of jute for this photograph was captured at the banks of Barishal's Arial Kha river. The golden fibre is brought to the port at Arjikalikapur village on trawlers, from where they're taken to warehouses by workers for Tk 500 per trip. This photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

DURGA PUJA IN BARISHAL AMID PANDEMIC

Idol artisans stare at losses

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Idol artisans in Barishal are not getting expected price ahead of Durga Puja amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The sculptors said even though prices of raw materials increased, their fees reduced as many puja mandap committees are offering low prices this year.

Many, however, said they are grateful that they are still getting some orders given the situation. Due to the pandemic, the festival will be celebrated on a limited scale this year.

Durga Puja, one of the biggest religious festivals of the Hindu community, will be held from October 22 to 26.

Organisers said 617 mandaps will be set up in Barishal – 42 in the city and 575 outside the city. Preparations are going on in full swing.

Last year, Durga Puja was held at 41 mandaps in the city and 570 mandaps outside.

Swapan Kar, organising secretary of Mahanagar Puja Udjapan Parishad, said number of mandaps increased this year.

Idol makers, however, said that did not make any good impact on their income, rather it went down at least 10 percent.

Rupak Pal working at Bhatikhana Puja Mandap said many are preferring small-size idols as they cannot afford the big ones. "This time, I took order for a

package of idols at Tk 20,000 which was Tk 60,000 last year," he said.

He said last year he got orders for five such packages. "So far, it's only one this year."

The sculptor said a Durga idol without paint generally costs Tk 5,000. This time, it needs more than Tk 6,000 due to price hike in raw materials, he said.

Despite the setback, these artisans continue to work and eagerly await the festival as bulk of their income comes from it, said Bishweswar Paul, adviser to Barishal Mritshilpi Sammelon o Sammanana, an organisation for clay artisan community in the southern region.

Tapan Pal, a clay artisan working for the city's Tiakhali Durga Mandap, said costs of straw, paint, other materials and labour went up by 10-20 percent but their fees did not.

Still, he said, they are in a way fortunate that they are getting orders amid this pandemic. "I thought I would not get any order as many were reluctant to celebrate puja properly this time," said Tapan. "It's still better than nothing."

Suranjit Dutta Litu, general secretary of Mahanagar Puja Udjapan Parishad, said they imposed a ban on lighting and music through loudspeaker this year. Health guidelines – including social distancing – will also be maintained strictly, he said.



An artisan working on an idol of Durga.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

DSHE issues guideline for using social media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) has asked all government college teachers and students to refrain from making and sharing posts, uploading photos, audios and videos on social media sites that might tarnish the image of the government or the nation.

On top of this, it also asked them to refrain from liking, commenting or sharing anything that might degrade the image of the government or the nation, according to a directive on social media sites of DSHE.

The directorate sent the guidelines to principals of all government colleges on Thursday evening. The directive also asked the principals to keep an eye on the social media activities of students and teachers so that no untoward and anti-law activities can take place there.

In the directive, DSHE has also asked not to make any comments regarding any nationally important persons, institutions, and others that can demean them.

The guideline also barred teachers and students from publishing any documents or information that can go against the national unity and spirit or hurt religious sentiment.

BNP announces candidates for Dhaka-18, Sirajganj-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday announced SM Jahangir as its candidate for Dhaka-18 by-elections, and Selim Reza for Sirajganj-1 by-polls.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, BNP's secretary general, made the announcement at a press briefing at party chairperson's Gulshan office.

The party has observed that that both by-polls and parliamentary elections make no difference; no voting takes place, only candidacies are announced, he said.

Fakhrul said people might then question why the party is joining the polls. "We believe in democracy. We believe that election is the only way to shift power peacefully."

Fakhrul said his party does not want to give any space to the "fascist" government. "That's why we are participating in the election. We believe that if Election Commission works properly, results would project the people's verdict."

The by-elections will be held on November 12. As per schedule, the deadline for nomination submission is October 13. They will be scrutinised on October 15. October 22 has been set as the last date for candidacy withdrawal.

The Sirajganj-1 seat fell vacant following death of Awami League presidium member and former health minister Mohammad Nasim on June 13 and Dhaka-18 fell vacant after death of former home minister Sahara Khatun on July 9.

A women-only hostel where safety comes first



At Bidyanondo's women-only hostel "Bashonti Nibash", guests are provided with their own bunk bed in the form of medium-sized capsules.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

FAISAL BIN IQBAL, from SHOUT

The state of gender relations in Bangladesh stands at such a precarious position that the lived experience of all women, across any strata, is filled with fear, anxiety, and even paranoia. The outrage currently gripping the country over rape and gender-based violence is an indictment that the problem is very real. However, life does not stop, and in spite of their utter discomfort, many women have to travel alone, while some need to stay the night, away from the safety of their families.

In such cases, accommodation in expensive hotels is hard to afford for many, and cheap hotels may not also suffice due to inadequate security measures.

Taking these issues into consideration, Bidyanondo Foundation has established "Bashonti Nibash" in March. Inaugurated on Women's Day, this women-only hostel is located in Pallabi, Mirpur, with continuous CCTV surveillance, and other security measures. A night's stay costs Tk 199.

The hostel provides affordable accommodation to women, and includes contemporary requirements like Wi-Fi, air-conditioning, laundry services and a computer zone. It does not allow a prolonged stay, although under special circumstances, it allows guests to stay a maximum of seven days.

For students staying for one night, the same package is offered only at Tk 1 for the first night, and Tk 199 per night from the second night onwards.

"Our volunteers have to travel a lot for work," says Rakhima Khatun, a volunteer of the foundation who manages Bashonti Nibash. "During one such trip, a volunteer and her husband checked into a cheap hotel for the night, where they fell victim to harassment by a few local miscreants."

"The issue was later brought up by the volunteer in a conversation with our founder, who pledged to establish an affordable and safe hostel for women. That's how our journey began," she said.

Rakhima said, "The premises are under CCTV surveillance, and no men are allowed to enter the hostel. Volunteers are present to help the guests settle in. Besides, we have notified the local police station of how we operate, and if needed, we can always seek help from them."

Currently, the hostel can accommodate up to 36 guests. Each guest is provided with their own bunk bed in the form of medium-sized capsules. They also have private shower and bathroom facilities, with a small dining area as well.

"I came to know about the hostel from a friend," said Jyotika Khisa Joyi, a college student visiting from Khagrachhari. "The best part about this place is that girls can stay here alone without fear, and that too for such a low cost," adds Joyi.

Farjana Zabin Dola, visiting the capital from Kushtia for medical purposes, said, "The current situation regarding women's safety in our country is distressing. But with the security facilities at this hostel, parents can feel assured to let their daughters stay here."

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yesterday was the 35th death anniversary of Mahmudun Nabi Tareque, son of Alhaj AKM Nurun Nabi, a retired district registrar, said a press release.



Tareque was the brother of daily Financial Times Editor Anwarul Kabir Shahzada.

He was a meritorious student who used to study at Begumganj Pilot High School in Noakhali, attaining remarkable results.

He died of cardiac arrest at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University in 1985, at the age of 17.

On the occasion, Qurankhwan and doa mahfils will be held today at the mosque adjacent to his Nijpana village house in Chagalnaiya upazila of Feni, and Shah Saheb Bari Mosque in Momenbagh and Gulbagh Mosque in the capital after Asr prayers.

His family members have requested all to attend the events and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Peace prize

FROM PAGE 12

The trust is in fulfilment of the pledge by Bangabandhu for the welfare, treatment and rehabilitation of physically disabled freedom fighters. The government has constituted an eight-member Board of Trustees with the relief and rehabilitation minister as its chairman.

MONI SINGH CALLS ON BANGABANDHU
Moni Singh, chief of Bangladesh Communist Party, calls on Bangabandhu at the Gono Bhaban today.

SOURCES: October 11, 1972 issues of *Bangladesh Observer*, *Dainik Bangla* and *Dainik Ittefaq*.

Deaths from

FROM PAGE 12

In the same 24 hours yesterday, a total of 1,278 new infections were recorded, taking the total number of people infected to 375,870, read the press release.

Against 11,256 tests in 109 Covid-19 testing laboratories yesterday, the positivity rate was 11.35 percent. The overall positivity rate stands at 18.33 percent.

Considering the total number of confirmed cases, Bangladesh is currently on the 16th position in the list of worst affected countries in the world.

The position is one step behind Iraq and one step ahead of Italy, according to worldometers.info.

Meanwhile, 1,596 Covid-19 patients have recovered in the same 24 hours.

With this, the total number of recoveries rose to 289,912 which is more than 77 percent of all confirmed cases.

Among those who died yesterday, nine were males and eight females. All of them died in hospitals, read the release.

One of them aged between 31 and 40 years, eight between 51 and 60, and the rest eight were above 60.

One each of them was from Mymensingh, Rangpur and Chattogram divisions while two were from Khulna and the highest 12 from Dhaka division, the release added.

8 arrested in Ctg over gang-rape

FROM PAGE 1

FROM CHATTogram Medical College Hospital around 4:30am, Bijoy Boshak, deputy commissioner (north) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, said.

The arrestees are Jahangir Alam, 38, Yusuf, 32, Debu Barua alias Jobair Hossain, Shahed, Rintu Dutta Biplob, Ripon, Sujun, and Monwara Begum alias Lebur Ma.

The woman was present at the spot during the incident, said DC Bijoy.

In Khulna, police arrested a man named Asanur Rahman Gazi yesterday afternoon for allegedly raping his 15-year-old niece.

Asanur mixed sleeping pills with soft drink and offered his niece to drink it last Saturday. As the girl fell unconscious, he raped her.

The victim's father filed a case with Paikgachha Police Station yesterday, said Ezaz Shafi, officer-in-charge of the police station.

In Savar, police on Thursday night detained five people for allegedly gang-raping a 23-year-old housewife in Ashulia.

The arrestees are Saiful Islam, 18, Antar, 19, Jotimoy Saha, 20, Pappu Saha, 19, and Milton, 21, said Inspector (Investigation) Ziaul Islam of Ashulia Police Station.

Quoting the victim, a residence of Dhaka's Mirpur, said Ziaul, Saiful

and Antar forcibly took her to an abandoned place in Ashulia and they along with seven other youths raped her on September 23.

After that incident, the victim was gang-raped again by the same people and three other persons after she was forced to meet them.

The victim recently revealed the incidents to her husband who sought help from police on Thursday night.

Inspector Ziaul said they arrested the five persons in separate drives in Rustompur area of Ashulia.

Abdur Rashid, inspector (operations) of Ashulia Police Station, said around 10 persons were involved in the incident.

In another incident, Helal Uddin, 57, a landlord, was arrested on Thursday night allegedly for raping three girls including twins, all aged about nine, on August 6.

The father of the twins, a garment factory worker, filed a case with Ashulia police on Thursday night over the incident, said Inspector Ziaul.

According to the case statement, Helal lured the three girls to his room saying he would buy them bottle of cold-drink on the day of the incident when their parents were away at work.

Also, police arrested a 35-year-old man from Nama Genda area of Savar on Thursday night on charge of raping his daughter on October 6, said Saiful

Islam, inspector (investigation) of Savar Model Police Station.

In Tangail, a 10-year-old girl was allegedly raped by two men at Bhuapur upazila.

Police and the family sources said Ismail Hossain, 40, of the same upazila, called the IV-grader victim at his house on October 5. Later, Ismail and Mostofa raped the girl there.

The girl's father filed a case with Bhuapur Police Station on Thursday afternoon accusing Mostofa and Ismail.

Mostofa, who was arrested yesterday, admitted to rape the girl during primary interrogation, said Rashidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bhuapur Police Station.

In Feni, police yesterday arrested Emon Faruk Badsha, 20, of Chhagalnaiya, for allegedly raping his four-year-old niece on Monday.

The district police also arrested Tomij Uddin Nayon, 50, president of ward-7 unit of Awami League in Motiganj union of Sonagazi, from Bhadadia village in the same upazila for allegedly raping his 14-year-old niece on Thursday night, reported UNB.

Police on Wednesday arrested Kamrul Islam, 40, in Laxmipur's Raipur on suspicion of raping and abducting his niece, a 10th grader from Chandpur's Faridganj, read a separate UNB report.

Without trial, 2 boys in jail

FROM PAGE 12

who is now posted in Sylhet Range Police, said the SIM card was activated just two days before the murder. It was switched off after the incident, he added.

"Analysing the call list, police spotted one of them [the arrestees], who is a worker of GPH Ispat. In the meantime, police also learned that another worker of GPH Ispat named Dilip was missing for a few days from the workplace."

Later on April 25, officials arrested Jibon and Durjoy in the murder case while Kanchan was released after interrogation.

According to police sources, Jibon gave his confessional statement before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Safi Uddin on April 26, describing how he and Durjoy murdered Dilip and burnt the body to destroy evidence.

In the statements, he mentioned that they murdered the man over a brawl for

Tk 50 and consuming marijuana, the sources said.

But on May 2 that year, police found Dilip in a remote area of Manikchhari upazila of Khagrachhari and produced him before the court with a report in this regard.

Jibon's father Suman Chakrabarty, who is also a day labourer, told The Daily Star, "My son is a worker of GPH Ispat factory and he went to the spot with his friends to see the dead body."

"They [police] tortured my son in custody and forced him to make a confessional statement. A police informant Palash Shil framed my son because of his rivalry with my family."

"I am a poor man living hand to mouth. I placed bail prayers two times through a lawyer but failed to have my son released due to the lawyer's noncooperation," he added.

Palash Shil could not be reached for comment as his mobile phone was

found switched off.

Durjoy's mother Shandya Acharjee said her son was innocent but police arrested him near their house when he went outside to have tea.

However, SI Saifullah refuted the allegations and asked, "If we had tortured the accused, why would we rescue Dilip alive through hectic efforts and place him before the court with documents?"

He added that the accused made the confessional statement before remand. "But when we found Dilip alive, we placed remand prayers to know the truth."

Inspector (Investigation) Sanjoy Sinha of Halishahar Police Station, also the current IO of the case, told the Daily Star, "We are trying to confirm the identity of the victim. The DNA samples have been preserved."

"Once the identity is confirmed, the reason behind the grisly murder will be known."

Act firmly to protect victims

FROM PAGE 12

watchdog made the call amid ongoing countryside protests after a video clip, showing a group of men attacking, stripping, and sexually assaulting a woman in Noakhali, went viral.

Though the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission has sought to remove the video from the internet, it continues to circulate widely, the HRW added.

The statement also reminded that the High Court had ordered the law ministry in January to form a commission within 30 days to address the troubling rise in sexual violence in the country, with the aim of producing recommendations by June.

More than nine months after the order, the commission, however, has not produced any recommendations, it said.

In the meantime, the government has yet to pass its long-promised sexual harassment and witness protection laws. Survivors continue to face stigma, and do not have adequate access to psychosocial services when they seek help. The attackers are rarely

held to account and the conviction rate for rape in Bangladesh is below 1 percent, it added.

The Bangladesh government should create the High Court-ordered commission on sexual violence and publicly report its recommendations; provide comprehensive sexuality education in schools, including on the meaning of consent; and provide training to law enforcement and court officials on working with victims of gender-based violence, the statement said.

The government should ensure that adequate and accessible resources for psychosocial support are available and accessible and should heed activists' calls to finally pass a sexual harassment bill, provide witness protection, and reform discriminatory legislation, the statement added.

"The Bangladesh government needs to listen to women," Ganguly said. "The government should ensure that this woman, and all sexual assault survivors, are treated with dignity and have access to services, and that their right to a fair, timely, independent investigation and adequate legal remedy is respected."

Rajapaksa draws

FROM PAGE 12

trade agreement were last held in 2017.

China has been making increasing inroads into South Asia with its Belt and Road Initiative, aimed at financing critical infrastructure in dozens of countries across the world.

In 2017, Sri Lanka signed over control of a Chinese-financed port and land around it to Beijing after incurring heavy losses, to the alarm of the United States and regional power India.

Yesterday, Rajapaksa rejected accusations that China wanted to trap Sri Lanka into mounting debt with the port deal.

"Many geo-political analysis interprets this project as a 'debt trap' set up by China to gain control over Sri Lankan affairs," Rajapaksa told the Chinese delegation, led by Yang Jiechi, one of China's top diplomats. "I want to prove that it is not the case and that this large-scale project will help improve the living standards of the people," he added.

The countries also agreed to deepen ties in the agriculture, education, tourism, water supply and healthcare sectors, according to a summary of the meeting released by Rajapaksa's office.

WHO reports record

FROM PAGE 12

36.5 million cases have been officially diagnosed.

According to a Reuters analysis of more recent country data, infections are rising in 54 countries, including surges in Argentina, Canada and much of Europe.

Infections in the United Kingdom have reached record levels with over 17,000 new cases reported on Thursday.

"We are seeing a definite and sustained increase in cases and admissions to hospital. The trend is clear, and it is very concerning," said Dr Yvonne Doyle, medical director for Public Health England.

France's new daily Covid-19 infections remained above the record 18,000 threshold for the second day on Thursday with new measures to curb the outbreak expected.

The average number of new infections reported in Belgium has been increasing for seven days straight and Germany reported its biggest daily increase in new cases since April on Thursday.

Spain's federal government declared a state of alarm in and around

Madrid to enforce a partial lockdown, overriding both strong opposition from the regional authorities and a ruling by judges had cancelled the restrictions.

Russia registered a record daily number of new infections, surpassing its previous high from May. The 12,126 new infections bring the total number of confirmed cases to 1,272,238 -- the fourth highest in the world.

While India still leads in the globe in most new cases reported per day, new infections are down 20% from its peak.

India's total cases rose by 70,496 in the last 24 hours to 6.91 million yesterday morning, data from the health ministry showed. Deaths from Covid-19 infections rose by 964 to 106,490, the ministry said.

In the United States, which has the largest total number of cases and deaths in the world, new infections are edging higher along with the most hospitalized Covid-19 patients since early September.

The US has passed another Covid-19 milestone, with more than 7.6m cases registered on the Johns Hopkins University tracker.

Another universe existed

FROM PAGE 12

these points are the final expulsion of energy called 'Hawking radiation', transferred by black holes from the older universe.

Black holes are a region of space where matter has collapsed on itself, and has such a high gravitational force that not even light can escape.

Such an event may be occurring in the centre of our galaxy; Reinhard Genzel and Andrea Ghez, who shared the Nobel Prize with Sir Roger, offered the most compelling evidence of a supermassive black hole in the middle of the Milky Way.

There is a possibility that the timescale for the complete evaporation of a black hole could be longer than the age of our current universe, and therefore could not be detected.

"I claim that there is observation of Hawking radiation. The Big Bang was not the beginning. There was something before the Big Bang and

that something is what we will have in our future", Sir Roger said, according to The Telegraph.

"We have a universe that expands and expands, and all mass decays away, and in this crazy theory of mine, that remote future becomes the Big Bang of another aeon.

"So our Big Bang began with something which was the remote future of a previous aeon and there would have been similar black holes evaporating away, via Hawking evaporation, and they would produce these points in the sky, that I call Hawking Points.

"We are seeing them. These points are about eight times the diameter of the Moon and are slightly warmed up regions. There is pretty good evidence for at least six of these points."

However, many have criticised the idea and the existence of the type of radiation from these black holes is yet to be confirmed.

Trump eyes to hit campaign

FROM PAGE 12

Trump said that he might hold another rally the following day in Pennsylvania.

But later yesterday, an administration official said the US president was unlikely to travel this weekend for campaign events.

Earlier in the day Trump's doctor gave him the green light to resume public activities this weekend.

"Saturday will be day 10 since Thursday's diagnosis, and based on the trajectory of advanced diagnostics the team has been conducting, I fully anticipate the president's safe return to public engagement at that time," Conley said in a statement.

Having been held back from campaigning, Trump earlier Thursday raged on Fox Business television, insulting Biden's running mate Kamala Harris as a "monster," branding illegal immigrants "rapists," and urging indictments of Biden and former president Barack Obama.

And in remarks that caught Pelosi's attention, the 74-year-old Trump quipped that he beat Covid because "I am a perfect physical specimen and I'm extremely young."

Pelosi warned that Trump is suffering from a "disassociation from reality (that) would be funny if it weren't so deadly."

Senior House Democrat James Clyburn cautioned on CNN that Trump was exhibiting "very erratic behavior" that has drawn public concern. As they questioned the president's claim to be rapidly recovering from Covid-19 and Pelosi announced her upcoming probe, Trump fired back on Twitter.

"Crazy Nancy is the one who should be under observation," he wrote. "They don't call her Crazy for nothing!"

Trump's rejection of next week's debate because organizers decided to go virtual due to his bout with Covid-19 upended the calendar of debates -- usually a set series of three that candidates arrange well in advance.

After back and forth between Trump and Biden's campaign, it appeared likely that only two debates will take place in total, with the next being October 22 and the one scheduled for Miami on October 15 now scrapped.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Jail Super
Chapainawabganj District Jail

Re-Tender Notice

Memo No. 58.04.7000.131.04.005.20-২৯৯১ Date: 08-10-2020

This is being notified for all concerned that the following tender is invited in National e-GP Portal:

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Name of work	Publishing, closing date & time
01	502171	Supply of Unnotamner Mashur Dal Mota to Chapainawabganj District Jail for the period of October/2020 to September/2021	07-October-2020, 14.15am 19-October-2020, 11.00am

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Zakiul Islam
Additional District Magistrate
and
Jail Super (In Charge)
Chapainawabganj District Jail

GD-1612

GULSHAN HOUSE TO-LET

Entire Eight Storied Building at Road No. 7/8 Gulshan-1 for Residence only. Each floor Single Unit (2600 Sft.) consists of 4 Bed/Bath, Drawing/Dining, Kitchen, 2 Balconies, 2 Verandas, Maid Room/Bath & Parking. Foreigners Preferred. NO BROKERS/AGENCY PLEASE.

Contact: 01911 387178, 01971 541540

brac

Invitation for Tender (IFT) for Disinfectant (For floor cleaning)

Project name	TB Control Programme
Source of Funds	Global Fund
Tender package no.	BPD-TB/04-2020
Reference no. and date	IFT/BRAC/ BPD-TB/20-07 Date: 07 October 2020
Tender name	Procurement of Disinfectant (For floor cleaning)
Time of delivery	As per Tender Documents.
Price of the tender documents	BDT 1,000.00 (Non-refundable).
Tender security	As per tender documents.
Availability of Tender documents	Procurement Department (Ground floor), BRAC Center, 75, Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212. For study purpose please visit procurement.brac.net.
Date & time of Selling Documents	11 October to 25 October 2020 Between 11.00a.m to 3.00p.m
Tender dropping place, date & time	Tender Box-3, BRAC Procurement Department (Ground floor), BRAC Center, 75 Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212. 27 October, 2020 Between 10.00am to 1.30 pm
Tender opening place, date & time	BRAC Staff Canteen (4th Floor), BRAC Center 27 October 2020 at 3.30pm

BRAC procurement Department, BRAC Centre, 75, Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212 Phone: 9881265 Ext 3033

RFP Ref. No.: LRPS-BAN-2020-9161898

Request for Proposal (RFP): To provide Landscaping & Gardening Maintenance Services for UNICEF Bangladesh Country Office (BCO) under Long-Term Agreement (LTA).

UNICEF-Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a strong record and credibility of providing the above required service. To receive the detailed scope of work and procedure to submit the bid response, please email to "supplybangladesh@unicef.org"

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

The deadline to submit proposal is **Tuesday, 03 November 2020; Time: 11:00 Hrs.**

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

www.unicef.org.bd

unicef for every child

Invitation to Bid Ref. No.: LITB-2020- 9162129 Procurement of Tyre and Battery Under Long Term Arrangement (LTA)

UNICEF-Bangladesh invites sealed bids from reputed companies/distributors in Bangladesh to provide offers for procurement of Tyre and Battery to establish Long Term Arrangement (LTA).

LITB can be obtained by sending an email to supplybangladesh@unicef.org. You will receive PDF copy of the LITB by return email. The detail requirements, terms and conditions are outlined in the LITB.

The deadline for submission of the bid is **25 October 2020 by 11:00 am.**

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

www.unicef.org.bd

unicef for every child

ঢাকা কমার্স কলেজ
(য-অর্থায়নে পরিচালিত রাজনীতি ও ধূমপানমুক্ত)

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পদবী	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা	বয়স	বেতন ও ভাতা
অধ্যক্ষ	মাসিক ও স্নাতকোত্তর পর্যায়ে মনুপক্ষে দ্বিতীয় বিভাগ/শ্রেণিসহ স্নাতক পর্যায়ে পাঠদানকারী কোন কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ/ উপাধ্যক্ষ/অধ্যাপক/সহযোগী অধ্যাপক/সহকারী অধ্যাপকগণ উল্লিখিত পদে আবেদন করতে পারবেন। আবেদনকারীর ন্যূনতম ১৫(পনের) বৎসরের জিজী কলেজ পর্যায়ে পাঠদানের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে। আবেদনকারীর অবশ্যই জিজী কলেজের উপাধ্যক্ষ হিসেবে ৩ (তিন) বৎসর অথবা সহকারী অধ্যাপক হিসেবে ৫(পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।	অনধিক ৫৫ (পঞ্চাশ) বৎসর (বিজ্ঞাপন প্রকাশের তারিখে)	বেতনস্কেল: ঢাকা ৭৮,০০০-৮০,৯২০ -১৩,৯৮০-৮৭,১১০ -১৩,৯৮০-৮৭,১১০ -১৩,৯৮০-৮৭,১১০ বেতনক্রমে মূল বেতনের ৫০% বাড়ি ভাতা, মাসিক চিকিৎসা ভাতা ১৫০০/- টাকা এবং কলেজ প্রদত্ত অন্যান্য আর্থিক সুযোগ-সুবিধা।

বি.প্র. (i) শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার কোন স্তরে তৃতীয় বিভাগ/শ্রেণি গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। এম.ফিল./পিএইচডি ডিগ্রীধারী প্রার্থীগণ আবেদন করতে পারবেন।
(ii) কমরত প্রার্থীগণ যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে পারবেন।

প্রার্থীর পূর্ণাঙ্গ জীবন বৃত্তান্ত, মোবাইল নম্বর, শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতার যাবতীয় স্বাক্ষরপত্রের সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি, জাতীয় পরিচয় পত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি, সদ্য তোলা পাসপোর্ট সাইজের সত্যায়িত ২(দুই) কপি ছবিসহ আগামী ১৫/১১/২০২০ তারিখের মধ্যে কলেজ অফিসে পৌঁছাতে হবে। চাকরীরত প্রার্থীদেরকে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে। ■ অনস্পৃশ্য আবেদনকার বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।

ঢাকা কমার্স কলেজ রোড, রাইনখোলা, মিরপুর, ঢাকা-১২১৬

ধূমপানীদের আবেদন করার দরকার নাই

অধ্যক্ষ (ভারপ্রাপ্ত)
ঢাকা কমার্স কলেজ

US ELECTION 2020

23 DAYS TO GO

More than 6.6m Americans have already voted

Americans are rushing to cast ballots ahead of the Nov 3 election at an unprecedented pace, early voting numbers show, indicating a possible record turnout for the showdown between President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden. With less than four weeks to go before Election Day, more than 6.6 million Americans already have voted, more than ten times the number who had at this time in 2016, according to the United States Elections Project, which compiles early voting data. The shift has been driven by an expansion of early and mail-in voting in many states as a safe way to cast a ballot during the coronavirus pandemic. The early surge has led McDonald to predict a record turnout of about 150 million, representing 65% of eligible voters, the highest rate since 1908. Trump has rallied against mail-in voting, making unfounded accusations that it leads to fraud. Experts have said such fraud is rare.

Nearly 58 million watch VP debate

US Vice President Mike Pence's debate with Democrat Kamala Harris attracted 57.9 million TV viewers, the second-highest audience ever for a matchup between vice presidential candidates, according to Nielsen data released on Thursday. The viewership figure for the Wednesday evening faceoff in Salt Lake City included people watching across 18 networks. The tally came in 56% higher than four years ago, when 37 million people tuned in to see Pence debate Democrat Tim Kaine. Vice presidential debates typically draw smaller audiences than presidential clashes. President Donald Trump's Sept. 29 debate with Democratic challenger Joe Biden pulled in 73 million viewers, making it the second-biggest event on US television this year, after the Super Bowl. T

China joins Covax

Vaccine group says 'impossible' becoming 'reality'

REUTERS, Beijing

China yesterday said it has joined a global Covid-19 vaccine initiative co-led by the World Health Organisation (WHO), becoming the 170th country and biggest economy to date to support equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines to rich and poor countries alike.

"This is fantastic news, which gives even more momentum to our efforts to ensure global, equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines," said Dr Seth Berkley, CEO of the GAVI vaccine alliance.

Covax is co-led by the GAVI vaccine alliance, the WHO and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI).

The move means China "will be procuring vaccines through the facility for a proportion of their own population, just as with other countries that have joined", a GAVI spokesman said.

"Vaccine deals are underway and we are fast approaching our initial fundraising target to jumpstart support for lower-income countries," Dr Berkley told Reuters in a statement.

"What seemed like an impossible challenge just a few months ago - ensuring every country, rich or poor, gets equitable, rapid access to Covid-19 vaccines - is now becoming a reality."

The move by China, where the new coronavirus was first reported, comes as it holds separate talks with the WHO to have its locally produced Covid-19 vaccines assessed for international use.

China will purchase Covid-19 vaccines for 1 per cent of its population, or 15 million people, via a global scheme backed by the World Health Organisation, the Foreign Ministry said yesterday.

The first batch of vaccine available under the plan will be in short supply, so there would be less for other countries if China had secured doses for a large number of its 1.4 billion people, ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a news briefing.

China has at least four experimental vaccines in the final stage of clinical trials - two are developed by state-backed China National Biotec Group (CNBG), and the remaining two are from Sinovac Biotech and CanSino Biologics, respectively. It is in talks with the WHO to have its domestically made vaccines assessed for international use.

China joins some 168 countries that have already announced their participation in Covax including 76 wealthy, self-financing ones. But neither the United States nor Russia have joined the programme.

The Covax facility aims to deliver at least 2 billion doses of vaccines by the end of 2021.



Palestinians attend Friday prayers as they react to tear gas fired by Israeli forces during a protest against Jewish settlements, in Beit Dajan near Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

PLOT TO KIDNAP US GOVERNOR, 'INSTIGATE A CIVIL WAR'

Right-wing militias among 13 held

AFP, Washington

Thirteen men, including members of two right-wing militias, have been arrested for plotting to kidnap the Democratic governor of the US state of Michigan and "instigate a civil war", officials said Thursday.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer thanked law enforcement for thwarting the kidnap plot and rebuked President Donald Trump for failing to condemn hate groups.

Announcing the arrests, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel described the conspiracy to kidnap the 49-year-old Whitmer as a "serious and credible threat."

Andrew Birge, US attorney for the western district of Michigan, said six men were facing federal charges for conspiring to kidnap Whitmer from her vacation home. Birge said they had conducted surveillance of her residence and even tested a home-made bomb they intended to use to divert law enforcement away from her home.

Trump has repeatedly attacked Whitmer over

her tough coronavirus lockdown, and armed right-wing groups have staged protests against her in the state capital Lansing.

Whitmer pointed to Trump's refusal at the recent debate with Democrat Joe Biden to condemn white supremacists and "hate groups" like the two Michigan militias that allegedly targeted her.

"Stand back and stand by, he told them," she said. "Hate groups heard the president's words not as a rebuke but as a rallying cry, as a call to action," she added.

Biden also sought to pin some blame on the Republican president. He said that Trump "is giving oxygen to the bigotry and hate we see on the march in our country. We have to stop it."

Attorney general Nessel said that seven members of a militia group called the Wolverine Watchmen were also facing state charges. They are suspected of attempting to identify the home addresses of law enforcement officers in order to target them and "instigate a civil war," Nessel said.



Moscow talks lift Karabakh truce hopes

REUTERS, Baku/Yerevan

Azeri and ethnic Armenian forces fought new clashes in and around Nagorno-Karabakh yesterday, while plans to hold talks in Moscow raised hopes of ending the dead-end battles in the South Caucasus for more than 25 years.

The Armenian and Azeri foreign ministers were expected to attend the Moscow talks later on Friday, a day after France, Russia and the United States launched a concerted drive for peace at a meeting in Geneva.

"We are moving towards a truce soon even if the situation is still fragile," French President Emmanuel Macron's office said after he spoke to the Armenian and Azeri leaders.

The Armenian government said yesterday's talks would focus on a cessation of hostilities and exchanges of bodies and prisoners of war.

Turkey, a close ally of Azerbaijan, said Ankara also wanted a diplomatic solution but that peace moves would succeed only if they ensured a withdrawal of Armenian forces from Nagorno-Karabakh, where fighting broke out on Sept 27. More than 400 people have been killed since then.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump slaps sweeping sanctions on Iran banks

President Donald Trump's administration imposed sweeping sanctions Thursday on Iran's banking sector, taking a major new step to cripple the arch-rival's already struggling economy weeks ahead of US elections. The Treasury Department said it was designating 18 major Iranian banks, a move that could largely cut off the nation of 80 million people from the world's financial system just as it tries to cope with the Middle East's worst Covid-19 outbreak. The United States defied concerns from European allies that the sanctions could cause needless suffering and insisted it was making exemptions for humanitarian trade. US said the Iranian leadership was to blame for devoting funds to the military when it has health needs.

Assam govt to shut down all govet-run madrasas, 'tols'

After dissolving the State Madrasa Education Board in 2018, Indian state Assam's education minister Himanta Biswa Sarma yesterday announced that the state government is going to close down all government-run madrasas in the state. Stating that they can't allow religious education with public money, the minister said that a notification to this effect would be issued next month. In February this year, Sarma had announced that the government has decided to close down not just government-run madrasas but also government-run Sanskrit 'tols'.

Aussie ex-PM registers as foreign agent over UK role

Australia's right-wing former prime minister Tony Abbott registered as an agent of foreign influence yesterday, after controversially taking up a role as a trade advisor to the UK government. Abbott -- who lost his seat in parliament at the last election -- is registered under the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme, which is designed to monitor outside influence over Australian public life. The scheme is similar to the United States' Foreign Agents Registration Act, and was introduced in late 2018 amid concerns about growing Chinese lobbying efforts Down Under.

India test fires new generation anti-radiation missile

India yesterday successfully test-fired the "Rudram" Anti-Radiation Missile, developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), from a Sukhoi-30 fighter aircraft off the east coast today. The missile hit with pin-point accuracy a radiation target located on Wheeler Island off the coast of Bay of Bengal in the eastern state of Odisha, the Indian Defence Ministry said in a statement. This is the first indigenous anti-radiation missile of the country for Indian Air Force (IAF) being developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), it said. With this, India has established indigenous capability to develop long range air launched anti-radiation missiles for neutralizing enemy radars, communication sites and other radio frequency-emitting targets, said the statement.

SOURCE: REUTERS

Padma Oil Company Limited
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)
Strand Road, Sadarghat, Chattogram

Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI)

Consultancy Services for Modernization/Improvement and Retrofitting of Design/Drawing Inc. Supervision of under construction Head Office Building (23-storied with two Basement & one Semi Basement) of Padma Oil Company Limited at Agrabad, Chattogram.

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources/Energy and Mineral Resources Division
2	Agency	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC)
3	Name of procuring entity	Padma Oil Company Limited (POCL)
4	Title of service	Consultancy Services for Modernization/Improvement with Retrofitting of Design/Drawing inc. Supervision of under construction Head Office Building (23-storied with Basement & one Semi Basement) for Padma Oil Company Limited at Agrabad, Chattogram.
5	Procuring entity district	Chattogram
6	Expression of interest for selection of	Consulting Firm Lump-sum
7	EOI Ref. No.	PO/CAPEX/28P/95/20-21
8	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	07/10/2020

KEY INFORMATION
9 Procurement sub-method: Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS).

FUNDING INFORMATION
10 Budget and source of funds: Own fund of Padma Oil Company Limited.

PARTICULAR INFORMATION
12 Project/programme code (if applicable): 4205
13 Project/programme name: Consultancy Services for Modernization/Improvement with Retrofitting of Design/Drawing inc. Supervision of under construction Head Office Building (23-storied with two Basement & one Semi Basement) for Padma Oil Company Limited at Agrabad, Chattogram.
14 EOI closing date & time: 22/10/2020 at 12:30pm.

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT
15 Brief description of the assignment:
Padma Oil Company Limited (POCL), a subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) under the Ministry of Energy & Mineral Resources. It is the largest oil marketing company of Bangladesh. The Head Office of the Padma Oil Company Ltd is situated on Strand Road, Sadarghat, Chattogram. The location of the under construction multi-storied Head Office Building of Padma Oil Company Ltd is at Agrabad, Chattogram which is basically commercial and office area. Almost all government/semi-government/office buildings, bank/financial institutions are situated in this area. As such the location of the proposed multi-storied Head Office Building is very suitable in all respect. The objectives of the project are:
a) To construct a multi-storied office building to accommodate Head Office of POCL including all its divisions to facilitate and organize the office management efficiently.
b) To save extra revenue by setting out premises to the interested parties.
c) To attain right of ownership on the plot of land at Agrabad Commercial Area, Chattogram.
In 2012, a consultant has prepared the architectural, structural, electrical, electro-mechanical, sanitary and plumbing fire fighting system etc. design/drawing of this under construction building for the project. The construction works of foundation, Basement floors and Ground floor are almost completed. Over the years, many improvements/alterations have been made to the Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC). So, it is important to modernize the design/drawing by incorporates with a view and coordinating with the new BNBC code before conducting the superstructure of the building for construction of a modern building situated at the heart of Agrabad CIA, Chattogram. Since the concept of building construction has already been approved to a very modern level, so the design/drawing modification is very important to keep the project in line with the modern concept.
In this context, design/drawing of architectural, structural, electrical, electro-mechanical, sanitary and plumbing, fire fighting system etc. of the building needs to be reviewed/upgrade with modern facilities. In view of above, POCL authority invites EOI through national/online portals in accordance with the Rules & Regulation of PPR-2009 for appointment of consultant for providing consulting services for Modernization/Improvement and Retrofitting of Design/Drawing for Construction of Head Office Building of Padma Oil Company Limited.
The consultant's scope of services shall include, but not limited to, the following:
(a) Assessment of existing structural system and Preparing Design proposals for appropriate adjustment of existing design in order to create efficient space management.
(b) Contextual Survey and Analysis Report.
(c) Remedial Architectural aesthetics in compliance with GoB and international standard.
(d) Assessment of existing structural system and Retrofitting of Structural Design due to remodeling.
(e) Relevant and sustainable design modification of Electrical, Mechanical, Electro-mechanical, Sanitary Plumbing, Fire Fighting system or any in compliance with GoB and international standard.
(f) Preparing BOQ with materials Specification and Tender documents.
(g) Ensuring all technical inputs and cost estimates related to the construction components.
(h) Responsible to ensure that effective implementation, monitoring and supervision tools are developed and implemented.
(i) Responsible to ensure that effective quality assurance systems.
(j) Construction Supervision, Architectural, Electrical, Mechanical, Electro-mechanical, Sanitary and Plumbing, Fire Fighting System works supervision to control quality of development works.
(k) Top supervision at any necessary part of works to ensure quality of development works of the project.
(l) Preparing project interim and completion reports whenever necessary and maintain all the relevant project records.
(m) Visiting/Retracting Design from BUET.
(n) Project Management Support.
The consulting firm will function as the engineering body and requires to report to POCL. The Consultant will administrate all types of engineering works of the project and ensure that the project works are constructed in accordance with the provision of the contracts. The Consultant will be required to nominate an experienced civil engineer who will be full-time resident in the project area.

16. Experience, resources & delivery capacity required:
The Consultant shall be short-listed on the basis of the following criteria:
Nature of Business: Construction consultancy firms
Year of experience: The Interested Consulting Firm should have at least 15 (fifteen) years of general experience in the relevant field with specialized experience in the field of High Rise Commercial Building Design & Construction Supervision works.
Specific/similar experience: The Interested Consultant should have satisfactorily completed similar assignment during the last 10 (ten) years ending last day of the month in which the EOI has been invited as under:
(a) Three similar assignment each pertaining to Design & Supervision of minimum 12-storied Building with minimum 1 Basement.
(b) Experiences in Modern Office Building design & supervision.
(c) Experiences in Sustainable Building (LEED Certified) design & supervision.
(d) Experience in designing at least 10000sqm area in a single building structure.
Under government/semi-government/ private/bank/ insurance/corporate office/NGO.
Minimum documentary evidences: (a) Background of the firm(s) with general & overall experience including company brochure.
(b) Summary of experience of the firm(s) in similar nature of works completed during the last 10 years and currently in progress with total cost of such project, date of start & completion.
(c) The firms having expertise of similar (03) Nos. of contracts each of project cost of Taka 50 crore over a period of last 10 years shall be required.
(d) Availability of appropriate skills staff (list of relevant professional staff, their qualification & experience to be furnished).
(e) Applicant (lead firm in case of the consortium) shall have minimum annual average turnover of BDT 3 (three) crore as per committed financial result of at least 03 (three) of the last 05 (five) financial years from the date of the submission of EOI offer.
(f) Company incorporation certificate, up-to-date trade licence, Vat registration, Income tax certificate, bank solvency certificate, last 5 (five) years annual turnover supported with audit report of the company.
Special instruction: The firms who have records of litigation and delaying the works are strongly discouraged to apply for the Expressions of Interest.

17. Other details (if applicable):
Duration of assignment: Duration of the contract + project liability period (according to govt. rules)
Submission of EOI should be done in bearing the name and address of the applicant, EOI No. & date and be addressed to the POCL, Construction of Head Office Building in 02 (two) copies/01 (one) marked as ORIGINAL, & other as COPY in sufficient envelope in the form of book binding both the ORIGINAL & COPY shall have to be covered within a single envelope & submitted the same at Head Office, Strand Road, Sadarghat, Chattogram by 12:30pm on/before 22/10/2020.
18. Association with foreign firms is: Encouraged.

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS
19 Name of official inviting EOI: Numon Ahmed Taffader
20 Designation of official inviting EOI: Project Director, Construction of Head Office Building of Padma Oil Company Limited.
21 Address of official inviting EOI: Strand Road, Sadarghat, Chattogram, Bangladesh.
22 Contact details of official inviting EOI: Phone: 031-610630, Fax: 031-612666, 031-618312, Email: numonpo@bpc.com Cell: 0177703317, 02-55012266.
23 The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs without showing any reason whatsoever.

Numon Ahmed Taffader
Project Director, Const. of
Head Office Building
Telephone: +88 031 610630

Whose body?

Indian court says sex work is a woman's choice

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION

A police sting that busted a prostitution ring and triggered a back-and-forth in the courts has revealed a conflict in Indian law over a woman's right to sell sex and a state's right to stop her.

It all comes down to female choice, according to a landmark legal ruling last month that hands a rare victory to prostitutes in a land which affords women scant sexual freedom.

"You cannot rehabilitate anyone against their will. There has to be consent," the women's lawyer Siddharth Jaiswal told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The case began last year when a Mumbai court prevented three sex workers from leaving the protective home they were forcibly moved to after police rescued them from prostitution. Despite their opposition, the court said they should be counselled against sex work, learn new skills and find fresh jobs. It said the trio needed state "care and protection".

That order was overturned last month by the Bombay High Court, which upheld the women's right "to choose their own vocation", a judgment campaigners say should help other adult sex workers break free from enforced protection.

"The consent of the victim is never taken before they are taken into shelters. The victim themselves are not aware of their rights," said Jaiswal.

The case is key as India's Immoral Traffic Prevention Act - applied in brothel raids and sex worker rescues - fails to distinguish between victims of trafficking and women doing sex work out of choice, lawyers and campaigners said. Adult sex workers rounded up by police are housed in shelters for 21 days for verification and medical tests, among other formalities, according to the law. After the 21 days, courts can impose a further detention of up to three years, based on a woman's family background and the circumstances that led them into prostitution.

"The belief is that no woman can take sex work by choice, that they are all trafficked... they infantile adult women," said Smarajit Jana, founder of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, a collective of 65,000 sex workers in Kolkata.

"But (the high court) did not confuse morality with livelihood... it distinguished between trafficking and sex work," said Jana.

'IMMORAL' CONTENT Pakistan to block TikTok

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan has decided to block social media App TikTok for failing to filter out "immoral" content, three top government officials said yesterday.

A formal announcement to this effect will be made in a few hours, they said.

"We have been asking them repeatedly to put in place an effective mechanism for blocking immoral and indecent content," one of the top officials directly involved in the decision told Reuters.

"The platform, however, hasn't been able to fully satisfy Pakistani authorities," he said.

Kyrgyzstan in state of emergency

REUTERS, Bishkek



Kyrgyz President Sooronbai Jeenbekov declared a state of emergency in the capital Bishkek yesterday and ordered troops to deploy, as supporters of rival political groups took to the streets after days of unrest following an overturned election.

Jeenbekov's office said in a statement the state of emergency, which includes a curfew and tight security restrictions, would continue until 8:00 am on Oct. 21. Earlier the president had said he was ready to resign once a new cabinet was appointed.

The country has seen a power vacuum, with opposition groups quarrelling among themselves since seizing government buildings and forcing the cancellation of results from Sunday's parliamentary election.

Russia has described the situation in Kyrgyzstan, which borders China and hosts a Russian military base, as "a mess and chaos".

The crisis tests the Kremlin's power to shape politics in its former Soviet sphere of influence, at a time when fighting has erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and Belarus is also engulfed in protests.

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SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Babita reigned as one of the most celebrated actors of the Bangladeshi film industry, during which she has starred in more than 250 films. In her 50-year illustrious career, she gained immense popularity at home and abroad. The seven-time National Film Award winner worked with several legendary filmmakers, including Zahir Raihan and Satyajit Ray.

The acclaimed film, *Golapi Ekhon Train E*, directed by Amjad Hossain, was a major turning point in Babita's career. "This film was a milestone in my career as well as



Babita with Farooque

in the Bangladeshi film industry," shares Babita. "It travelled to several film festivals abroad, including the Moscow Film Festival."

Another Amjad Hossain directorial, *Noyonmoni*, starring Babita and Farooque, is considered one of the most successful movies of all time. "This film was screened for six months to one year at several theatres," she adds.

Ashani Sanket, directed by Satyajit Ray, marked another milestone in Babita's career and made her an international star. "I am still praised for my role in this film," she shares. Accompanying Ray in multiple festivals, Babita was startled to see her work reach all corners of the world at the time.

Babita also talked about her roles in the films, *Bashundhara* and *Dumurer Ful*, directed by the famous filmmaker Subhash Dutta. "These were two unique stories and they left a profound impact on my career," she says.

Renowned director Narayan Ghosh Mita helmed several successful films,

including *Lathial*, which gained Babita immense acclaim.

She further represented Bangladesh at the prestigious Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in The Czech Republic with the film, *Dohon*, directed by Sheikh Niamat Ali.

Her phenomenal performances in the films, *Obujh Hridoy* and *Smarolipi*, captivated the audience and critics.

Lailee Majnu, directed by Ibne Mizan, was one of Babita's most definitive movies. "This film truly struck a chord with the audience," shares a nostalgic Babita.

Babita further recalled that after the film *Nishan*, directed by Ibne Mizan, gained immense popularity, its posters were showcased as rickshaw art at different locations.

She received multiple accolades for her role in the film, *Ramer Sumoti*, as well. Her performances in several Liberation-War based films, such as *Orunodoyer Ognishakkhi*, directed by Subhash Dutta, *Alor Michil*, directed by Narayan Ghosh Mita and *Abar Torā Manush Ho*, directed by Khan Ataur Rahman, truly captured the essence of our fight for independence.

"Not many live to look back on a 50-year career. I consider myself lucky for this privilege," says the star. "Throughout these beautiful years, the audience's love has been my biggest achievement."



In Satyajit Ray's 'Ashani Sanket'.



Babita in Narayan Ghosh Mita's 'Lathial'.



A young Babita poses for a photo.

Babita aced all kinds of characters that she portrayed — be it in the genre of romance, war, social satire, or folk, winning the hearts of millions.

Translated by Rasheek Tabassum Mondira



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL



At the launching ceremony of the song, 'Pujor Dine Pujor Ronge'

Durga Puja with Bishworang

SHARMIN JOYA

Every year, keeping the Durga Puja celebrations in mind, Bishworang, one of the most popular fashion houses in Bangladesh, arranges grand events and launches their latest range of clothes.

"Puja is one of the biggest and busiest festivals for us, much like Eid," says Biplob Saha, the owner of Bishworang. "This festival brings people of all races and religions together, in joyous ways."

Focusing on the details, Biplob Saha makes special designs and outfits for the occasion. "Since it is an autumn festival, we use white as an essential colour in our clothing, keeping the white clouds and the *kashful* of this season in mind," he says. He also uses bright colours, symbols and *alpona* in his designs, to depict



Sadia Islam Mou and Biplob Saha at the launching ceremony of the song, 'Pujor Dine Pujor Ronge'.

the essence of the festivities.

This year, due to the pandemic, things will take a different turn. "Our events will be online-based. We are arranging the fifth installment of one of our signature shows, *Sharod Shaje Bishworang er Didi*," adds Biplob



(L) From left) Nilanjona Neela, Sadia Islam Mou, Masuma Rahman Nabila and Sarika Sabah in the Puja attires for Bishworang. (R) Badhon, Nirab and Asif in the Puja attires for Bishworang.



Saha, who is also a talented singer. "The aim of this show is to showcase women's confidence." Bishworang's team already received plenty of applications for the event. The winner will get the opportunity of modelling for the fashion house.

Biplob Saha has always pleasantly surprised people with his innovative ventures. He recently arranged a street t-shirt festival, with numerous models. "T-shirts are the most casual outfits we wear," says the entrepreneur. "We tried to make our t-shirts very comfortable, so that their simplicity attracts pedestrians."

Furthermore, Biplob Saha believes that fashion is not limited to clothes only. "Fashion is in everything that we live with," he adds. He also arranged an online singing competition exclusively for the Puja season. Eminent singer Haimanti Sukla and celebrated singers Samarjit Roy and Priyanka

Gope will be judging the contestants in the contest, along with Biplob Saha.

"We have already selected the top 12 semifinalists among 5,000 participants," he shares. "We received recordings from the participants online. We are overwhelmed with the positive response. The winner will get the opportunity to record an exclusive song with us and the runners up will be rewarded with gift vouchers from Bishworang."

Biplob Saha recently wrote and lent his voice to the Puja special song, *Pujor Dine Pujor Ronge*, presented by Bishworang and produced by Kolpolook Creative Factory. Ujjal Sinha composed and arranged the music for the song. Biplob Saha also directed the music video, which is available on his official Facebook and YouTube pages. "The song depicts the *Puja Bari*, the *Pujamandap* and the celebrations with our friends and family," concludes Biplob Saha.

A man as iconic as his music

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

"We came here with approximately \$50 and a piano, and we didn't speak the language. Now look where we are. If that's not the American dream, what is?" — Eddie Van Halen, 2015

For better or for worse, much of the 'rockstar attitude' that we see in today's bands come from the iconic Eddie Van Halen — a man who stole the spotlight from rock's ostentatious gatekeepers for the majority of 5 decades. The artist passed away on October 6, after a long battle with lung cancer.

Inspired by Eric Clapton, Eddie started perfecting his chops as a guitarist in his early teens. "I loved Eric Clapton but sound nothing like him," said the musician in an interview with CNN.

With his brother Alex, the musician would form the iconic Van Halen, producing hits like *Jamie's Crying*, *Beautiful Girls*, *Unchained*, *Mean Street* and *So this is Love*. However, the band's groundbreaking success came with the chart-topping *Jump*, made with an uncharacteristic pop-sounding synthesizer as the riff. There was no party in 1984 that did not play and dance along to *Jump*.

Eddie's roaring riffs and solos would make their way into many pop hits such as Michael Jackson's *Thriller* and Nicolette Larson's *Can't Get Away From You*. Throughout four turbulent decades of platinum albums, chalk-full stadium gigs, Eddie played and partied like no other.

The artist's signature guitar, the

Frankenstrat, is as iconic as the songs that Van Halen created — in fiery performances all over the world to recording sessions — it was his trusted friend. The two-handed tapping technique, even though Van Halen did not invent it by any means, is regarded widely as being perfected by him.

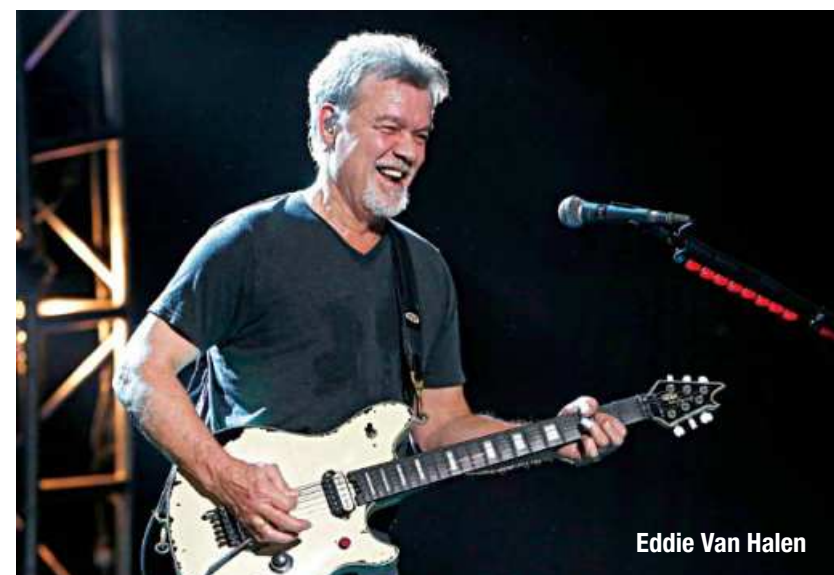
"I think I got the idea of tapping watching Jimmy Page do his 'Heartbreaker' solo back in 1971. He was doing a pull-off to an open string, and I thought wait a minute, open string... pull off. I can do that, but what if I use my finger as the nut and move it around? I just kind of took



Eddie Van Halen with his iconic 'Frankenstrat'.

it and ran with it", he had said in an interview with Guitar World.

Eddie's death was a shock to the world, more so the musical community that he bedazzled over the years, and the fans who grew up listening to him. It is a loss for every music lover who never got the chance to see the guitar god rock his Frankenstrat.



Eddie Van Halen



Politicians and bandwagon-jumping superstore, 'celebrities' declare verbal war only against rape

FRUSTRATED CORRESPONDENT

The country's top leaders, a superstore that can turn everything into a PR opportunity and people who think they are celebrities all came out strongly against the growing incidents of rape. "Rape is a crime and it must be taken seriously," one of the top leaders said. "I really don't like rape," another politician said. One leader took it as far as blaming the opposition party of being a "party of rape", showing just how little they care about the actual matter in hand.

Meanwhile, a superstore, which likes to become a part of any viral video -- be they of rickshaw-pullers or someone having a hard time in life -- also tried to become part of the anti-rape campaign by offering cash rewards to rape survivors. No survivor, however, came forward to get the rewards. YouTube celebrities also passionately spoke out against rape. Some of these were the same celebrities who had to back-track on their earlier show of support for disenfranchised groups over issues with their sponsors.

In the tri-state area, a protest also broke out against rape, with participants calling for more policing and more surveillance, turning the entire matter into what it really was about: making it harder for those from more economically-disadvantaged backgrounds to access the tri-state area. The police also cracked down hard on rapists, which should have been their job all along. Law enforcers made a big show of making quick arrests. Of course, it must be pointed out that for the most talked about rape in the tri-state, the

culprit was not only granted bail, but had also left the country. That was another show of how the law differs for people depending on their income. Calls for capital punishment for rapes have also become more prominent, with many wondering what giving this state such retributive powers would result in. In the end, the discussion has finally gained steam in the country and it is hoped that this time those in power will have more than buzz words and talking points to offer.

Police hire student consultants to help them with tactics not covered in training

E GAZA

Our headlines say so much that we have to train our reporters in grammar and sentence reconstruction to help them fill the blank space. In the same way, police have recently hired politics loving students of Juggernaut University to help them fill up blank skills not covered by official training.

Shahed Harun, majoring in Economics since 2003, has been mentoring the police in shooting firearms. That's right. Shooting goddamn firearms is an important counter terrorism tactic that the taxpayer should be charged with. This technic helps anti-terrorist personnel find the correct vein to follow up on criminal activities. When we say vein, we mean the ones carrying blood and drugs.

Shahed Harun, who has many accolades to his name aside from having two first names, is also MD of RogueAgent Hospital. He uses his extensive medical skill from patching up and stabbing people to help police literally find veins of criminals. Or at least, people who have the potential to become criminals. These criminals are then charged with possession of drugs and finally they confess to other crimes. Harun assures a 110 percent success rate in getting confessions this way keeping unsolved crime rates low.

The police force is very excited at this new collaboration with university students. Josef, a political science major said, "When push comes to shove, we are there to help our friends in uniform." A photo surfaced a few weeks ago showing Josef very much pushing and shoving people who refused to move during a silent peaceful protest. "Without Josef, we could not have dispersed the crowd



PHOTO: JACOB MORCH

just sitting there, occupying public space in the name of saving street dogs," said Constable Abdur Rahman. "Josef even showed us how to un-jam our firearms which we never use because actual

criminals have much more powerful weapons than us." From firearms to firearms, Juggernaut University students are helping maintain order whether you want it or not.

READERS CAN WRITE TOO!

The driver who became a legend

PRANTA DATTA

MD Rasel, a fresh graduate, was caught selling his newly bought BCS MP3 books in the capital's Nilkhet Market. Backing his deed, Rasel said, "I bought these books a month ago to prepare for the BCS exam. But, Driver Abul Khalek vai opened my eyes. His achievements inspired me to learn driving and earn more money than a BCS Cadre."

Sujan Sen, a BCS aspirant, spoke about his frustration as Abul Khalek's name was not in the recently published TIME 100 influential people list. "He deserved a place there since he proved that no job is insignificant and you can shine in life from any profession" he added.

A veteran film director, Rowshan Faruki, is pondering to make a world class biopic on Driver Malek. "Unlike Martin Scorsese's 'Taxi Driver', my film 'DG's Driver' will not only be a thriller but also motivate people to grab every opportunity in life. Maybe, it will be the first film for Bangladesh to win Oscar," he opined.

Ted Talk is going to host Driver Khalek next week in a seminar named "Don't work hard, work smart". Netizens have expressed their pride in having such an icon in the country. Supriya Sarkar, an undergraduate, posted in her twitter account, "I am vry proud 2 be a Bangladeshi. Bcz only in Bangladesh,

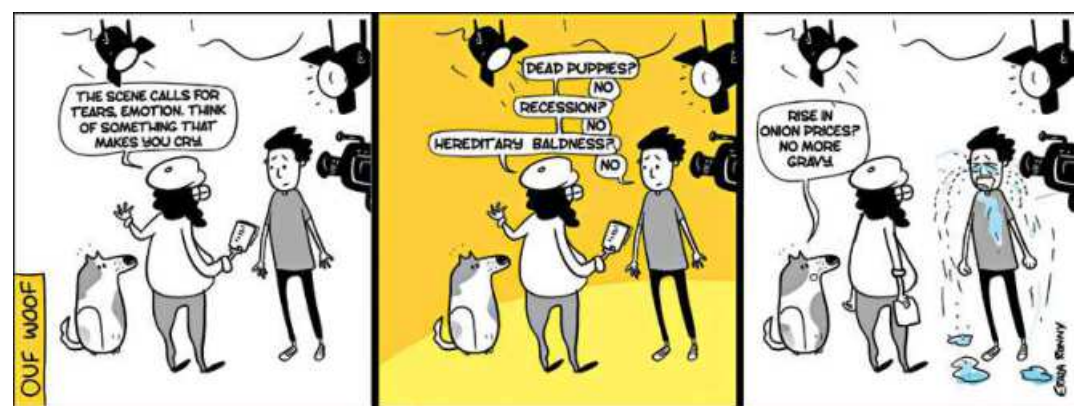


talent like Driver Abul Khalek vai can grow and make his own fortune. D world shld take lesson frm us."

In truth, Abul Khalek's reputation continues to grow, with a biography set to be published. The book will be written by a motivational speaker turned author, because no one else has the time.

Pranta Datta is a third-year student of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.

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HSC results without exams: The pros and cons

We want higher convictions in rape cases

But is death penalty the answer?

IN the wake of protests over the ever-escalating number of rape incidents in the country, the government has decided to amend the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000, to make death sentence the highest punishment for committing rape. While we appreciate that the government wants to show zero tolerance towards rapists, we are worried that such a move, taken without due critical consideration of the implications, may actually deter suspected criminals from being convicted. The impunity enjoyed by rapists in this country is not due to the fact that Bangladesh does not have a high punishment for rape—currently the highest punishment afforded is life imprisonment—but that rapists are convicted in only three percent of the cases.

Researchers have, in fact, argued that there is an inverse relationship between the severity of punishment and conviction rates—the higher the punishment, the lower the conviction rate, as judges are less willing to pass down harsh verdicts, particularly in rape cases, where it is difficult, in the absence of a witness, to prove without a benefit of the doubt that the survivor was raped.

Additionally, archaic rape and evidence laws puts the survivor, rather than the perpetrator, on trial. It is these outdated laws which need to be reformed in line with human rights standards on an urgent basis to ensure protection to victims and survivors of sexual violence.

The Reform Law Reform Coalition, comprising 17 women's and human rights organisations, have identified existing gaps in the legal and institutional framework that prevent justice for rape victims/survivors, and laid down 10 proposals for reform. These are: Reform rape laws in line with human rights standards; broaden the definition of rape to make it non-discriminatory; define penetration to cover all forms of rape; allow proportionality of punishment and introduce sentencing guidelines; ensure justice process is accessible to rape survivors with disabilities; prohibit use of character evidence against rape survivors; enact Witness Protection Law; establish a state compensation fund for rape survivors; hold gender-sensitisation training for justice sector actors; and introduce consent classes in schools.

We strongly believe that these are the reforms that the government, as well as the protestors, need to focus on. Instituting the death penalty, without addressing any of the root causes of the problem or the gaps in the existing legal framework, will only make it that much more dangerous and difficult for women to pursue and prove cases in court.

We simply cannot afford to be so short-sighted in our demands for justice. If the government wants to show zero tolerance towards rapists, it can do so by ensuring that its administration and law enforcement does not, ever again, provide protection to rapists, and that any allegations of rape in any political party is met with the strictest of measures.

The UN is concerned by the rise in sexual violence

Bangladesh must put a stop to it now

AS protests against rape and other forms of sexual violence rage across the country in response to the recent horrific incidents, including the gang rape of a woman in Noakhali, the UN has also called for justice for the increasing trend of violence against women and children in Bangladesh. The UN Resident Coordinator has highlighted the "social, behavioural and structural misogyny" that has been manifested through the Noakhali incident.

Sexual violence has reached unprecedented levels recently, and time and again, the factors behind it have been identified as the impunity enjoyed by sexual predators. In this backdrop of extreme insecurity that women face, it is difficult to envisage any real development in the country. If we are to realise our goal of greater participation of women in public spheres, women and children have to be safe in both public and private spaces. The UN has strongly recommended urgent reform in the criminal justice system to support and protect victims and witnesses and to speed up the slow trial process. Such recommendations should be heeded if the government is serious about addressing this terrible curse that has afflicted our communities. The government, with the help of non-governmental organisations, rights bodies and the public in general, must make concerted efforts to arrest rapists and mete out punishment regardless of their affiliations to political circles.

That the UN has expressed its concern also indicates that the spate of sexual violence has caught the attention of the international community. Surely, this is not the image of our nation that we wish to be projected to the world. The government has a moral and constitutional obligation to protect all citizens, especially vulnerable groups, which unfortunately include women. It is also in its own interest to project a better image of the country on the international stage.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Women paving the way

At a time when the nation is enraged over the recent atrocities faced by women, we are proud of Nazma Begum—the Bangladesh Army's first woman brigadier general. This is not the first time she has proven herself in a highly male-dominated profession. She was also the first female field ambulance commander in the Bangladesh army, the first female assistant director of medical services, and the only female in world history to have commanded a level-2 hospital twice. She is a powerful symbol of women empowerment for a society that is yet to break free from the shackles of patriarchy. It gives me tremendous pleasure to know that she has represented our country with dignity and determination.

Ananya Banerjee, Chattogram



SHAMSAD MORTUZA

BLOWN' IN THE WIND
YOU have near perfect vision, or 20/20 vision, if you can see the letters of an eye-chart from a 20 feet distance. 20/20 is an exciting cricket game if you can add two ounces of cricket with one ounce of baseball and garnish it with pom-poms. The year 2020, however, has been less than perfect or exciting. Thanks to Covid-19, it may very well be a year that we want to forget. Then again, it will be remembered as the year in which 100 percent of our students passed their Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) exams.

A record total of 1.37 million students will get their grades calculated based on the primary and secondary level public examinations: JSC and SSC. This is a momentous decision which is far from perfect, yet given the circumstances, this will go into history as one of the "abnormal" compromises that was "normalised" by the pandemic-infested 2020.

The Education Minister and his Deputy cited examples of other countries in support of their decision of not holding HSC examinations this year. Almost all countries of the world have either cancelled, postponed or modified their high-stakes examinations. The HSC is by definition a high-stakes examinations. It certifies students with the credentials to move from one level of education to the next (or workforce). While the decision to cancel the examinations six months after its scheduled start will somewhat unburden the parents and students from their current worries, it will trigger new ones. Before getting into the consequences, let me ponder on the decision making process.

UNESCO published a report in April indicating how 188 countries opted to close their academic institutions, affecting the learning of 91.3 percent of total enrolled students, numbered at a whopping 1.58 billion. Our academic institutions adopted a similar measure to secure the health safety of our students. In course of time, private institutions tried to adopt and adapt by espousing technology and switching to online teaching and learning; the public system faltered. The fear over fair assessment and the accessibility to technology are the main culprits for such a hindrance.

The same fear dictated the terms of holding the national-level public examinations. For a country where infrastructure is still at its infancy, holding

on-site exams while maintaining utmost health safety rules was a no-brainer. Spreading the seating arrangement would have meant doubling the number of examination centers, and that too would not have necessarily stopped the parents crowding to the centres or examinees traveling in the public system. Even one casualty in the process would be too many. Ensuring technological accessibility to all candidates for online testing and training all teachers to administer a new form of tests would have required adequate training programmes and

Commerce or Humanities in her HSC. Although the government has assured that they will come up with compatibility formula for these students with changed disciplines, the giant exam machinery is unlikely to be case-sensitive. The hard work of many who were determined to excel will not be rewarded. Conversely, many students who not deserve to pass will get a free pass to move to the next level. The wholesale pass will further attach social stigma to these students for no fault of their own.

The real challenge, however, will be



This year will not see such celebrations from students after the publication of HSC results.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

orientations, which we do not have.

The other option could have been assigning grades based on school records (predicted grades of test/pre-test results). In the absence of a monitored continuous assessment, relying on the grades predicted or assigned by teachers would have been risky (given our track-record of nepotism and corruption). The government must have got their cue from the A-level/GCSE fiasco in the UK where a faulty algorithm created inequities in results: the prediction process in the UK has favoured the affluent schools, and the universities in turn are struggling to deal with the grade inflations. Calibrating results based on previous public examinations therefore seem to be an acceptable, if not an ideal, choice.

It will, however, put students with an upward curve in a disadvantageous position. There are many late-bloomers who do better after coming to the higher secondary levels or universities. Their school performance is hardly any indicator of their true potential. There are also the students who change disciplines because of their weakness in certain subjects. A science student who has done poorly in Maths in SSC may switch to

to accommodate these students at the tertiary level. It will be interesting to see how universities decide to give weightage to the aggregated marks. I am sure top institutions will make their admission tests difficult to ensure quality; whereas, the mushrooming private university sector will be thirsting for the student inflow. Those planning to go abroad will not face any new hindrance as most of the overseas universities have their own selection mechanism that requires sitting for aptitude and language proficiency tests in addition to personal statements.

The delay in the decision of cancelling the examinations begs some serious questions. It seems the government waited for long, thinking (even voicing out publicly) that the academic year in universities will begin in June. Since HSC candidates have already missed the 2020 session, they might as well as wait for the next term when the academic year of the public universities would begin in June. They did not consider the fact that many of these students would join the private system or try to go abroad.

According to a 2016 UGC report, the 34 public universities in Bangladesh provided spaces to 264,084 students.

As humanitarian crises escalate, so does child marriage

It's time we reversed this trend

BJORN ANDERSSON and JEAN GOUGH

MONA'S village was located in the far west of Nepal when the devastating 2015 earthquake struck. The tremor damaged her house but more significantly, her father did not return home from his work in India. Her family was left to fend for themselves within their remote and poor Dalit ethnic community. Then, in a further upheaval, Mona received a marriage proposal. She was just 16.

In another trauma-stricken community in South Asia, Rohingya refugee Asmot Ara was barely 14 when she gave birth to her first child. Forced to flee her village amid violence in Myanmar, Asmot travelled alone for days until she arrived at Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. Now she lives in a makeshift settlement with her husband whom she agreed to marry soon after arriving in the camp when his family promised to take care of her.

Mona and Asmot's stories speak to an observed escalation in child marriage amid humanitarian disasters in several countries across Asia and the Pacific, including South Asia, where one in every three women aged 20-24 is married before the age of 18. Their plight shines a spotlight on restrictive social expectations and barriers that millions of girls face as they become adolescents.

Unfortunately, propelled by the perils of climate change and tensions of an increasingly globalised yet divided world, the frequency and force of disasters like these—one natural, the other man-made—will continue picking up speed. And the far-reaching tentacles of Covid-19—a global pandemic—is further exacerbating and reinforcing such practices.

Beyond their immediate havoc, the fallout from humanitarian crises is treacherous to girls' and women's rights. Besides child marriage, emergencies fuel other harmful practices such as gender-biased sex selection and gender-based violence. All of these share a common thread: the culturally sanctioned and ill-informed social and patriarchal notion

that girls and women hold less value than boys and men.

The current global health and humanitarian crisis of Covid-19 is proving no different. As forecast by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the pandemic has disrupted efforts to end child marriage and could potentially result in an additional 13 million such unions taking place globally between 2020 and 2030 that could otherwise have been averted.

Lockdowns, school closures and economic downturns linked to Covid-19 are disproportionately affecting girls, with reduced access to sexual and reproductive health services, and rising incidence of harmful practices.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that the Covid-19 crisis has plunged an additional 150 million children into poverty globally, whilst a third of the world's school children remain out of school. Both poverty and access to education, coupled with harmful social norms, are key drivers of child marriage. Not surprisingly, emerging anecdotal evidence indicates child marriages are occurring more frequently. And, we can be sure that for every report of violations to girls' rights through harmful practices, far more incidents hide in the shadows, unreported.

Now, Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings in South Asia, a new report commissioned by UNFPA and UNICEF, confirms earlier indications that humanitarian crises do in fact result in child marriage spikes. Reported cases are only the tip of the iceberg, as referral and support systems are weakened. The report's launch aligns with this year's International Day of the Girl which demonstrates global solidarity towards upholding girls' rights and amplifying their voices.

For many impoverished families with young girls, child marriage may seem the only viable solution to the socio-economic problems compounded by emergencies. But this option represents negative coping strategies. Indeed, the



PHOTO: UNFPA

underlying drivers of child marriage persist and even intensify all the more in disasters.

The report finds that in times of crisis, communities already disposed to this human rights violation are particularly vulnerable to the practice. Behind the guise of keeping girls safe and preserving family honour, is one of the most entrenched and corrosive norms of all: gender discrimination, fuelled by patriarchy and the chauvinistic desire to control adolescent girls' sexuality and reproduction.

However, countries can, and should, seize opportunities to mitigate the situation and safeguard the gains made towards stamping out harmful practices made in recent years.

The report recommends that governments must strengthen laws, policies and programmes all the more and be diligent in monitoring their impact, including in the context of humanitarian response. However, as policy and legal frameworks are strengthened, attention

Colleges under the National University and the Open University offered spaces to another 2,300,053 students, with technical institutes adding another 89,723. In the same year, private universities accommodated 337,157 students. A government should have a 20/20 vision and be mindful of all its stakeholders—not just public ones.

The figures suggest another Achilles Heel of our education system. Even if all institutions admit their full quota, five lakh students will not have a seat in the tertiary system. There should be an immediate strategy to address the issue before the publication of the results. If the country wants to pivot on the demographic dividends, it must have a clear vision to transform this youth force into a workforce. There should be an inventory on the role of higher education. At the same time, there should be alternative measures to give voluntary, entrepreneurial and life skills to these students who would not find a slot in the tertiary system.

The students who have waited almost a year (and continue to wait) must be mentally distraught by now. The admission worry will add to their mental condition. Again, a clear policy on the psychological well-being of these students are required. The government must incentivise the educational institutions to come up with the necessary student support services. Dealing with this new batch will require sensitivity and empathy. The large scale stigma of 100 percent pass will do them a serious disservice. Media can play a positive role in this regard.

The session lag in the public universities has demonstrated its inability to adjust to the new normal. The indecision, caused by a mixture of indifference and ineptitude, dented the public universities from moving to online teaching. It is imperative that the public system ups its game to tackle the situation.

The private universities, on the other hand, will be self-motivated to attract these students with services lacking in the public system. Many of these universities have been suffering from a serious shortage of students as there has not been any new student in the system for the last three terms. If the government further delays publishing the results, many smaller universities will simply perish. Already many universities have gone for lay-offs, halved their staff salary and curtailed benefits.

The stakes are high. And there is not a single moment to tarry.

Shamsad Mortuza is a professor of English at the University of Dhaka (now on leave). Currently, he is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of ULAB. Email: shamsad71@hotmail.com

also needs to be paid to the possibility that child marriage may go further "underground", as social and legal sanctions against the practice may prevent reporting or access to support services.

Efforts to bolster girls' and women's economic and physical security—grounded in gender equality and human rights—should be prioritised, including in disaster response. Support for girls who are married, for example, to remain in school, are critical to both their own long-term wellbeing and eventually that of their children. And, not least, comparative data on child marriage across a range of settings can help organisations and district officials understand its true scale and trend. Governments and civil society should work together to fill this dire gap.

Ultimately, our report indicates that out of crisis may come opportunity. Humanitarian settings could open doors which can be leveraged to enable action against child marriage, with girls empowered to be change agents within their own communities.

In Nepal, for example, more adolescents found their voice to resist marriage after the 2015 earthquakes, when government, UN partners and non-governmental organisations' relief efforts made education and other services more attainable in affected communities. Gender-responsive social protection measures were introduced to increase resources within households and support linkages to referral networks.

In fact, unlike her two sisters, Mona successfully refused the marriage proposal she received after the earthquake destroyed her village. "In my village, most of the girls get married young," Mona explains. "But I won't do that. I have a dream to be the first Dalit teacher of our village."

We know what works to end child marriage. For International Day of the Girl tomorrow, let's pledge to stay the course.

Bjorn Andersson is the UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Director and Jean Gough is the UNICEF South Asia Regional Director.

Our quest for national identity

ALI AHMED ZIAUDDIN

MID April, 1971. A lanky young boy sneaked out of his family home in old Dhaka into the hitherto unknown world of warfare. A mate in the vicinity did the same. The political mood was already charged since Bangabandhu's inspiring call of March 7, but the horrors of March 25 turned our world upside down. The despair, however, quickly turned to resolve with the thrilling call of resistance. Not much persuasion was needed. The intent to resist the Pakistani brutes, the pull of adventure, and the scope to escape parental control blended with the adrenal call of the wild. But the two friends could little imagine they were on a life altering journey. Youth's passion works in so many mysterious ways.

Half a century later, when I, one of the boys, now an elderly citizen, retrace that fateful plunge—the myriad recollections wrapped in blood, tears, toil, joy, grief, valour, folly, and fear rush down memory lane—it is difficult to set them apart. They sometimes make me wonder, were the sacrifices worth it? While instinct responds in the affirmative, reason gets a bit fuzzy. Wading in the five decades of turmoil, violence, uncertainty, achievements, and failures, it's time to inquire what our goals were and how far we could attain them. Seeking equality, human dignity and social justice is enshrined in the constitution, but these political goals do not explain the philosophical foundations of creating a state. Did we have any? Fifty years is not a very long time in a nation's history, but enough to make an evaluation for charting our future course. This train of thought leads me to taking a cursory look into our nationality, the *raison d'être* for waging our Liberation War.

Pakistan deprived us both politically and economically, but what angered us most was it wanted to erase our ethnic Bengal identity, which forms the basis of a nation. A nation may have other elements in its body politic but without shared ethnicity, it's incomplete. As family is the basic unit of society, ethnicity is the first unit of nationality. A nation can be artificially imagined like many postcolonial ones, but an ethnic people/society is an organic growth and can't be imagined, bestowed or imposed. It may have other traits but racial similarity, shared geography, dialect, and sociocultural behaviour make them distinct. With these basic features, an ethnic people at some point in their evolution may grow into a nation. With the twists and turns of history, it may also grow into a political nation if its cultural and political aspirations match with material abilities. But this process may not inevitably lead to statehood; that depends on a host of conditions. In view of this general theory, how did the Bengalis evolve into a nation?

Various ethnic peoples evolved across the world at different times in history. They would have had little

impact without power. Power is derived from multiple sources, like material wealth or wisdom/knowledge. On the positive side, it empowers a people, lifts aspirations, refines culture, and gives a sense of unity and purpose. Several ethnic nations, including Bengal, evolved in different parts of the subcontinent over the past thousand years. It also became part of a few millennia old centre-region conflict. For resisting the centre's imperial reach, the regions developed their own ethno-regional, racial and cultural patterns. In Tagore's view, "nation" carries three different meanings. First, it means *jati*—a caste or subcaste in Hinduism, both in professional and social categories. Second, *jati* also means race or sub-races like the Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Assamese, Punjabi, Rajput and so on. These *jatis* evolved as a result of a mixture of races from outside India and local Austric and Negroid people over a long period of time, and by late middle-ages they evolved as clearly visible ethnic nations.

Third, *jati* also means nation. An ethnic nation can grow into a political nation, like several in Europe. Bengal experienced such a transformation from the mid 19th century. Of course, this didn't happen suddenly. From the early middle-ages, the assertive Pathan Sultans of Bengal had advanced the Bangla language to counter the influence of imperial Delhi. The second influence was the birth of syncretism, a blend of the Sufi, Vaishnava and Buddhist spiritual traditions. Third, the Hindu and Muslim large landlords had joined hands, however briefly, against the Mughal invasion, like their counterparts in the Deccan, Maharashtra and Punjab. It was primarily to save their estates, but it also sowed ethnic unity. All these contributed to the growth of an ethnic nation, but it was the colonial assault and tyranny that finally created the fertile ground for Bengal to awaken and assert itself. In the meantime, a new generation of educated middle class emerged, unwilling to remain adjunct to the colonial masters. The Bengal renaissance was their collective expression to rediscover themselves.

It was led by a new professional class, the *Babus* who emerged with a bag full of conflicts. They, however, succeeded in igniting the imagination of the growing middle classes. Yes, it had a communal tilt, and remained confined to the Kolkata based Hindu upper castes/class, but was nevertheless instrumental in stirring a national consciousness, however flawed. In fact, this is also true about the famous European renaissance—before it influenced the rest of Europe, it was confined to a few rich families in northern Italy. A series of brilliant minds from the mid 19th to mid 20th century made immense contributions to Bengali culture, knowledge, and sociopolitical fields. As a result, Bengal asserted its political claim via the anti Bengal partition movement in the early 20th century. Although similar ethno-regional/nationalist trends were visible among

the Tamils, Marathas, Punjabis and few others, it is in Bengal that it became irreversible.

Since the Bengali Muslims were at least two generations behind the Hindus in acquiring modern education, it was only from the 1920s that the renaissance dawned upon them. Of course, earlier, a number of notable literary figures had pioneered this awakening, but it was from this period that a sizeable and certainly secular Muslim intelligentsia grew in society. Several literary circles led by Nazrul and other creative individuals made key contributions in discovering their Bengali heritage. As they were skeptical of orthodox Islamic views, they connected with the rich attributes of the Bengal renaissance, free of communal tilts. It was a quest for the educated Bengali Muslims to graduate from an ethnic to a political nation. Of course, it still had to wait.



The Mongol Shobhajatra at Pohela Boishakh has now become an integral part of celebrating our Bengali culture.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA

The nascent Bengali nation—the fruit of the renaissance—got divided in the communally frenzied days of pre-Partition India. The Hindus in the west yielded to the imagined Indian nation, which in fact was a multinational state, while the Muslims in the east submitted to another imagined nation of Pakistan, fearing the tyranny of the Hindu loan sharks/landlords. While the west stayed put within the Indian state, East Bengal, having made common cause with its co-religionists, soon reclaimed its ethnic identity. Facing economic, racial and cultural bias from the Pakistani rulers, the Bengalis demonstrated passion for their language, which slowly grew into a national movement and culminated in the creation of Bangladesh; a sovereign nation state. Bengalis rose to the occasion and took a quantum leap to be free from the shackles of medieval moorings. For the first time in the subcontinent, out of several similar ethno-regional nations, Bengalis, like the English, French or the Chinese, organically transformed into a political nation over centuries and created a state. Of course, this does not preclude other

minor nationalities sharing the same geography.

Liberation was a great feat! But having created a state, we got busy in the ensuing decades, tearing ourselves apart trying to decide whether we are Muslims or Bengalis. Why this confusion? Are they mutually exclusive? Not at all, if their roles are clearly defined. Eons ago, faith was the primary identity of all humans. State and religion was inseparable. Consequently, over a long period both got corrupt, though at different stages of different faiths. In the modern age, state and religion was parted with clearly defined roles. State would take care of temporal affairs of society based on human reason, while religion will deal in the spiritual domain. As for Bangladesh, after Liberation, we found ourselves surrounded by India; we needed friends beyond. As a Muslim majority state,

dropping "Muslim" from its name in a meeting held in 1955 created a secular awareness. Slowly, the cultural front took the lead, growing in leaps and bounds and culminating in the Six Point Movement. The combined impact of these interventions galvanised the Bengali nation into action.

It's this growing secular Bengali national identity the Pakistanis hated most and deprived us for on all fronts. They expected Bengalness to be subservient to the imagined nation of Islam embodied in the state of Pakistan. And that is why the Liberation War became a necessity for creating our own state. But if in free Bangladesh, we seek to reestablish the Bengali Muslim nation as state policy, the very philosophical basis for the war falls apart and creates ground for unwittingly relapsing into the two nation theory.

Although the secular state policy has been restored recently, the state religion is still there. Now we are both a secular and a religious state. How can we resolve this paradox? The usual reason is that 90 percent of the country are Muslims. Perhaps it also reflects the wider Islamic world's still somewhat ambiguous position between the modern nation state and the mirage of Islamic Umma. This line of reasoning forgets Europe is also 90 percent Christian, but that doesn't stop it from separating religion from state. The very rise of modernity was to avoid religious control in state affairs, which paved the way out of the middle ages. The result of dragging religion back into state affairs in modern times has not been positive anywhere.

In 1953, after a bloody clash between two groups of Islamic clerics in Lahore, two high court judges were entrusted with judicial inquiry. After lengthy investigation and cross examination of diverse clerics and multiple other relevant people over a year, Justices Munir and Kayani, wrote a long report with recommendations on separating religion from the state. However, ever since, all the successive Pakistani governments ignored it. As a result, innumerable radical Islamic groups, state sponsored or private, have grown to hold the state hostage. Afghanistan is another sorry example. Now, India is on an irreversible course of becoming a Hindu state by tossing its secular credentials to the gutters. It is not yet legally binding, but the ramifications are already grotesquely visible. All religious minorities are virtually at the mercy of Hindu supremacists.

Separating religion from state is not faithlessness. Islam is in our DNA. It has an important role to play in our personal, family and social lives, but not in state affairs. If it does attain such a role, the above mentioned fates will be inescapable—a brief attempt in that line, in the form of curbing women's rights, was made in the recent past. State religion is not consistent with our secular credentials.

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WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

'Mental health for all' during the Covid-19 pandemic

MD NAZMUL HUDA

THIS year, we celebrate World Mental Health Day during a challenging time, when the need for improved mental health and psychosocial support is higher than ever. The pandemic has brought many challenges to people's lives, including their exposure to Covid-19, lockdowns, self-isolation or quarantine, suspension of educational activities, job losses and so on. The theme for this year's celebration is "Mental Health for All: Greater Investment—Greater Access", which appropriately focuses on the necessity for increased investment in mental health programmes, nationally and internationally, in order to optimise people's mental health and their access to mental health services. Although mental health is a precondition for individuals' physical health and should be a top priority during this pandemic, it is under-funded globally.

According to the World Economic Forum report 2018, globally, one in four people was affected by mental health problems (e.g., anxiety, depression, stress, and mental disorders) at some point in their lives and approximately 450 million individuals suffered from these illnesses due to inequalities in educational attainment, income, accommodation, social support services, violence, human-made tragedies and natural disasters, including floods, cyclones and storms. The advent of coronavirus has deteriorated individuals' mental health, and the number of people with mental illnesses is rapidly growing. For example, in the US, before the outbreak of coronavirus, one in five adults lived with mental health conditions (approximately 47 million in 2017). The pandemic has only added to this existing mental health situation. According to a Kaiser

Family Foundation poll, approximately half of Americans reported that the Covid-19 pandemic is harming their mental health. This suggests that they now require mental health services more than before. However, the psychological health services in the country remain underfunded, unprepared and fragmented, according to a report in *The Washington Post*.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

While similar situations prevail in other high-income countries, the state of the low and middle-income countries (LMIC) is far worse. According to the National Mental Health Survey in Bangladesh from 2018-19, around 17 percent of Bangladeshi adults are undergoing mental health problems like depression, anxiety, stress and obsessive-compulsive disorders. Of them, over 92 percent did not seek mental health services due to stigma, negative perceptions, inadequate knowledge

of available mental health services, misconceptions about treatment and treatment cost. Although there is limited population-based data on what percentage of Bangladeshi people are suffering from mental health problems due to the Covid-19 crisis, a review of extant studies of Covid-19 has found high rates of psychological distress among Bangladeshi individuals, ranging

from 58 percent to 86 percent. This indicates that the pandemic has taken a serious toll on existing mental health problems in Bangladeshi individuals. Nevertheless, the available data on healthcare budget shows that less than 0.5 percent of the total health budget is usually allocated for mental health programmes, which has created a gap in the response to mental health problems. Mental health is oft ignored and massively underfunded in most countries of the world. According to the

World Health Organization (WHO), over 66 percent of countries spend only one percent or less of their health budgets on mental health. Notably, there is no mental health policy in over 40 percent of countries, and more than 30 percent of countries do not have any programmes for the mental health of their citizens. This little emphasis on mental health is reflected in the provision of inadequate healthcare services for people with mental health problems. More than 50 percent of countries have only one psychiatrist per 100,000 individuals. At the primary health care level of around 25 percent of countries, there is an absence of the most frequently prescribed drugs applied to treat mental disorders, including schizophrenia, depression and epilepsy. Limited resources and their inequitable distribution, city-based services, stigma, and discrimination restrict people's access to mental health services.

Because of the challenges mentioned above and limited or no mental health policies, programmes and financial investment during this unprecedented pandemic, globally, people from all walks of life are currently experiencing the mental health fallout of Covid-19. Specifically, some groups of people—like women, children, older people, healthcare workers, individuals with compromised immune systems, and those who have pre-existing medical and substance use problems—have become more vulnerable than others to the psychosocial effects of Covid-19, which includes suicidal behaviour. This may act as a barrier to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 3 of reducing by one-third the premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promoting mental health and well-

being.

What all these suggest is that mental health has been underfunded and sidelined from development indicators across the world, thus creating a huge challenge to ensuring "Mental Health for All". Therefore, it is vital to undertake global actions. First, all governments should recognise the importance of mental health as an essential part of health, and financial investments should be prioritised in the national budgets and development assistance, and implemented correctly. Even just USD two per capita investment in mental health can spread mental healthcare among approximately half of the individuals living with mental health problems in LMIC. Second, it is vital to incorporate mental health into primary healthcare services for enhancing universal health coverage so that people, including the disadvantaged individuals and those with mental illnesses, can afford mental health services. Third, to facilitate the provision of mental health services and address barriers to accessing those services, all countries should have evidence-based guidelines and policies where the expert opinions of psychologists and social scientists should be integrated.

Finally, the harmful impacts of Covid-19 on individuals' mental health may get worse in the coming days, specifically when we are being threatened by a second wave. The longer the disease stays, the less likely people are to deal with and recover from mental illnesses. Therefore, governments and development partners must ensure that mental health is prioritised during this time, and psychosocial support and mental health interventions are provided to all individuals, everywhere.

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FICTION |

Reflection

PROTTI RASNAHA KAMAL

My mother has a habit of staring intently at reflective surfaces. When alone, she will look directly into mirrors with a vacant look in her eyes. I am not sure what she thinks of while staring. She doesn't seem natural when she does this, she sits up straight, and places her hands gently on her lap. Her posture is forced, but I assume that stiffness, contradictorily, allows her to release tension in her body. When she takes up

do, mine has many gifts – the most astonishing of which is her voice. I don't religiously listen to her singing, but her voice catches my attention even when I am not listening. It announces its presence every day, at dawn, when the light is just peeking through the dark skies. Her incredible modulations, tone and timbre creates an aura that is heavenly. As the *riyaz* ends each morning, I find myself eagerly waiting

we sat on our patio and sang together, a song where a child asks the moon to bring her mother back to her. She says that her mother had left her when she was asleep, and must have gone to the moon, because that's where people end up eventually. It was a full moon that night, and I remember looking at my mother as the moonlight reflected off her face, in awe of the perfect glow that she exuded.

This morning, I found myself waking up without the usual melodies acting as a trigger. Once I shook the weight of drowsiness off me and got up from bed, I felt quite queasy, as if there was an unknown spectre hovering over my body and imposing thoughts onto my mind. That sudden burst of intuition, the one that almost always forms a knot in your stomach, hit me hard. I dragged myself up the stairs towards my parents' room, anticipating the encounter with a truth that I might not want to meet face to face.

I quickly entered the room, not really caring about waking anybody up. I identified the figure with the ability to create the more soothing sound, and shook her gently. Within a second, she opened her eyes. With keen focus, and a perplexed facial expression my mother looked on until I broke the silence.

"Ma, why couldn't I hear your voice this morning?"

My mother tried to smile a little, but gave in to her rigid facial muscles. She got up quickly and said, "Didn't feel like practicing today," and turned away from me. I didn't say anything, and walked down the stairs and back to my little room.

The rest of the day unfolded as it always does, only today I did not let my mother escape my periphery. I noticed something was off – her glow, that wonderful aura that usually surrounds her was gone. I wanted to let my father know but he was busy, the only word that fully described him. Today,

however, he was busier than usual. He called home early from work to say that he wasn't coming home tonight. My mother waited for an explanation, but my father wasn't one to give any. She was visibly distressed by this new information, but she was calm. She kept her voice low, and I could just make out two words that left her mouth before she hung up the phone – "her" and "why."

The two words haunted me for the rest of the day, and I didn't know the reason – I felt like they appeared everywhere I went, like that spectre that had its power over me last night.

At dinner, I saw my mother staring at the stainless steel bowl that held rice for quite some time. Again, she was in her usual posture, which embodied constraint and grace at the same time. I wanted to feel bad for her today, but something told me not to. I felt this sudden urge to be selfish – to not care about how she felt at all. As these thoughts raced through my mind, I felt a sudden rush of pure bliss. My face must have lit up as a reaction which distracted my mother and caused her to look up. She looked at me as if she didn't recognise me at all. After a few seconds, she smiled.

"Do you know something?" she asked with her lips still stretched out.

"What, Ma?"

"You look exactly like your father."

After dinner I went back to my room, still embodying the blissful energy. It must have affected my mother too since I noticed she hummed a tune while doing the dishes. When I was about to walk upstairs from the kitchen, my mother rushed toward me and hugged me from behind. I let myself relax in her arms, and when she finally let me go, she touched me lightly on my head and asked me to go to sleep.

I did as she had asked me to do right away, I did not toss and turn. I slept so peacefully, that even dreams did

not dare disturb me. As dawn came, however, I realized something was unusual. I heard a tune, but not the usual intricate melody, but a simple tune, the lullaby that my mother sang to me when I was a little girl. I wondered why she started the day with a lullaby, and as my curiosity was piqued, I ran upstairs and barged into my mother's room. I reached the bed and as I was about to yell "Ma!" I stopped in my tracks, dumbfounded. I could hear the lullaby, loud and clear, but my mother was still sleeping. Her smile from last night never left her lips, and she looked as beautiful as I remembered her to be. With the tragic tune as a background score, I tried to shake her awake, for I was scared, so very scared of what I was starting to realize.

I stepped back from the bed, and followed the words of the lullaby in my head. It comforted me, just as my mother did when she would put me to sleep. I felt the tune all around me, but as I stood there, the tune started to converge at a point, at its source. I could hear the booming sound from the right, and as I turned to look in that direction, I caught myself looking at a reflection.

I was looking at a mirror, but the reflection was not mine. The figure in the mirror was the most beautiful thing I had ever laid my eyes on. As I looked at her I suddenly felt something pulling my legs, guiding me to take a seat. I felt as if I was not in control of my own body, but I went through with the motions. Shortly, I was stiff all over, my hands fell onto my lap and I couldn't take my eyes off of the alluring woman sitting right in front of me.

Since then, my mother and I have been separated by just a piece of glass. I am forever bound to her, bound to her reflection.

The writer is a recent graduate of Mount Holyoke College, USA.



this position, the clocks tick away and the sun sets in the horizon, and yet she does not budge. My father thinks she just admires herself quietly, but I think she doesn't look at anything at all.

Some may assume she is easily crippled by her daydreams, but her apparent lack of focus on her daily deeds does not take away from nourishing her talents. As all mothers

for the next dawn.

But before dawn comes, the night emerges – and I have spent quite a few nights laying in my mother's lap listening to her lullabies. When I was very young, the tune was simple, and the words made no sense to me. As I got a little older, my mother started to share with me songs with a story to them, most of them tragic. One time

REVIEWS

Nazrul beyond Bangla

A BOOK REVIEW BY SHAHID ALAM

Kazi Nazrul Islam: Selections, Volume 1, Niaz Zaman, ed., Dhaka: writers.ink, 2020

Kazi Nazrul Islam needs no introduction to those familiar with Bangla literature. He and his works are, for cogent reasons, less known in other circles. Niaz Zaman, educationist and prolific writer, is an active member of a group known as The Reading Circle, which is involved in matters literary. For one of its monthly meetings it chose to have a reading and discussion on Nazrul's poem "Bidrohi" (The Rebel) in both the original Bangla and its English translations. The group concluded that "the translations could not do justice to the original. (They) are difficult at the best of times, and "Bidrohi," with its declamatory tones, its fast pace, its heady rhythms, makes translation into English close to impossible." Something invariably gets lost in the process of translation, but The Reading Circle decided to go ahead and try to translate some of Nazrul's writings. A few tricky glitches had to be overcome on the way, but, with Niaz Zaman as the able editor, *Kazi Nazrul Islam: Selections 1*, has seen the light of day. And literature aficionados, particularly those to whom Bangla might as well be some gibberish from outer space, but English understandable, should be the happier for it.

As the title indicates, this is the first volume of a two-part publication. Zaman's hope is that, "the two volumes of *Kazi Nazrul Islam: Selections* --- the first volume containing poems, songs, and dramatic pieces, the second containing prose writings, fiction and non-fiction --- will finally see the light of day." Amen to that! In the first volume, appropriately containing works that Nazrul is most known for, there are 101 entries that are grouped according to the following wide-ranging categories: Autobiographical Poems, Poems on Equality, Islamic Poems, Hindu Devotional Poems, Love Poems, Political Poems, Poems on Nature, Miscellaneous

Poems, Autobiographical Songs, Love Songs, Patriotic Songs, Songs on Nature, Islamic Songs, Hindu Devotional Songs, and Dramatic Poetry.

A fairly lengthy and informative, at times introspective, Introduction lays out different aspects related to the book, besides discussing several of the contents contained within. Some of the pieces are very familiar, others less so, but, nonetheless, carrying the unmistakable stamp of Nazrul's style and genius. Some fiery lines and pieces will fairly leap out of the pages to hit the reader's inner self and the reader, should s/he be familiar with the originals, would acknowledge that their translations were done with feeling and dexterity. The translators form a diverse group --- some rather well-known in reading circles, others less so, but their effort is not lacking. The readers will be the judge of their endeavours, but the person not conversant in Bangla will at least get a fair inkling of what the popularly known "Rebel Poet" is all about. Translators like Sajid Kamal, Niaz Zaman, Fakrul Alam, Kaiser Haq, Ayesha Kabir, Nashid Kamal, Razia Sultana Khan, Haroonuzzaman, Sanjukta Dasgupta, and Jaydeep Sarangi will have seen to that.

The Introduction contains insightful materials and is quite helpful in understanding Nazrul and his endeavours in life. He wrote some fiery pieces, as well as many dealing with love and beauty besides devotional matters, all the while working hard to make ends meet, until he fell silent for a long time before death mercifully relieved him of his agony. For a man of his writing ability, he found it, like a number of other prominent writers, rather tough going. He once said, "A soldier's life is a hard one. But I labour a thousand times more to write." That military life contributed to the heart of

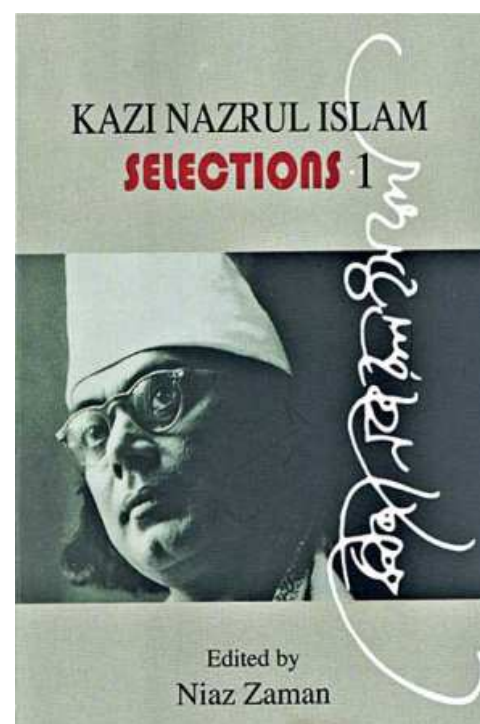
several of his poems and prose. "Bandhon Hara," for instance, notes Zaman, "provides a fairly detailed account of what life was like in the Karachi barracks for a Bengali.... Nazrul describes the hardship of army life as well as its camaraderie." She continues, "While Nazrul's life in the army gave him material for his writings --- immediate themes for his short stories but also images, metaphors and emotions that he would use later in his poems and songs --- his experience in Karachi also introduced him to Communism."

All those experiences contributed to the writer and person that Nazrul was to eventually become. His versatility encompassed both his life and works. He wrote many of his pieces spontaneously, and his most famous poem "Bidrohi" (The Rebel) was no different. Zaman elucidates on this poem and the poet this way: "While the title "Bidrohi" means "Rebel" and the poem does talk about shattering all forms of oppression and discrimination --- secular, political, societal, religious --- the poem is also celebratory. It eulogizes man's humanity, his creativity, his ability to withstand pain, as well as his ability to savour the beauty of life and nature." She starts the collection with this poem and as one goes through it (Kaiser Haq's translation), the ferocious words grip the mind as it hears them, and reverberates in the reader in the memorable concluding lines:

I am the eternal rebel hero ---
Alone, my head ever high,
Rising far above Earth.

The second piece is also another of Nazrul's poems that resonates in one's mind: "The Comet." Sutapa Chaudhuri's translation reverberates:

Even today, on the wounded bosom of creation, God trembles in terror,



Lest His Creation became mightier than the Creator and devour Him!

The third selection is another Nazrul classic: "The Ecstasy of Creation," translated by Sajid Kamal:

In the ecstasy of creation
came forth smiles and tears,
freedom and bondage,
words from deep within my heart,
and the joy of bitter pain

On my right is a newborn, on my left a decaying corpse."

"I Sing of Equality" is translated by Sajid Kamal, and is a poem that, like several others, contains very profound thoughts:

Why do you search for God in vain within the skeletons of dead scriptures when he smilingly resides in the depths of your immortal heart?

Fakrul Alam translates another iconic Nazrul piece, "Mankind," which begins with these words of a common humanity:

"Of equality I sing"
Selina Hasib deals with Woman (Nari) that contains these touching lines:
All beauty that lies in flower and fruit
Has been filled by a woman with love and care and joy.

Man has brought the unbearable heat of the scorching sun;
Woman has brought peaceful night,
light breeze and gentle rain.

Niaz Zaman translates "Ode to Equality": the poem Equality that ends with these lines: "Clad though in soiled or dusty garb,
All are happy here."

"Poverty," translated by Fakrul Alam, ends with these seemingly melancholy lines: Even to this day I hear the *shehnai's* overture wailing.

Seemingly saying: Nothing, there is nothing!

There is a plethora of riches in the 101 selections contained in the book. There has been no lack of effort on the part of the translators and the editor. They have seemingly spared no effort to bring some of the works of an iconic Bangali poet to those unable to read or understand Bangla, but who read and understand English. It has been a worthwhile venture and one can only eagerly look forward to Volume 2 of *Kazi Nazrul Islam: Selections*.

Shahid Alam is a thespian and Professor, Media and Communication department, IUB.



Sofia Kenin, the 2020 Australian Open winner, came into the French Open with a wretched record on clay court, but the American fourth seed will be the odds on favourites when she meets Poland's Iga Swiatek today in the final, which will coronate a new queen of Roland Garros. PHOTO: TWITTER

Roland Garros awaits a new queen

AGENCIES

Sofia Kenin defeated Petra Kvitova 6-4, 7-5 to reach the French Open final on Thursday, setting up a final showdown against 19-year-old Iga Swiatek of Poland on Saturday.

Kenin will attempt to capture a second Grand Slam of the year following her Australian Open triumph, but she may face stiff challenge from Swiatek, who became the first Polish woman in 81 years to reach the final after her dominant 6-2, 6-1 win over Argentine qualifier Nadia Podoroska.

The championship match will be the first at the majors to feature two players aged 21 or under since Maria Sharapova beat fellow 20-year-old Ana Ivanovic at the 2008 Australian Open.

"I knew I had to be at my best. I am super happy and proud of myself," Kenin said following her victory over Kvitova. "I have won in Australia and had really tough matches this week so that gives me confidence. I am going to enjoy this moment and then start to prepare for the final tomorrow."

Before this season, Kenin had never gone as far as the quarterfinals on clay. She lost her

SOFIA KENIN (USA)	IGA SWIATEK (POL)
Age: 21	Age: 19
Ranking: 6	Ranking: 54
Career record: 208-119	Career record: 103-31
Career titles: 5 WTA	Career titles: Zero WTA
Previous best in GS: Winner of Aus Open 2020	Previous best in GS: 4R in Aus Open 2020
Roland Garros 2020: Dropped three sets so far	Roland Garros 2020: Hasn't dropped a set yet

only match on the surface this year prior to Roland Garros, 6-0, 6-0 to Victoria Azarenka in Rome.

The 54th-ranked Swiatek, on the other hand, has yet to drop a set at the tournament, conceding just 23 games through six matches.

The last woman to capture the French Open title without losing a set was Justine Henin in 2007. Swiatek has matched the run of compatriot Jadwiga Jedzejowska who finished runner-up at Roland Garros in 1939.

"It seems unreal," said Swiatek. "I never thought at the start I would play so good here but I always knew that if I was going to be in the final of a Grand Slam it would be at the French Open."

NO LOOK SERVES NO PROBLEM Sofia Kenin says she is very

comfortable with her bizarre, no-look service action which has carried her into a maiden Roland Garros final.

The 21-year-old American has developed the habit of throwing the ball in the air while simultaneously staring down at her feet. Only when the ball is at its high point and her racquet is in motion does she then swivel her head back up.

"I've had that my whole career. I know it's a little bit different. I've had great success with it. I think it would be quite wrong to start changing things now," said Kenin.

"I've improved my serve. I feel like I'm serving well. I guess maybe it doesn't matter how you serve, as long as you get it in. Yeah, that's worked for me," she added.

STUDIES CAN WAIT

Swiatek decided to put off going to university for two years in order to try to make it in tennis – a decision which was richly rewarded on Thursday when she reached the French Open final.

"Well, right now it's going to be hard to make a decision to go back to studying because I feel like really I can achieve big things," Swiatek told reporters. "I just want to focus on that."

"But really I'm only 19, so a lot can change during few years. We are going to see. Maybe I'm going to be hungry for knowledge or anything. I'm not going to make a decision right now."

Swiatek ousted top seed Simona Halep en route to the final at the claycourt Grand Slam and could become the youngest since Monica Seles in 1992 to lift the Suzanne Lenglen Cup if she is able to beat Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin on Saturday.

"Right now it would be hard for me to study in this tournament and after," she added. "So I'm just going to focus on doing tennis, tennis-related stuff, as good as I can. I'm just going to deal with it later."

"I think if I'm going to be in a few finals of Grand Slams, it would be impossible to study and playing that kind of tennis consistently."

Players look to Salahuddin as last hope for good deal

SPORTS REPORTER



Footballers of the Bangladesh Premier League are now looking to re-elected Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) President Kazi Salahuddin to settle the issue of their payment for the next season as the newly elected BFF executive committee sits tomorrow following the October 3 polls.

In the last of a series of meetings with clubs and players on September 17, the professional football league committee headed by Abdus Salam Murschedy decided to reduce players' payments by a whopping 75 percent of their new contracts, which will be similar to last season, citing the clubs' financial constraints amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The meeting also decided to refer the payment matter to the BFF executive committee for the final decision. However, the players refused to accept the decision of the professional football league and sought the intervention of the BFF boss to deliver a win-win decision for both clubs and players, who had earlier demanded 50 percent of the new contract and clearance of all of last season's dues.

"Although the players' payment is not on the agenda at the first executive committee meeting after the polls, the issue may come up as we are thinking of opening the transfer window late this month," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag. "It is an introductory meeting of the executive committee, which may also form some important sub-committees such as the professional football league, national teams, development, finance, women's, etc."

The representatives of the players were supposed to meet four-time BFF President

Salahuddin last Monday, just a day after the BFF polls, to discuss the matter as they have already expressed their dissatisfaction to the BFF boss.

"What the professional football league did is not [part of] a mutual understanding and we are really disappointed with their decision. The clubs were even supposed to clear 100 percent of last season's dues before signing the new contracts but they now want to clear only 40 percent of the dues. We even accepted that decision for sake of immediate return of football. To be honest, they possess both ball and ground and they will take the decision," said national team goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana.

"We are lastly looking at Salahuddin bhai to settle the payment issue. I talked to him yesterday [Thursday] and he assured that I need not be worried as he has been with us. We are really looking forward to getting something new from the new committee," said the Sheikh Russel KC goalkeeper.

The players also tried to submit a written application to Salahuddin before the elections but the BFF president promised to look into the matter and asked players to keep faith in him.

"The players did not accept the decision of 25 percent payment and are sticking to their demand to be paid 50 percent of the new contracts," former captain and current midfielder Mamunul Islam said. "Salahuddin bhai is our last hope and we will now seek an appointment with him within the next week to discuss the matter."

National defender Tapu Barman said, "We are always ready to sacrifice but we hope to get a respectable payment. You look at the foreign players... they are not suffering from it."

The majority of footballers played the last season for token payments.



Ashraful Islam Rana



Mamunul Islam

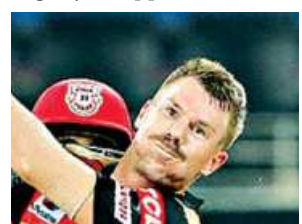
Fifty 50-plus scores for Warner

AGENCIES

David Warner etched his name on the record books by becoming the first player in the history of the Indian Premier League to register 50 fifty-plus scores.

The burly Australian opener accomplished the feat during his knock of 52 which helped SRH register a comprehensive 69-run win over Kings XI Punjab in Dubai on Thursday night.

An opening stand of 160 between left-hander Warner (52) and his partner Jonny Bairstow (97) put SRH firmly in control, though they would have been slightly disappointed to



finish on 201 for six given the platform laid for them.

In reply, KXIP were bundled out for 132 inside 17 overs. The win also helped SRH move up to third in the IPL 2020 table while KXIP continue to languish at the bottom.

Warner currently has 46 fifties -- also the most by some distance -- and four centuries in IPL. Second on the list is RCB captain Virat Kohli with 42 fifty-plus scores to his name in the IPL. This was also Warner's 9th consecutive fifty-plus score against Kings XI Punjab in IPL. This was his 11th fifty overall against KXIP and the second one in IPL 2020.



An important win, says Messi

AGENCIES



Argentina got their World Cup qualifying campaign off to the perfect start on Thursday when Lionel Messi's early penalty gave them a 1-0 win over Ecuador in a lacklustre match in Buenos Aires.

The Argentine FA piped fan noise around the empty Bombonera stadium and the chants of "Messi! Messi!" were vindicated as early as the 12th minute when he put Argentina ahead from the spot after Lucas Ocampos was fouled inside the penalty area.

Argentina had lost just one of their last eight World Cup qualifiers against Ecuador and although they could not add to the scoreline they never looked in danger of losing in a scrappy game against limited opponents.

"It was important to start with a win because we know how difficult the qualifiers are. All the matches are going to be as hard as this one," Messi said.

With the South American qualifiers twice pushed back from the scheduled start in March, it was almost a year since either team had played a full international and Messi said that inaction contributed to the poor spectacle.

"We hoped the level of play would be

different but it's been almost a year since we played together, this was our first game back and the nervousness makes it complicated," the Barcelona striker said.

Argentina's next game is on Tuesday against Bolivia in La Paz, while Ecuador return home to face Uruguay, who beat Chile 2-1 in their opener earlier on Thursday, the same day.

The Uruguay-Chile game in Montevideo, though, proved to be controversial, with Chilean footballers berating referees and officials after several penalty decisions went against them. Luis Suarez got Uruguay's first goal from the spot shortly before half time with the aid of VAR. The referee pointed to the spot after the ball bounced off Sebastian Vegas' body and on to his arm as he slid in to block a shot.

Although Alexis Sanchez equalised for Chile early in the second half, substitute Maxi Gomez made it 2-1 in injury time to give the home side a barely deserved win.

The Chileans' ire was exacerbated by the referee's refusal to consider two of their own penalty claims, including one clear handball in the dying minutes of the match.

It was honours even between Paraguay and Peru in Asuncion as Angel Romero for the hosts and Andre Carrillo both scored a brace.

Brazil sweat on Neymar

AFP, Sao Paulo

Brazil said on Thursday they will give Neymar as much time as possible to recover from a back injury so he can face Bolivia in a World Cup qualifier.

The Copa America champions start their bid to qualify for Qatar 2022 on Friday in Sao Paulo.

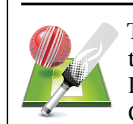
"It's a health problem that's not entirely resolved," said coach Tite. The 28-year-old's back injury flared up on Wednesday.

"He's a little bit better today than yesterday," said team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar. "We'll see tomorrow how he responds."

PRESIDENT'S CUP

Players tested ahead of opening encounter tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER



The cricketers participating in the three-team fifty-over BCB President's Cup underwent Covid-19 testing at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday and will check in to hotels today.

The members of all three teams will be kept in a bio-secure bubble and their activities will be guided by the Bangladesh Cricket Board's medical team.

Although the BCB has experience with bio-secure bubbles, having made one for the national team's training camp, it will be a bigger challenge to maintain a larger group.

Mahmudullah XI and Najmul XI will train today before locking horns in the opening game of the tournament tomorrow.

All matches will be day-night affairs. The final will take place on October 23.

This tournament will mark Bangladesh's return to competitive cricket after a gap of seven months. It will be the first time since the outbreak of coronavirus in March this year.

Players from the national team, high performance team and members of the 2019 ICC U-19 World Cup-winning team were divided into three teams.

According to the BCB, they are considering this tournament as a test case before trying to resume domestic competition in the country in the coming days.

However, the BCB still feels that it will be a huge challenge for them to resume the league considering the current coronavirus situation in Bangladesh and they are not willing to risk players' health.



Everton forward Dominic Calvert-Lewin headed home England's opening goal in the 26th minute of their international friendly against Wales at Wembley on Thursday night. Later Conor Coady and Danny Ings added two more as Gareth Southgate's men ran out 3-0 winners.

PHOTO: REUTERS



4-LANE DHAKA-BHANGA EXPRESS HIGHWAY BUILT WITH BSRM XTREME

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT BSRM building a safer nation



GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES

World's Largest VRM

SHAH CEMENT

MURDER IN HALISHAHAR

Without trial, 2 boys in jail

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Two teenagers, who were arrested by police for their alleged involvement in a murder in the port city's Halishahar area last year, have been languishing in jail for 17 months without trial.

Family members alleged that police intimidated the duo after their arrest and forced one of them to make a confessional statement.

Police, however, brushed aside the allegation.

Interestingly, the person named as the victim in the confessional statement was later found alive by police and produced before a Chattogram court on May 2 last year.

It came to light recently when the families moved the High Court and made mention of this finding of police.

In response, the court asked the first investigation officer (IO) of the case to be present before it with the arrestees -- Durjoy Acharjee and Jibon Chakrabarty -- on October 22.

The boys, both aged about 18, used to work at GPH Ispat factory as labourers and lived in Halishahar's Acharjee Para, said police and family members.

They prayed for bail at the lower court two to three times but were denied.

THE CASE

According to the case statement, police found a burnt and decomposed body at an abandoned house near Khalpar area of Halishahar on April 21 last year.

It was sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) morgue for autopsy and then buried through Anjuman Mufidul Islam.

The identity of the dead is yet to be known.

Md Shahjahan, the then sub-inspector of Halishahar Police Station, filed a case in this connection accusing unknown persons.

During the investigation, police recovered a SIM card packet from the spot and started investigation, taking it as a clue.

SI Shahjahan, now posted in Habiganj district, said police checked the SIM number's location and call history and detained a schoolboy named Kanchan Das for questioning.

"At one point in the investigation, police learned that Kanchan and Jibon are friends and the SIM is registered in the name of Kanchan's father. Jibon told police that he took the SIM packet from Kanchan and kept it in his shirt's pocket but dropped it at the spot unknowingly."

The then IO of the case, SI Saifullah, SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



ON A BED OF ONIONS... A hawker lying on top of his cart of onions on the side of a road near the Palashi intersection in the capital yesterday afternoon. The price hike of this essential item has transformed a once-thriving business into one which draws the attention of very few pedestrians.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

COVID PANDEMIC

WHO reports record one-day rise in cases

Europe's misery deepens; India's cases near 7m

AGENCIES

The World Health Organization reported a record one-day increase in global coronavirus cases on Thursday, with the total rising by 338,779 in 24 hours led by a surge of infections in Europe.

Europe reported 96,996 new cases, the highest total for the region ever recorded by the WHO. Global deaths rose by 5,514 to a total of 1.05 million.

The previous WHO record for new cases was 330,340 on October 2. The agency reported a record 12,393 deaths on April 17.

As a region, Europe is now reporting more cases than India, Brazil or the United States.

India reported 78,524 new cases on Thursday, followed by Brazil at 41,906 and the United States with 38,904 new infections, according to the WHO, whose data lags the daily reports by each country.

Across the world 1,063,346 people have died of the coronavirus since it first emerged in China late last year. More than SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Peace prize for Bangabandhu

October 10, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

JOLIOT-CURIE MEDAL FOR BANGABANDHU

A World Peace Council Presidential Committee meeting in its closing session awards the highest honour -- 'Joliot-Curie Medal of Peace' -- to the leader of Bangladesh's liberation struggle Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with Cuba's revolutionary leader Fidel Castro and three more outstanding peace leaders. World Peace Council Presidential Committee in a special message to the UN secretary general and to chairman of the 27th General Assembly calls upon all member nations to accept application of Bangladesh for full membership in the interest of peace and the universality of the world body.

AMENDMENTS INVITED

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman says today that any suitable amendment to the draft constitution moved by any member of the Gono Parishad (Constituent Assembly) would be welcomed. Addressing the concluding session of the two-day meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) held at the Engineers' Institutions, the leader of the party exhorts the MCAs of his party to study the draft constitution seriously. The ALPP will meet again on October 17, 1972 one day before the discussion on the draft constitution begins in the Gono Parishad.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS WELFARE TRUST STARTS FUNCTIONING

The Freedom Fighters Welfare Trust starts functioning from today. SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Deaths from Covid fall to lowest since end of May

17 die, 1,278 test positive in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) reported 17 Covid-19 deaths across the country in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, the lowest in the last four and half months.

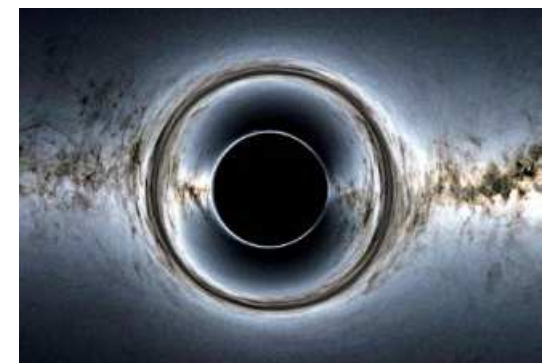
Earlier on May 28, 15 patients reportedly died of the virus infection.

The DGHS reported the first Covid-19 death on March 18, the 11th day of the first three cases were reported on March 8 in the country.

With the latest deaths, the total number of casualties due to the highly infectious virus rose to 5,477, according to a press release from the DGHS.

The death rate now is 1.46 percent against all confirmed cases in the country. SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Another universe existed before ours



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

There was an earlier universe before the Big Bang, and evidence for its existence can still be observed in black holes, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist has said.

Sir Roger Penrose made the claim after recently winning the award for breakthroughs in Einstein's general theory of relativity and proof of the existence of black holes.

Sir Roger argues that the existence of unexplained spots of electromagnetic radiation in the sky -- known as 'Hawking Points' -- are remnants of a previous universe.

It is part of the "conformal cyclic cosmology" theory of the universe, and it is suggested that SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Sexual Assault Act firmly to protect victims

HRW urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh should take proper steps to support sexual assault survivors so that they are treated timely with dignity and have access to services which are necessary to combat sexual violence against women, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a statement yesterday.

"Bangladeshi women have had enough of the government's abject failure to address repeated rapes and sexual assaults," HRW South Asia Director Meenakshi Ganguly said in the statement.

"The Bangladesh government needs to finally make good on its empty promises and heed activists' calls to take meaningful action to combat sexual violence and to support survivors," she said.

The human rights SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Rajapaksa draws Sri Lanka closer to China

REUTERS, Colombo

China and Sri Lanka plan to restart discussions on a free trade agreement, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said yesterday, following a high-level meeting between the two countries.

Seen as close to Beijing, Rajapaksa has appointed several members of his family to top cabinet positions since his party won a commanding majority in August's parliamentary elections -- including his brother Mahinda, who previously also served as president.

Negotiations on a free SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PRAYER TIMING OCTOBER 10

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-45 12-45 4-15 5-45 7-15
JAMAAT 5-20 1-15 4-30 5-50 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Farmers in Bogura's Sariakandi upazila planting paddy seeds of a local variety after flood water recently receded from the area. Flooding in the upazila caused widespread damage to crops, amounting to about Tk 63.92 crore, and currently 500 hectares of crops are under water.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUI

US ELECTION 2020

Trump eyes to hit campaign trail today

Democrats propose commission to probe his fitness for the job

AGENCIES

Donald Trump said he hopes to resume campaigning today after receiving a green light from his doctor, even as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi prepares to unveil plans to probe the president's capacity to govern after contracting Covid-19.

With just four weeks until the November 3 election, Washington's top Democrat took the extraordinary step of proposing a commission to investigate Trump's fitness for the job -- and whether he needs removal under the Constitution's 25th Amendment -- which she was scheduled to unveil in a bill later yesterday.

The move came after Trump spent the day ranting against critics and threw the debate schedule with Democrat Joe Biden into turmoil.

With tensions building over the president's diagnosis and questions about his judgment, Trump said in a Fox News interview late Thursday that he wants to hold a campaign rally as early as today.

"I think I'm going to try doing a rally on Saturday night if we have enough time to put it together," he said during an interview with Sean Hannity, adding that it would be "probably in Florida."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5