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A winter to watch

Experts fear simultaneous outbreaks of dengue, common cold during pandemic can pin healthcare system

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and WASIM BIN HABIB

The temperature drop over the last few days means that the season of cold and flu is around the corner.

But this winter comes with additional concerns over a possible surge in other illnesses, including Covid-19.

The country has already been witnessing a spike in the number of coronavirus cases and deaths caused by Covid-19. Moreover, people falling ill from dengue and Nipah viruses are posing new challenges to public health.

Experts said the overlap of Covid-19, flu and other cold-related diseases like pneumonia could complicate the diagnosis and become a burden on the healthcare system.

Covid-19 and the flu are both contagious respiratory illnesses with similar symptoms. Children and elderly people, especially those with preexisting breathing problems, are susceptible to such illnesses due to low humidity, less sunlight, mild vitamin D deficiency and impaired immunity, they added.

The deadly coronavirus would continue circulating in the population if measures like the use of masks, social distancing and screening at airports are not taken properly, they warned.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Syrian painter Aziz Asmar draws on the wall of a destroyed home a portrait of famous Argentine footballer Maradona, who passed away on Wednesday, in the town of Binnish in Syria's northwestern Idlib province.

PHOTO: AFP

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Maradona leaves world in mourning

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Argentines lined up in the streets of Buenos Aires on Thursday to say goodbye to soccer great Diego Maradona, whose casket lay in state at the Casa Rosada presidential palace draped in an Argentine flag and his famous no. 10 shirt.

In Bangladesh as across the world, conversations were dominated by Diego Maradona. Mourners gathered all across his second home of Naples while the Camp Nou in Barcelona put its flags at half-mast as fans gathered outside. Football games at any level across the world observed a minute's silence and Argentina put on a beautiful display by dimming all the lights, bar the one in Maradona's box, overnight in stadia across the country.

Maradona, whose life was marred by struggles with addiction, died aged 60 following a heart attack at home on Wednesday. Three days of national mourning were called for the player who led Argentina to a 1986 World Cup win

Rigorous steps a must to curb virus infection

Experts say as deaths from Covid on rise

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The total number of deaths for coronavirus surpassed 6,500 mark in the country as 37 more died of the virus in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

Based on weekly analysis of the number of infections, a total of 15,279 people were tested positive for the virus in the last week from last Friday.

The number was 13,961 in the previous week, according to data of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Besides, the number of daily new cases surpassed 2,000 mark on November 16 which did not go down ever since except on Saturday November 21. On the day the number was 1,847.

Considering the increasing trend in deaths and infections in the last one month, experts said the needed rigorous infection control and uninterrupted oxygen supply at more hospitals to save lives.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

City corporations to take control

Govt decides in principle to hand it over from Dhaka Wasa

HELEMI ALAM

The government has decided in principle to hand over the drainage system of Dhaka city from Wasa to the two city corporations to solve the city's longstanding waterlogging problem.

The decision was taken at a meeting headed by LGRD Minister Md Tazul Islam, in presence of two Dhaka city corporations mayors and Wasa's managing director.

The meeting also formed a 14-member committee, headed Muhammad Ibrahim, additional secretary of Local Government Division.

Sayed Ur Rahman, deputy secretary of the ministry, will be member secretary of the committee while four members each from the two city corporations and Wasa will be included as well.

"The committee will submit its report within a month and then we will move forward to the handing over the drainage system after considering all the aspects like the legal side," said Tazul Islam.

He said that though it is the mandate of the two city corporations to solve the water logging problem of Dhaka city, the work was handed over to Wasa long before through an order of the president.

Now logistics, manpower and many other things will have to be

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Take proper action against crimes, graft

PM to admin officers

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the administration cadre officers to build a nice society taking proper measures against different social malaises like rape, terrorism, militancy, and corruption, without considering the identities and political affiliations of the criminals.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

UNEQUIPPED MORGUES

Tricky autopsy gives doctors hard times

Risk of faulty report remains as well

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Salauddin Khan, officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station, lost his life during the Holey Artisan siege on July 1, 2016. Police officials suspected he had suffered bullet injuries during the operation to free the hostages.

But the doctors at Dhaka Medical College morgue initially did not find any bullet in

his body after dissecting all major parts.

They even cut the spinal cord into pieces, and finally a grenade splinter was found stuck between two bones.

"It took more than three hours and we literally had to dismember the body as we don't have a digital portable x-ray machine," said Sohail Mahmud, chief of the forensic department of DMC.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



NOT EASY FOR VULNERABLE

The sick, elderly have to cross busy street to get tested for Covid

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Abu Taher, a 57-year-old man suffering from spinal pain, hip fracture, diabetes, and kidney problems, braved traffic in front of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University for three days on a wheelchair to be tested for Covid-19.

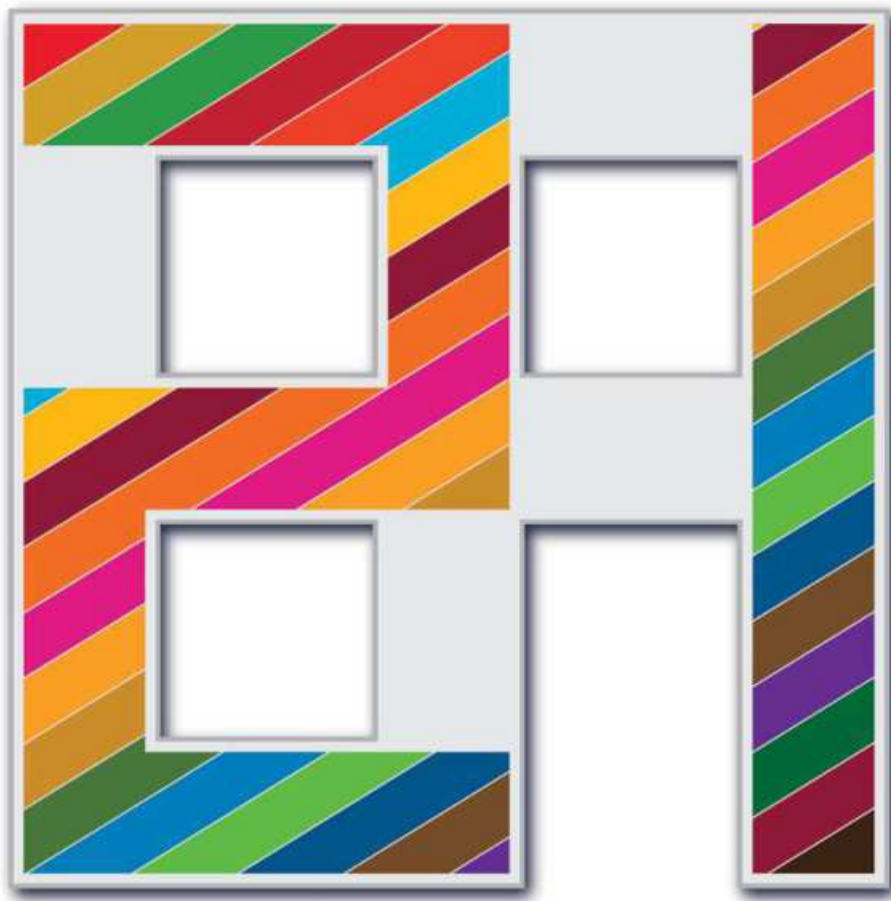
Abu Taher and his son Al-Amin came from Chandpur for treatment at the BSMMU on November 8. After going from one department to the other, doctors of the orthopaedic department said on Sunday that he has to be admitted, but needed a coronavirus test for that.

The fever clinic where tests are conducted is outside the BSMMU premises, situated on the opposite side of the road.

This correspondent saw Abu Taher being pushed on a wheelchair by his son towards the Shahbagh intersection on Tuesday, the day his sample was collected after they had waited in vain the previous two days.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

গ্রাহক নির্ভরতায় ২১ পেরিয়ে



anniversary
Bank Asia

সমৃদ্ধির পথে অগ্রযাত্রায় ২১ বছর পূর্ণ করেছে ব্যাংক এশিয়া। দীর্ঘ এই পথচলায় গ্রাহক নির্ভরতাই আমাদের সবচেয়ে বড় শক্তি। এমন নির্ভরতায় পাশে থাকার জন্য সম্মানিত গ্রাহক, পৃষ্ঠপোষক, সহযোগী ও শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের প্রতি আমাদের অশেষ ধন্যবাদ ও কৃতজ্ঞতা।

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



2,292
New cases in 24hrs



4,56,438
Total cases



6,524
Deaths



3,71,453
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,430,775
Deaths



60,936,545
Total cases

Interpol wants 6 Bangladeshi human traffickers

*Puts them on Red Notice after 26
Bangladeshis killed in Libya*

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Interpol put six human traffickers of Bangladesh in their “wanted-list”, on charges of deceiving jobseekers and “wrongfully confining and killing” people over ransom demands.

The step came up following the killing of 26 Bangladeshi migrant workers in a Libyan desert town Mezda in May this year.

Dhaka’s National Central Bureau (NCB) Assistant Inspector General Mohiul Islam confirmed it to The Daily Star yesterday.

The traffickers are Minto Mia, 41, Shapan, 28, Tanzirul, 35, and Jafor Ekbal, 38, from Kishoreganj, Molla Nazrul Islam, 43, from Madanipur and Shahadat Hossain, 28, from Dhaka.

A Red Notice was issued following a human trafficking case filed with Paltan Police Station in June. The serious crime unit of CID’s organised crime department has been investigating the case.

Following the investigation, the CID wrote to Dhaka’s NCB, Bangladesh counterpart of Interpol, in October against the six traffickers when the process started.

Among them, Minto was the first to be added on the international police agency’s Red Notice list of wanted fugitives on November 6. His charges were described as deceiving jobseekers and “wrongfully confining and killing” people over ransom demands.

Interpol then asked for further details against the other five. When Dhaka’s NCB responded with effective answers, the names of the five traffickers appeared on Interpol’s wanted list on Wednesday.

Red Notices by Interpol are issued for fugitives wanted either for prosecution or to serve a sentence. A Red Notice is a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a

person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action.

As many as 77 Bangladeshis are on Interpol’s Red Notice list, which seeks the provisional arrest of fugitives, for prosecution or to serve a sentence, on charges that include murder, use of counterfeit money and distribution of pornography.

The CID said Bangladesh shared details of suspected human traffickers with Interpol for the first time as it seeks to stop the kidnap and killing of migrants.

Talking to Reuters, earlier, Syeda Zannat Ara, special superintendent of the CID, said these are the traffickers who trick people from Bangladesh by taking money from them with promises of jobs abroad. They then keep them hostage in Libya and torture them for more money.

“With their details up in Interpol, their movements will be restricted because they will be wanted no matter which country they go to,” she said.

The trafficking ring is probably based in Libya and Italy, according to the NCB.

On the wanted list, the six were charged for “deception and alluring for suitable jobs, wrongfully confining and killing with demanding ransom by organised human trafficker with a view to unlawful gain”.

On May 28, some traffickers killed 30 migrant workers, including 26 Bangladeshi nationals. The killing took place at a smuggling warehouse in Mezda, near the city of Gharyan, southwest of Libya’s Tripoli. Twelve more Bangladeshis were also injured in the attack, nine of whom were repatriated.

A total of 26 cases were filed with different police stations across the country in connection with human trafficking to Libya. Law enforcers arrested at least 50 people in this regard.

Rigorous steps

FROM PAGE 1

“If we observe last month’s daily death and infection trend, it is clear the Covid-19 situation is worsening. And it may turn more severe in December. So, we have to stay aware of it,” Mahbuba Zamil, head of the virology lab at the Institute of Public Health, told The Daily Star.

With the latest figure, the total number of deaths reached 6,524.

This was 1.43 percent of all confirmed cases in the country, according to a press release of DGHS.

Against a total of 17,052 samples tested in the past 24 hours, 2,292 new people were tested positive for coronavirus.

This was 13.44 percent against the total tests yesterday.

With the latest figure, the total number of infected people rose to 456,438, added the release.

Excluding the deaths and recovered patients, the number of patients undergoing treatment was 78,498.

Of them, 2,861 were in hospitals while the rest were undergoing treatment at home.

Maradona leaves world

FROM PAGE 1

and is revered with cult-like status.

The star’s family is hoping to hold the burial on Thursday evening at the Bella Vista cemetery on the outskirts of Buenos Aires where his parents are also interred, a government source said. A cemetery source confirmed that the burial had been scheduled for 6pm local time, but said it could also be delayed to Friday morning.

Early on Thursday, thousands of fans had already formed a snaking line through the streets near the central Plaza de Mayo after a night of mourning and reminiscing. Some scuffles broke out as some tried to get inside the palace to see their hero’s casket.

“Maradona for me is the greatest thing that happened to me in life. I love him as much as my father and it’s like my old man died,” Cristian Montelli, 22, a fan of the star’s former club Boca Juniors said with tears in his eyes. “If I die young, hopefully upstairs I can play ball and watch a Boca game with him,” added Montelli, who had a tattoo of Maradona’s face on his leg.

Maradona’s body lay in a wooden coffin with the blue and white national flag and an Argentina soccer jersey with the number 10 that had been part of his nickname “D10S” - a play on “dios”, the Spanish word for God.

“He was someone who touched the sky with his hands but never took his feet off the ground,” President Alberto Fernandez said on Wednesday.

Major athletes and world leaders, including Argentina-born Pope Francis, paid tribute to Maradona. Fans from Naples to India mourned

his passing. In Spain, the Diario AS front-page headline read “D10S has died.”

“Diego belongs to the people, Diego belongs to Argentina, Diego belongs to the country,” said Dario Lozano, waiting in line to view the casket.

Diego, Pelusa, or simply God, as Maradona was known, had a long career that included leading the South American nation to World Cup glory in 1986. Pelusa, which means fluff in Spanish, referred to Maradona’s prominent mane of hair at the height of his playing days.

The 1986 tournament included a quarter-final game against England where Maradona scored two of the best-known World Cup goals ever - an illicit “Hand of God” goal and one that followed an incredible swerving, dribble.

Maradona battled various health problems over the years as a result of his addictions. Earlier this month, he was hospitalized for symptoms including anemia and dehydration and underwent emergency surgery for a subdural hematoma - a blood clot in the brain.

On Thursday, Maradona’s lawyer, Matias Morla, said he would ask for a full investigation into the circumstances of the soccer star’s death, and criticized what he said was a slow response by emergency services.

Maradona fan Mauro Gimenez, wearing a yellow Boca Juniors shirt, said it was hard to explain the feeling that his playing created. “I think everyone today felt like something had died, your childhood died, your mother died, your father died,” he said. “This is what it feels like.”



PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

A few people bathe in the Surma river in Jhalopara area of Sylhet city with piles of garbage dumped on the bank. Locals have long been throwing their household waste there, polluting the river. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

A winter to watch

FROM PAGE 1

Practicing the health safety guidelines could limit the flu outbreak, they said.

“Cold-related diseases spike in winter, but this time it is dangerous because of coronavirus since it also attacks the respiratory system,” said IEDCR Consultant Prof Mushtuq Hussain.

At least 61 people died of various cold related diseases between November last year and March this year. But the number was only 11 in 2018-19, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The DGHS has yet to start publishing the data from the current season.

The dengue fever situation is also bad.

This month witnessed the highest number of dengue cases in the year. Usually, dengue cases drop in November.

The number of people infected with dengue this month was 460 as of yesterday, a sharp rise from last month’s 163.

Only 47 dengue cases were recorded in September and 68 in August.

The season of mosquito-borne diseases is lingering because of the persisting rainfalls until recently. Such diseases are likely to continue until December, experts said.

Currently, 71 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at different hospitals across the country. Of them, 65 are in 41 public and private hospitals in the capital, according to DGHS data.

A total of 1,087 dengue patients got

admitted to public and private hospitals this year. About 1,010 of them had been released. Six suspected deaths were reported, but IEDCR confirmed one.

Meanwhile, Nipah virus has already killed four people this year and the virus will continue to spread until March. Fewer people died with Nipah in the last three years.

The first Nipah case in Bangladesh was detected in 2001 in Meherpur. Since then, cases have been reported almost every year in different districts, according to the DGHS.

A total of 319 people got infected with the virus since 2001 and 225 of them died, the data shows.

There is no vaccine or cure for the illnesses caused by Nipah which has many strains capable of spreading from person to person.

Currently, there are 11,983 beds, of which 555 are in ICUs, in the hospitals across the country. There are 503 ventilators in the hospitals, according to the latest data from the Management Information System of the DGHS.

A total of 24 dedicated Covid-19 hospitals in the country have centralised oxygen supply systems, the data shows. **WHAT EXPERTS SAY**

Bangladesh doesn’t have the experience of tackling Covid-19 in winter because the disease arrived here in March.

“We see that Canada, many European countries and even the USA are suffering although they are better equipped than us. So it is easily understandable how severe it can turn out to be,” Prof Benazir Ahmed, former director (disease

control) at the health and family welfare ministry, said.

He added that air pollution increases in winter and those who are asthmatic and have chronic bronchitis might suffer from poor oxygen saturation.

“Hospital admission and death risks will also increase. During this time, cases of pneumonia among kids and elderly people usually rise.

“The government should think of taking preventive measures. Quick tracing is the key to tackle the situation. If we scale up diagnosis at early stages, then we may tackle the situation.”

He stressed launching a social movement involving the community, political leaders and public representatives to make people aware of the health rules.

Prof Mushtuq told The Daily Star that: “If we follow the health rules properly, we can avert most of the risks, especially the respiratory problems. The aged and kids have to be aware of pneumonia.”

Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of DGHS, said, “There is no doubt that this winter is challenging. We are trying our best to tackle the situation.”

DGHS’s efficiency has increased and health workers gained experience.

“We hope to tackle the situation. But the health ministry alone cannot handle the situation, people have to come forward,” he said, adding that the prime minister herself was continuously monitoring the situation.

Take proper action against crimes, graft

FROM PAGE 1

“You will have to take appropriate measures against some problems such as rape, repression of women, formation of juvenile gangs, drug abuse, terrorism, militancy and corruption. Don’t consider the identity of anyone, rather consider the criminals as criminals,” she said.

A criminal is a criminal, no matter which party he or she belongs to, the PM said. “So, you will have to build this society nicely taking proper measures against the perpetrators considering them as criminals. We want you to do it.”

Hasina was addressing the certificate-giving and closing ceremony of the 116th, 117th and 118th law and administration training courses at the capital’s Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy through a video conference from the Gono Bhaban.

She asked the trained officers to serve the people showing respect to them.

“Don’t neglect anyone. You’ll have to show due respect to the people as human beings,” she said, adding that her family members learnt from their parents the lesson of showing respect to

all people.

The premier said her parents taught her family members to address car drivers, domestic helps and even rickshaw-pullers with respect by calling them “Apni” (you).

She asked the officials to ensure justice for all in their workplaces. “People should get services from you as it’s your duty to render services to them to change their fortune and improve their living standard.”

Hasina said the government wants to build Bangladesh as a hunger- and poverty-free non-communal country where everyone will live with dignity.

She advised the trained officers to utilise their knowledge acquired through the training course for the development of the country.

The PM directed the fresh officers to strictly follow and implement the health rules to check the spread of Covid-19 and protect the people from getting infected.

“You’ll have to remain conscious enough so that you abide by the health codes. If this is so, your colleagues in your workplaces and the people of the country will follow the codes.”

The premier said the second wave of

the novel coronavirus had already hit a number of countries where lockdowns were imposed again. “The Bangladesh government is so far liberal to some extent considering the reality. But we have been very careful and we are following the health protection guidelines.”

Hasina said Bangladesh has already ordered the Covid-19 vaccine and the authorities concerned have been given necessary directives so that the country can collect the vaccine as soon as it is available and preserve it.

She asked the officers to oversee the projects taken up during the pandemic so that those are implemented properly and timely.

State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain presided over the function.

A total of 116 cadre officers -- 70 males and 46 females -- took part in the three five-month training courses. All the participants successfully completed the courses through online classes.

On behalf of the PM, Farhad handed the Rector Award to three best performers -- Jisan Bin Majed, Hafizul Haque and Tariqul Islam -- of the 116th, 117th and 118th training courses respectively.

City corporations to take control

FROM PAGE 1

discussed about how it will be handed over to the city corporations, he said.

CHALLENGES

A few weeks ago, Muhammad Ibrahim, additional secretary of Local Government Division, told The Daily Star that to hand it over, there is a matter of budget. A full set up of manpower and equipment will have to be handed over to the corporations.

If Wasa sends the whole department to the city corporations, then some questions will arise regarding the staffers’ salaries and promotions, as most are permanent staffers of Wasa, while many of the city corporation staffers work on a deputation basis, he said.

The idea of handing over the drainage management to city corporations came to light in July when the two mayors -- Dhaka South’s Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh and Dhaka North’s Atiqul Islam -- said they wished to take over the job.

Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul told the Daily Star on November 11 that the corporation

has started to recover river land from encroachers and will similarly have to recover canals from encroachers gradually.

“We have to establish proper authority over canals and water bodies, including their infrastructure, manpower, technical know-hows, human resource and budget, to do the job,” he said.

Contacted, mayor Taposh recently said, “As you know we have started cleaning some water bodies like Khilgaon Jheel, Kalunagar Canal, Shyampur Canal, and Dhanmodi lake irrespective of the authorities concerned. We will also maintain these water bodies by revitalising the flow of water, as the citizens have been suffering from waterlogging for a long time.”

He said he wants people to know that the corporations are asking for total authority from all custodians.

According to experts, just changing the custodian without addressing the core issues that has failed Wasa -- such as the absence of total authority of one

particular body and lack of coordination with six other organisations -- might also fail the two city corporations.

Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said apart from handing over manpower and logistics, Rajuk will have to engage the city corporations in the action plan and implementation in line with the Detailed Area Plan and there should be a law for this.

The water bodies and canals that are owned by the deputy commissioner’s office will have to be leased out to the city corporations for management.

Besides, the Bangladesh Water Development Board also will have to set up pumps according to the plan of the city corporations.

A gazette notification will have to be issued so that BWDB does its job through a separate department while coordinating with the corporations.

Finally, an integrated master plan will have to be made to solve the problem and it will have to be executed properly, Habib concluded.

Copyright should go to first publisher

*Probe body tells HC about 2
books on Bangabandhu*

ASIFUR RAHMAN

As the first publisher of the books Bangabandhu Maney Swadhinota and 3053 Din, the Ministry of Liberation War and the prison directorate should have the copyright of the two books, recommends an enquiry committee.

The three-member committee, headed by the secretary to Ministry of Primary and Mass Education Akram Al Hossain also observed in a report that any commercial agreement could only be appropriate once the copyright issues of the two books are settled.

The High Court bench of Justice Obaidul Hasan and Justice AKM Zahurul Haque formed the committee on September 2 following a writ petition filed by HC lawyer Syed Sayedul Haque Suman on August 31.

The petition sought the HC’s directives for a judicial or independent probe into allegations of fraud and irregularity in purchasing books for Bangabandhu Corner in primary schools across the country.

Although the committee in its report to the HC, which the unveiled yesterday, did not mention whether any misappropriation had taken place, it said the Ministry of Liberation War and Bangladesh Jail were the first publishers of the two books. The publisher was changed in the next edition.

But the first two publishers must get the copyright, they recommended. The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the probe report submitted to the HC.

While recognising the involvement of Nazmul Hossain -- a journalist accused for illegally changing the copyright of the two books to his own publication, Journey Multimedia -- in research, editing, concept, cover design and publishing, the committee also said: “Both books are the result of the combined efforts and work of many people.”

The book named “3053 din”, which is a collection of dates and pictures of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s time in prison, was first printed with funding from the Department of Prisons, said the committee.

However, in a Demo Official (D/O) letter, former inspector general of prisons Syed Iftekhar Uddin on November 5, 2018, said no money was spent from the revenue budget of the Department of Prisons for the publication of the book.

The probe body, however, got a different opinion from the Department of Prisons on Iftekhar Uddin’s letter.

The letter did not have a commemorative number and it was not recorded in the Department of Prisons, the committee mentioned in its report.

Maradona to remain in hearts of football fans forever: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of football legend Diego Maradona.

In a condolence message, she said the Argentine footballer, one of the greatest players in football history, would remain alive in hearts of football fans across the world forever.

His sporting prowess will act as an inspiration to future football players for ages, the PM said.

Hasina wished eternal peace for the departed soul of the great footballer and expressed deep sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Maradona, 60, passed away at his Buenos Aires home in Argentina on Wednesday after suffering a heart attack.

Teenager dies in gun accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A teenager was killed as a bullet was fired mistakenly from a gun of some hunters in Lohagara upazila on Wednesday evening.

The victim’s family filed a case with Lohagara Police Station on Thursday.

The dead is Maruful Islam, 12, son of Mohammad Forkan, of Lohagara’s Jadimura village.

Jakir Hossain Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Lohagara Police Station, told The Daily Star that the incident happened around 7:00pm when the hunters were preparing their firearms for going into hunting in Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary.

Their firearms were hidden under haystack of the victim’s house, he said. He added that a bullet was fired from a firearm mistakenly and hit Maruf, who was sitting on the verandah of his house, leaving him dead on spot.

8 iconic mosques for 8 divisions:PM

Will be built with Saudi support
BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said eight “iconic mosques” with all modern facilities will be built in eight divisions of the country with Saudi assistance.

The prime minister discussed the issue when newly-appointed Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Essa Bin Yusef Al-Duhailan paid a courtesy call on her at her official residence Gono Bhaban in the morning.

After the meeting, PM’s Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters.

The premier said 560 model mosque and Islamic cultural centres are being constructed at upazila level with Saudi assistance.

She also recalled development of the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the capital with Saudi cooperation, the press secretary said.

Noting that her government gives priority to the agriculture sector, Hasina said Bangladesh could provide farm labourers to Saudi Arabia.

Pointing out the traditional relationship between the two brotherly countries, she said Bangladesh always values these ties.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



An executive magistrate of Rab gets ready to place over the face of a person not wearing at Shahbagh intersection yesterday. Covid-19 cases and deaths have been on the rise recently, and experts say the coming winter may worsen the situation. Authorities are also conducting drives to ensure people are following the health guideline.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Grassroots orgs standing up against gender-based violence

Speakers tell MJF webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sirajganj’s Husne Ara Jolly married at an early age. She has been subjected to violence throughout her married life, and at one point, she attempted to take her own life.

However, considering the future of her children, she left her husband and started working for the good of survivors of domestic violence like herself.

It was difficult to work alone, so she decided to form an organisation called Programme for Women Development with like-minded women in 1999. They registered it with Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

Initially, she developed a good relationship with union parishads, community leaders, journalists, police station, court, hospital and other service providers and with their help, she started working on preventing all forms of violence against women and girls and empowering them.

“At one point I was engaged with Manusher Jonno Foundation. Afterwards I formed different groups in the grassroots level consisting of women, men, adolescents, and youth, gave them the training to prevent all sorts of gender-based violence. In the last one year, we have stopped 123 weddings and prevented 775 marriages from happening, trained 169 female arbitrators, who are taking part in different village arbitrations,” shared Husne Ara, at a webinar yesterday.

The webinar titled “Grassroots Response to Address Violence against Women and Girls” was organized by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Drive against graft, irregularities in AL to continue: Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said the drive Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina started against irregularities and corruption in the party will continue.

AL is a disciplined political party, he said, adding, “The party does not tolerate irregularities and corruption. Organisational steps are taken as soon as any allegation is found to be true.”

He made the remarks while speaking at a briefing at his official residence in the morning.

There is no chance to commit crimes in AL using political identity, Quader said, adding that a culprit is a culprit in the eyes of party president Sheikh Hasina.

He said the government’s achievements cannot be allowed to fade due to crimes of a few people.

The main goal of AL, a strong and people-oriented organisation, is to establish understanding among its different units. Stalemates happen in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Graft in health sector, violence on women, pressure on media

TIB expresses concern over irregularities amid pandemic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday expressed deep concern over the graft in the country’s health sector and irregularities occurred during the coronavirus pandemic.

Besides, the anti-graft watchdog expressed concern over the gradual rise of incidents of violence against women and children and continuous institutional and non-institutional pressure on the media.

The TIB members voiced the concerns during the annual members’ meeting that was held virtually, said a press release.

During the meeting, the TIB members called upon the authorities concerned to ensure effective participation of youths in fighting global disastrous events like the coronavirus pandemic as well as in the decision-making process to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Besides, they called upon the government to work for ensuring flourish of effective institutions those uphold transparency and accountability.

They also urged the authorities to ensure safe and orderly banking system to bring back people’s trust in the sector.

Moreover, they stressed for

implementing the promises of building a democratic Bangladesh through taking effective measures in curbing corruption.

TIB members also expressed deep concern over the failure of Anti-Corruption Commission and other related institutions in controlling massive corruption that persists in the country, despite sufficient legal basis.

They think, TIB has been subjected to “unwanted and premeditative” comments because of its activities and research reports, which turned out to be an ill-attempt to avoid responsibility.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Shaheed Dr Milon Day today

CITY DESK

Shaheed Dr Milon Day will be observed across the country today, commemorating the 30th martyrdom anniversary of Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon, who was joint secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association.

Milon, a teacher of Dhaka Medical College, was killed by thugs of then authoritarian ruler HM Ershad near TSC of Dhaka University, at the height of the anti-autocracy movement on this day in 1990.

The sacrifice of Dr Milon transformed the movement into a mass uprising that prompted the fall of the regime, paving way for restoration of democracy.



A one-stop info service for migrant workers

IOM, Brac launch bdeshjatra app, website

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Organization for Migration yesterday launched an online platform for migrant workers that provides information on safe migration, sustainable reintegration, and remittance management.

A smartphone application -- bdeshjatra -- is available for download from Google Play store. Besides, users will be able to use it via web on www.bdeshjatra.com.

The application, developed in Bangla language, provides information on all stages of the migration-cycle, including pre-decision, pre-departure, migration, and return.

It can also be used in low data usage mode.

The app was developed under the European Union-funded project “Bangladesh: Sustainable Reintegration and Improved Migration Governance (Prottasha)” implemented by IOM in partnership with Brac under the leadership of Bangladesh government.

It is hosted by bdjobs, Bangladesh’s largest job site.

IOM Bangladesh formally launched the platform in a virtual ceremony.

Addressing the ceremony, IOM Bangladesh Chief of Mission Giorgi Gigauri said the purpose of the platform is to ensure that migrants and their family members know their rights, can access to support and services inside Bangladesh and the countries of destination.

Bangladesh is a major labour-sending country and Bangladesh government is committed to ensuring welfare of migrants and promoting regular migration, said Giorgi.

He said both governmental and non-governmental organisations are working to promote safe and orderly migration practices and ensuring access to correct and authentic information on migration process, remittance management and many other aspects of migration.

However, total elimination of irregular migration and human trafficking remains the major challenge in many countries including Bangladesh, he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Snake venom worth Tk 9cr seized, 2 held

CID suspects smugglers were using Bangladesh as a pit-stop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department of police has seized snake venom worth Tk 9 crore and arrested two smugglers from Gazipur on Wednesday.

The arrestees are Mamun Talukder (51) and his associate Md Mamun (33). They were arrested from Kaliakoir of Gazipur, CID Additional Deputy Inspector General Sheikh Rezaul Haider told a press briefing yesterday.

Investigators suspect the arrestees were using Bangladesh as a route to smuggle the venom into Indonesia and Malaysia. Police suspect Mamun is the kingpin of the smuggling ring.

During the drive, CID recovered two lockers containing six bottles of snake venom from their possession. The bottles were brandished with ‘COBRA Snake Poison of France, Red Dragon Company, Cobra Code No-80975, Made in France’.

“The snake venom somehow entered the country through the smuggling ring, although we’re not sure from where,” the CID official said.

CID already has information that some consignments have been smuggled from Bangladesh, he added.

DIG Rezaul said a team of CID had previously conducted a drive in the district on November 17 and busted a snake venom smuggling ring and found out of another ring.

Snake venom is used in Asian traditional medicine, but does not have widespread use in Bangladesh. CID said it is illegal to trade snake venom in the country.



Boredom busters and content verification

EH SANUR RAZA RONNY

4TH LEVEL IN AMONG US

Among Us is the biggest hit game this year. The indie game has a team of players work together to performing simple tasks on three available maps. There are randomly assigned “Imposters” who will have to directly, or indirectly, kill the other players without getting caught.

The game is two years old but it rose to sudden fame this year, with people stuck at home and wanting something more than just killing time. It has been downloaded 217 million times. Want to see if it will rack up something close to PUBGs 734 million downloads?”

The latest update to the game is a new fourth level. Developer InnerSloth gave a screenshot of the new map which looks like a large cockpit complete with the all-important vent through which players get around. It will be revealed at The Game Awards on December 10th where Among Us is nominated for “Best Multiplayer,” and “Best Mobile Game.”

CONTENT VERIFICATION ON YOUTUBE AND TWITTER

Covid vaccine news getting you hopeful? YouTube is adding a verification panel so that viewers can be directed towards legitimate sources of information related to Covid-19 vaccines. This is in an attempt to combat misinformation. Relevant videos will also prompt more verified info linking sources like CDC and WHO.

YouTube is a massive hotbed of misinformation especially for conspiracy theorists and anti-vaxxers. Twitter also announced a relaunch of its verification process early next year. Once verified, users will get that all important small, blue badge. Accounts will need to meet certain criteria to be verified such as like being profiled in a media outlet. Among other rules, verified users can have their badge revoked if they change their name or bio to mislead people. Twitter is taking surveys on its policy and users can tweet their feedback before December 8th with the tag #VerificationFeedback.

DRAW UP YOUR OWN MONSTER

Have you heard of Chimera? It’s a genetic anomaly where one organism contains two sets of DNA. In Greek mythology (and sounding much cooler) it was a fire breathing creature made of two animals. You can play with Chimera though. It is an AI tool made by Google researchers. It will turn your strange doodles into monsters. You draw, it applies textures and fine tunes it. Random blobs will be textured blobs. So you’ll have to put a little effort into it. It uses machine learning similar to how Nvidia made landscapes, MIT and IBM created buildings. You have segmentation map overlays that divide different parts of a monster for you to draw (muzzle, limb, claw etc). Lot of options, super easy, so try it (https://storage.googleapis.com/chimera-painter/index.html) or just look for chimera painter. I’ve been spending all day on it.



Sixty-year-old Abed Ali sets up his makeshift station for men’s grooming and haircuts, but this road in Savar’s Fulbaria remains fairly empty. Before the pandemic, Abed Ali’s daily income averaged at Tk 300. But now he barely makes Tk 100 per day. The elderly man has been passing his days in hardship as the pandemic disproportionately affect lower-income groups.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Retired public officials don't need govt approval for jobs at other orgs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Retired public officials will no longer require government permission to take up jobs at other organisations, change profession or go abroad.

The public administration ministry yesterday issued a circular highlighting a provision of the Public Service Act, 2018 on the post-retirement employment of former government employees.

In the circular it was said that even after retirement or commencement of the post-retirement leave, some employees apply to the department concerned for taking up jobs in international or private organisations or projects, changing profession or conducting business, and renewing passport or traveling abroad.

According to the provisions of Section 52 of the Public Service Act, 2018, after retirement, the former employee concerned is out of government's jurisdiction, so there is a waste of labour and time in processing such applications, the circular said.

The circular also said, "Section 52 of the act states that after retiring from service, except for those engaged in government services on contract basis, a person does not require to obtain permission from the government or authorities to take up any job in a foreign or private firm or in a project, take up any other profession, conduct business and travel abroad."

However, under Section 52 of the Public Service Act, 2018, the government or the appointing authorities hold the power to ask retiring bureaucrats to seek approval of the authorities to pursue a different job or business only in some special cases.



The Padma Bridge stands at the verge of completion. Before its formal inauguration, authorities are beautifying the area around it, with a particular aim to uphold local traditions. For example, this foot over bridge at Dholaipar area is being made to look like a local boat. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Mother, toddler killed in road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A woman and her 3-year-old son were killed and five injured as a bus hit a battery-run auto-rickshaw on Lalmonirhat-Burimari road in Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat yesterday.

The accident took place in Chowdhury intersection area around noon, said police.

Deceased Manjila Begum (33) was wife of auto-rickshaw driver Badiuzzaman of Char Sholmari village.

Manjila and her son Sajedul Islam died on the spot when a bus coming from the opposite direction hit their auto-rickshaw, said Kaliganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Arju Mohammad Sajjad Hossain.

Police and locals said Badiuzzaman along with his wife, son and some other passengers was on the way to Kaliganj upazila headquarters from his Sholmari residence.

The injured were taken to Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex. Two of them have been referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital as their condition was critical at the time of filing this report.

Grassroots

FROM PAGE 3

A number of girls from different areas of the country also shared how they were able to prevent being married off by availing the help of the grassroots organisations and local union parishad.

According to a telephone survey conducted in MJF's working areas, from April to September, 37,912 women faced domestic violence; of them, 16, 485 faced violence for the first time in their life.

The survey also found around 935 girls became the victims of child marriage. However, the partner organisations of MJF were able to stop 713 child marriages in their areas.

MJF executive director Shaheen Anam moderated the event. She said while there is rise in gender-based violence across the country, there are also social movements along with civil society and government response at the grassroots to prevent it.

"We need a concerted effort, coordination and collaboration among all different stakeholders to stop violence against women and girls. Concerned institutions in healthcare, policing and judiciary etc have to perform their responsibilities with honesty and accountability," she said.

"Most importantly a change in attitude is necessary both at the family and societal levels. Women and girls' contributions must be recognised,

and finally, the state has to take special measures to enact laws that will enable the prevention of gender-based violence," she added.

Judith Herbertson, development director, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Bangladesh, British High Commission said, "We recognise violence against women and girls as another sort of global pandemic, rooted in unequal power dynamics between women and men; and reinforced by harmful social norms and inequality under the law."

National Human Rights Commission Chairperson Nasima Begum in her speech as chief guest said service provider organisations should come forward to prevent the increasing incidents of violence against women and girls.

Sahely Ferdous, assistant inspector general of police and Dr Abul Hossain, project director, Multi-Sectoral programme for Violence against Women, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs also spoke at the webinar.

The webinar also recommended that quick measures should be taken so that "virtual court ordinances" can function in emergencies without any hindrance and there must be massive awareness campaigns to stop rape, child marriage and domestic violence.

3 'Ansar al Islam' men arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion claimed to have arrested three suspected members of banned militant outfit Ansar al Islam from Dhaka's Dhanmondi and Savar on Wednesday.

The arrestees are Nahid Mina (27) of Gopalganj, Salam Hawlader (25) of Jhalkathi and a 17-year-old hailing from Gazipur.

Based on information provided by two arrested members of the outfit, a team of Rab-4 conducted drives around 9:30pm and arrested them, said Ziaur Rahman Chowdhury, assistant director of Rab-4.

Nahid is a driver by profession who has been an "active member" of the outfit since last three years. He was involved in motivating others.

Salam is a former employee of a private company who collected money for the outfit while the 17-year-old college student used to share "extremist write-ups" and videos online, Rab claimed in a press statement.

Graft in

FROM PAGE 3

They said as TIB is adamant to be impartial while conducting its institutional activities, people involved in the institution are also adamant to maintain political impartiality both in personal and professional surroundings.

Some 44 TIB members with different professional identities, who have been involved in the institution on the basis of voluntary services in social movement against graft, participated in the meeting.

Moderated by TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman, the conference was chaired by Kazi Mohammad Mortuza Ali, representative of members at the TIB general assembly.

After the meeting, attending TIB members in a declaration paper voiced concern over increase in violence against women in Bangladesh and other parts of the globe amid the pandemic. Besides, they expressed deep concern for increase in rape incidents like an epidemic due to lack of justice.

They called for ensuring proper punishment to culprits to stop violence against children and women and rape.

The TIB members said crisis in the country's already corrupt health sector deepened further amid the pandemic.

They said misuse of the Digital Security Act (DSA) turned out to be a matter of concern nationally and globally.

Media has been forced to maintain "self-censorship" due to pressure created in the name of DSA and other related laws, which contradicts the spirit of the independent Bangladesh, the TIB members said.

3 held with heroin in Rajshahi

UNB, Rajshahi

Police in a drive arrested three alleged drug traders with 1.1kg heroin from Gopalpur in Rajshahi's Godagari upazila on Wednesday. The arrestees are Jamila (30), Babu Sheikh (21) and Selanur (35).

Acting on a tip-off that some people were heading towards Rajshahi with huge amounts of heroin, a police team intercepted an auto-rickshaw at Gopalpur and seized the drugs worth over Tk 1 crore from the three.

Later, police arrested them for possessing heroin, said Kamruzzaman Mia, in-charge of Godagari Premtoli police camp.

Drive against 8 iconic

FROM PAGE 3

the organisation, if there is lack of coordination and harmony, he further said.

The recent dismissal of local AL presidents and general secretaries in two districts was a message from the party chief to the grassroots, he continued.

Quader said the party's internal discipline is being considered seriously now.

He said activities of those performing duties as public representatives at different levels are also being closely monitored.

Quader called upon leaders and workers of AL and its allied organisations at all levels to abide by the organisational discipline and follow the ideals of Bangabandhu.

FROM PAGE 3

"There is cooperation between the two countries in many sectors," she said.

The Saudi envoy expressed the hope that the existing friendly relationship between the two countries would deepen further under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

He said the bilateral cooperation in the fields of economy, security and manpower between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh will continue.

Al-Duhailan mentioned that over 1.5 million Bangladeshis are working in different sectors in their country. "They're very hard-working and making immense contributions to Saudi economy," he added.

Referring to the existing investment-friendly atmosphere in Bangladesh, the ambassador said Saudi entrepreneurs are keen to come to Bangladesh for investment.

He said their government also welcomes Bangladeshi entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia

to promote trade and business between the two brotherly countries.

"There is a huge potential of investment in Saudi Arabia and we'll extend full support to the Bangladeshi entrepreneurs in this regard," the ambassador said.

Expressing satisfaction over the existing excellent ties between the two countries, Al-Duhailan told the premier that it will be his responsibility to take forward the relationship during his tenure.

The prime minister and the ambassador also discussed the coronavirus issue, Ihsanul Karim said.

At the outset of the meeting, the premier welcomed the new Saudi ambassador and assured him of extending full support during his stay in Bangladesh.

Prime Minister's Office Secretary Md Tofazzel Hossain Mian was present at the meeting.

Later, Bhutanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Rinchen Kuentsyl paid a courtesy call on the prime minister, the press secretary said.



Winter is here at Barishal, with yesterday's temperature dipping below 20 degrees Celcius, a trend that is expected to continue from hereon. Customers are flocking to stores and malls for winter garbs, like this scene from the city's Fazlul Haque Avenue. A hub for cheaper articles, the makeshift stores of the area have seen a sharp rise in business. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

VACANCY NOTICE

(Re-advertisement)

United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh announces a post of **Communications Officer (SB-3)** for UNDP Cox's Bazar Crisis Response Office.

The duration of the Service Contract (SC) is one year initially, subject to renewal on an annual basis upon satisfactory performance and availability of funds.

For details of the Job Description and instructions to apply, please visit our website: <https://jobs.partneragencies.net/erecruitjobs.html?JobOpeningId=33899>

Applications should be received no later than **Tuesday, 8 December 2020.**

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

Female and people living with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

World Health Organization
Bangladesh

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

The World Health Organization in Bangladesh invites Request for Information from the interested Companies/Garment Factories/Suppliers in Bangladesh for Pre-qualification of suppliers for supply of visibility material such as Vests, T-shirts, Caps, Scarf etc:

1. RFI/BAN/2020/001: Developing specifications and samples of high-quality visibility material suitable for weather of Bangladesh.

Deadline for the submission of RFI: 14:00hrs, 06 December 2020.

Interested Companies/Institutes/NGOs can view and download the relevant RFI documents from: <https://www.who.int/bangladesh/about-us/procurement-notice>

This Request for Information is not a solicitation and replying to it does not guarantee that a vendor will be invited to any solicitation by WHO. No further details of the planned solicitation will be made available to vendors prior to the issuance of solicitation documents.

Interested parties are requested to submit their EOIs in the prescribed templates in a sealed envelope as per the instructions provided in the EOI documents at the Reception of WHO- Country Office for Bangladesh, United House (Ground to 3rd Floor), 10 Gulshan Avenue, Gulshan-1, Dhaka.

A one-stop

FROM PAGE 3

In his speech, Ahmed Munirur Saleheen, secretary of the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Ministry, said giving potential migrants the opportunity of getting the correct and accurate information is part of a collective responsibility to ensure safe and orderly migration.

He said the ministry has been trying in different ways to disseminate information.

"Unfortunately, people are not well informed to the extent that we expect them to be informed," he added.

Plot Sale

Uttara Rajuk 3rd phase Sector 16, Block H, 3 Katha attracting corner plot. Contact: **01719556739**

পূর্বাচল মহাসড়কের পাশে

POHS প্রট বিক্রয়

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Institute of Business Administration, R.U.

Grafting method increases tomato yields

SHYKH SERAJ

A few days back, on a sunny November morning, I went to Tingaon village in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila. The rural areas of the country have changed a lot, while some are in process. For example, farmers used to come to the field in early morning as farm work usually starts in the morning. But now farmers arrive the field around 10:00am. Agricultural technology has made their life more comfortable and easy. However, it is a popular belief that there are plenty of fallow lands in Sylhet region. In other words, the people of this area are perhaps less attracted to farming. Nowadays, farming is going through a change there with increasing investment. Moreover, young farmers are becoming more interested in farming sector.

Today, we'll see how tomatoes can transform a village. Bodu Mia, a farm entrepreneur, was also with me during my visit to Tingaon village. I know Bodu for quite a long time. This man has a deep affection for farming and farmers. As I walked along the village road from the upazila headquarters, I saw fields with bamboo poles on both sides. Reaching a little closer, I saw tomatoes being cultivated here. Bamboo poles have been used to facilitate vertical farming of tomatoes. This method of farming seems to have changed the look of the farm. Those who regularly watch 'Hridoye Mati O Manush' (Soil & People in Heart) may remember that I have presented detailed documentaries on tomato farming and marketing in Sylhet region several times. Farmers were happy to see the bumper yield of tomatoes when its production increased. When they went to the market, they faced the inevitable crisis: lots of tomatoes without any price at all. I can still remember a vivid event where many farmers wasted their tomatoes out of fury as they could not sell per maund (40 kgs) of tomatoes at even Tk 20 (USD 0.24). One morning I came across another event with



Farmer Bodu Mia at his tomato farm located at Tingaon village in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

were usually planted in the Bangla month of Agrahayan and Poush. Chaitra was the production month. Now farmer prepares seedlings with the target of getting the vegetable for nine months, apart from the regular season of three months in a year. And in this method, you are getting double or more yield. Talking to another farmer Belal Hossain, I came to know that his life has changed by cultivating tomatoes. This would not have been possible without technology. Talking to another tomato farmer Syed Mia, I learned that he earns around Tk 3 lakh (USD 3540) a year from tomatoes. Previously, he used to earn only Tk 60,000 (USD 708) in a year. Sometimes the losses have to be counted. Yusuf Ali was in a state of complete deprivation. He got the mantra to become successful from tomato cultivation. Now he is doing much better than before. All the farmers say that one farmer has made a great contribution to the diversification and development of agriculture in this whole area. He is Bodu, a farmer and also a great organizer. He is a hundred percent passionate farmer. Bodu has a great inclination towards new crops and technology. He has played the role of an extension worker in motivating tomato growers through local grafting technology. The humble Bodu said, he learnt about organic farming from one of my Krishi Budget Krishoker Budget (Farmers' Voices in Budget) open-field sessions in Sylhet. Since then, he devoted himself to the field of organic farming. He understands that sustainable agriculture means organic farming. Fortunately, the farmers here are not only focused on crop production and profit, but they also have in mind the idea of producing safe food.

Tomatoes have changed the economy of Tingaon village and the days of the farmers. Farmers can buy five trucks of bricks by selling one truck of tomatoes today. I saw farmers no more live in the mud-house, they now have concrete buildings. This is real prosperity, this is development. As I said before, our farmers are now much more interested and aware in using technology, understanding the benefits of commercial farming and this is how they are moving onward to higher yields. Apart from Habiganj, this grafting technology of tomato has also spread in the surrounding districts. I would humbly request the agricultural research authority of Bangladesh to do in-depth research in developing tomato varieties and new technologies. As far as I know, BARI-8 variety of tomato is very popular among the farmers. If the seedlings that the farmer is making by grafting with BARI-8 and Tit begun could be developed by the research authority, then farmers would be able to save both time and extra land for making it. Farmers could benefit by producing other crops on the same land if they get the seedlings. I earnestly hope that agricultural research institutes will look into the matter and soon would be able to provide rain- and disease-resistant new tomato varieties to the farmers.

Shykh Seraj is Bangladesh's pioneer development journalist. He received country's two highest civilian honours, Swadhinata Puroshkar and Ekushey Padak, respectively. He is a BIDS, Ashoka and Bangla Academy Fellow. He also received highest award for agricultural journalism from the United Nations, FAO A.H. Boerma Award, Gusi Peace Prize (Philippines) and many other prestigious accolades at home and abroad. At Channel i, he's the Founder Director and Head of News. He's also Director and Host of Channel i's popular agro-documentary, Hridoye Mati O Manush.



a difficult scene at Nimsa Bazaar in Cumilla. When summer tomato cultivation started in the Barind region of Rajshahi, there was a rush to ripen tomatoes using hormones across the country. It affected the markets all around the nation. I remember a few years back, I saw the administration's strict drive in Shariatpur. I have seen farmers being severely affected. But they know how to turn around. Farmers are now selling these tomatoes directly from the field at Tk 70 per KG (USD 0.83). They have wholeheartedly welcomed technology to their farming method. By adding it to their cultivation, farmers now expect to make more profit.

When I went to the field of Dulal Mia, a farmer from Tingaon village, the scorching heat of the sun was right on our heads. The silver mulching paper on the field was so shiny. I came to learn that tomatoes are being

produced here all year round. Farmers are grafting tomato seedlings from the base of the Tit begun plant (Turkey berry). As a result, tomatoes are becoming more sustainable on one hand, and on the other, farmers are getting higher yields. In the last few years, the grafting method has changed the fortunes of hundreds of farmers in the area. According to the Department of Agriculture, tomatoes are grown on 4,500 bighas (1803 acre) of land in Habiganj, of which Madhabpur alone has 1,875 bighas (751 acre). Of these, the grafting method is being used in about 200 bighas (80 acre). Let me tell you one thing, the grafting method of vegetable cultivation started in the 1920s. It is very common, especially in the agricultural scenario in Japan and Korea, 71 percent and 54 percent respectively. Grafting methods became very popular in tomato cultivation in France and Italy in the 2000s.

I remember going to the then Institute of Post Graduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA) in Gazipur in the late 80s, now established as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University (BSMRAU), to cover their research on tomato grafting with Tit begun. Since both belong to the Solanaceae family, the grafting goes well in between them. Dulal, the farmer from Tingaon village, says grafted plants face fewer diseases, gives a high yield. Earlier, an ordinary tomato plant where 5 to 10 kg of tomatoes could be harvested now that very plant gives 25 kgs of tomatoes. Grafted tomato plants are water tolerant and do not rot even during heavy rainfall. Due to huge demand for seedlings, farmer Dulal has adopted the grafting technique himself.

Farmers are practising grafting method, keeping in mind the year-round demand for tomatoes. Earlier, tomato seedlings



The prices of TSP, a fertiliser that is widely used by farmers on winter crops, have been rising alarmingly in Lalmonirhat. This photo of a farmer applying TSP on a cauliflower filed was taken recently from Karnapur village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

TSP fertiliser prices on the rise in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Rising prices and scanty supply of triple superphosphate (TSP) fertiliser are worrying farmers in Lalmonirhat.

They said the situation spells trouble for them as they are currently in the mid-season of growing various winter crops including potato, maize and winter vegetables.

They also demanded the authorities increase their monitoring activities at fertiliser markets during the primetime of winter crop cultivation.

Naresh Chandra Barman, a farmer in Kamalabari village of Aditmari upazila, said the TSP is needed to be applied on the crops every day at this stage of the cultivation. But if it is not applied in time due to unavailability or higher prices, quality or yield of the crops might fall.

The authorities, therefore, need to be vigilant for price manipulation at fertiliser markets, he also said.

Acknowledging that there is a supply shortage of TSP, Shamim Ashraf, deputy director of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat, said instead of the TSP, the DAE advises farmers to use diammonium phosphate (DAP), which has higher nutrients and is cheaper than the TSP.

The TSP includes only phosphate whereas the DAP includes both phosphate and urea. "But without realising the advantage, the farmers have been in favour of the TSP," he added.

However, farmer Nazrul Islam, from

Karnapur village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said he prefers TSP to DAP as the former is more effective in controlling diseases and ensuring essential nutrition in winter crops.

Mozammel Haque, another farmer from the same village, said according to the government rate, the TSP is to be sold at Tk 22 per kilogram.

But fertiliser traders have been selling it at Tk 28 to 29 per kg. "Since we have to get TSP [for the crops], we are compelled to buy it at higher prices," he added.

When asked, Ashraful Islam, a fertiliser dealer of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), said the supply of TSP has been less than the demand requires and they have been getting it at higher prices from Patenga in Chattogram.

And that is why they have to sell it to farmers at higher prices, he explained.

Mozammel Haque, in-charge of BADC fertiliser depot in Mahendranagar, said each fertiliser dealer has been allotted 6 tonnes of TSP in November and all fertilisers are being sold to farmers at preset prices via 92 dealers in the district.

Contacted, Shamim Ashraf, deputy director of DAE in Lalmonirhat, claimed that their field officers have been working to control fertiliser prices.

Admitting that some dealers might sell TSP at higher prices due to supply shortage, he also said, "I will be sending a letter to the ministry concerned to increase the supply of TSP as soon as possible."

Addict man kills minor son for money in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A drug addict youth killed his minor son allegedly over a family feud for money in Phulbari upazila of the district yesterday.

Villagers, however, caught culprit Subash Chandra Mohanta, 28, son of Sunil Chandra Mohanta of Barai village, and handed him over to the police.

Anita Mohanta, mother of the 22-month-old victim Babu, said her drug addict husband often used to torture her for money since their marriage two years ago.

On Wednesday afternoon, Subas demanded some money from her for buying drugs.

When she refused to give him the money he physically tortured her, she said, adding that her parents were supposed to visit her house yesterday morning to settle the matter.

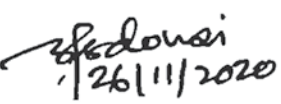
But around 7:00am, Subash stabbed his son to death with a knife, when she went out for her work and started behaving abnormally, Anita alleged.

Locals rushed to the house, caught Subas from the spot and informed the police.

On information, police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital for autopsy, Officer in Charge of Phulbari Police Station Fakhrul Islam said.

A case was filed with the police station accusing Subas the same evening, he added.

After the murder a pall of gloom descended the locality.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh					
National Malaria Elimination Program					
Disease Control Division					
DGHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212					
Standard Format for Advertising Expressions of Interest (EOI) for Services					
1	Ministry/Division		Ministry of Health & Family Affairs.		
2	Agency		Directorate General of Health Services.		
3	Procuring entity name		Director, Disease Control & Line Director (CDC), Directorate General of Health Services, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.		
4	Title of service		Lot-1 Round Table Discussion & Supplementary Publication in National Print Media, Lot-2 Round Table Discussion and Live Recorded Telecast in Electronic Media.		
5	Procuring entity district		Dhaka.		
6	Expression of interest for selection of		Consulting Firm.		
7	EOI Ref No.		DGHS/DC/Mal/Admin/2020.4370		
8	Date		November 25, 2020.		
KEY INFORMATION					
9	Procurement method		Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS).		
FUNDING INFORMATION					
10	Budget and source of funds		Development Budget.		
11	Development partner (if applicable)		Global Fund.		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION					
12	Project/programme code (if applicable)				
	Project/programme name (if applicable)		National Malaria Elimination Program.		
13	EOI closing date and time		November 09, 2020		Time: 5:00pm
14	EOI opening date and time		November 10, 2020		Time: 12:00 Noon
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT					
15	Brief description of the assignment		As per ToR.		
16	Experience, resources & delivery capacity required		The interested applicants advertising/Media/Consulting Firm shall have to submit the following documents with their application.		
17	Other details (if applicable)				
18	Association with foreign firms is		Not encouraged.		
	Ref No.	Phasing of services	Location	Indicative start date	Indicative completion
19	Lot-1	1	Dhaka		Dec-20
20	Lot-2	1	Dhaka		Dec-20
PROCUREMENT ENTITY DETAILS					
21	Name of the official inviting EOI		Prof. Dr. Shahnila Ferdousi.		
22	Designation of the official inviting EOI		Director, DC & Line Director, CDC, DGHS.		
23	Address of the official inviting EOI		National Malaria Elimination & ATD Control Program Office, House # 240, Lane-17, New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka.		
24	Contact details of the official inviting EOI		29885744	mpdc_dghs@yahoo.com.	
<div> Prof. Dr. Shahnila Ferdousi Director, DC & Line Director, CDC DGHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212 Tel: 9880948</div>					
GD-1889					

‘Conclude the final phase’

Ethiopia PM orders offensive against Tigray leaders in Mekele; rights watchdogs warn bombarding could constitute war crime

AFP, ADDIS ABABA

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed yesterday ordered Ethiopia's army to launch a final offensive against Tigray's dissident leaders in their regional capital Mekele, saying the deadline for surrender had expired.

Abiy, the winner of last year's Nobel Peace Prize, late Sunday gave the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) 72 hours to lay down their arms.

The ultimatum was rejected by the leaders of the region, whose forces have been fighting federal troops in the country's north for three weeks, displacing over 40,000 people and killing hundreds.

Ethiopia's army -- which in recent days said it was advancing on Mekele with tanks -- had been directed "to conclude the third and final phase" against the TPLF, Abiy said.

"In this final phase, great care will be given to protect innocent civilians from harm. All efforts will be made to ensure that the city of Mekele, which was built through the hard work of our people, will not be severely damaged," Abiy said.

He said "thousands" of TPLF militia and special forces had surrendered to federal forces before the deadline lapsed.

Amnesty International and other rights watchdogs warned bombarding Mekele

could constitute a war crime.

It was not immediately clear how close the army was to the city. A communications blackout in Tigray and restrictions on reporting have made verifying claims from both sides difficult.

Diplomats briefed on the fighting told AFP Wednesday that federal forces were at least 30 kilometres (18 miles) from Mekele to the north and the south.

The threatened assault and fears for Mekele's half a million inhabitants accelerated diplomatic efforts this week to mediate, with the UN Security Council holding its first meeting on the crisis on Tuesday.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres urged "the leaders of Ethiopia to do everything possible to protect civilians" as the US, EU and other international powers encouraged mediation through the African Union, headquartered in Addis Ababa. Abiy stressed that Ethiopia's defence forces had "carefully devised" a strategy to defeat the TPLF in Mekele without harming civilians or public property. "We call on the people of Mekele and its environs to disarm, stay at home and stay away from military targets" and assist by handing over TPLF elements in their midst, Abiy said.



Residents of the Palestinian Yarmuk camp, on the southern outskirts of the Syrian capital Damascus, walk past destroyed buildings yesterday as families visit the destroyed residential district to inspect their abandoned apartments and register with the authorities with the hope of eventually returning to their homes.

PHOTO: AFP

1m Palestinians under poverty line in Gaza: UN

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

The Israel-led blockade of the Gaza Strip cost the Palestinian enclave more than \$16bn and pushed more than one million people below the poverty line in just more than 10 years, according to a new United Nations report.

The document issued on Wednesday by the UN's Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to the General Assembly covered the years between 2007 and 2018.

It called for an immediate stop to the continuing siege that has caused a near-collapse of economic activities in Gaza and a poverty rate of 56 percent.

"The situation is going to get worse if the blockade continues," said Mahmoud Elkhafif, coordinator of the Assistance to the Palestinian People of UNCTAD.

"This unfair blockade in which two million Palestinians are kept inside Gaza should be lifted immediately. They should be allowed to move freely, do business, trade with the outside world and reconnect with their families outside of the Strip," Elkhafif added.

Since June 2007, people of Gaza have been confined to the 365 square kilometres enclave of the Strip and subject to a land, air and sea embargo.

The entry of goods has been reduced to a minimum, while external trade and exports have been stopped. Meanwhile, the population has very limited access to safe water and lack regular electricity supply or even a proper sewage system.



A volunteer is examined by Cira 3, a remote-controlled robot that runs tests on suspected coronavirus disease patients to limit the human exposure to the virus, amid a second wave of infections in Tanta, Egypt. The photo was released yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

2016 TURKEY COUP TRIAL

Over 300 ex-pilots, other suspects jailed for life

AFP, ANKARA

A Turkish court jailed 337 former pilots and other suspects for life in one of the largest trials stemming from the bloody 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Fethullah Gulen, a US-based Muslim preacher who was once an Erdogan ally, is accused of ordering the failed putsch. Gulen, whose movement has been proscribed as a terrorist group by Ankara, strongly denies all charges.

A total of 251 people died and more than 2,000 were injured in what has turned into the defining moment of Erdogan's rule and contemporary Turkish politics.

The country's largest courtroom was packed with dozens of security personnel and lawyers and the presiding judge ordered one protesting defendant to "Sit down!" several times before reading the verdict.

He handed down multiple life sentences

to disgruntled air force pilots who bombed the capital Ankara and civilians who orchestrated the coup attempt from inside the Akinci military base near the capital.

Court documents obtained by AFP showed 337 defendants handed life sentences for murder, violating the constitutional order and attempting to assassinate Erdogan.

Sixty suspects were given jail sentences of various lengths while 75 were acquitted. The full verdict was expected to be officially published later yesterday.

"Justice has been served," Ufuk Yegin, who represents a victims' families association, told AFP.

"We believe the punishments were given in accordance with existing laws."

The then chief of staff general Hulusi Akar -- now the defence minister -- and other top commanders were held hostage at the military base overnight before their rescue on the morning of July 16, 2016.

Be safe amid pandemic

Biden urges Americans; Trump pardons ex-aide Flynn

REUTERS, WILMINGTON

President-elect Joe Biden pleaded with Americans on Wednesday to take steps to remain safe over the Thanksgiving holiday as Covid-19 cases soar, while President Donald Trump pardoned a former aide who twice pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI.

Biden gave a presidential-style speech acknowledging people's fatigue with restrictions amid the coronavirus pandemic, but urged them to exercise caution as caseloads surge.

"I know the country has grown weary of the fight. We need to remember - we're at war with the virus, not with one another," Biden said as he urged Americans to forgo the type of big family gatherings normally associated with the holiday, wear protective masks and maintain social distancing.

The Democratic former vice president again said he would take



immediate steps to address the coronavirus pandemic when he takes office on January 20. During the campaign, Biden accused Trump, a Republican, of panicking and surrendering in the face of a public health crisis.

Shortly after Biden spoke, Trump pardoned his former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who had pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with the former Russian ambassador in Washington.

It marked the latest instance in

which Trump has used his power of executive clemency to benefit a friend or associate.

Prominent Democrats responded quickly and angrily.

"President Trump's pardoning of Michael Flynn, who twice pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his dealings with a foreign adversary, is an act of grave corruption and a brazen abuse of power," House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a statement.

More than 261,000 Americans have died from Covid-19, with the daily toll on Tuesday surpassing 2,000 for the first time since May, as infections and hospitalizations surge nationally. The United States leads the world in Covid-19 cases and deaths.

Biden said the United States faced "a long hard winter" but that it was during the most difficult circumstances that "the soul of our nation has been forged."

AI-ENHANCED RACIAL PROFILING

UN experts sound alarm

AFP, GENEVA

Countries must do more to combat racial profiling, UN rights experts said yesterday, warning that artificial intelligence programmes like facial recognition and predictive policing risked reinforcing the harmful practice. Racial profiling is not new but the technologies once seen as tools for bringing more objectivity and fairness to policing appear in many places to be making the problem worse.

"There is a great risk that (AI technologies will) reproduce and reinforce biases and aggravate or lead to discriminatory practices," Jamaican human rights expert Verene Shepherd told AFP.

She is one of the 18 independent experts who make up the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which yesterday published guidance on how countries worldwide should work to end racial profiling by law enforcement.

The committee, which monitors compliance by 182 signatory countries to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, raised particular concern over the use of AI algorithms for so-called "predictive policing" and "risk assessment".

The systems have been touted to help make better use of limited police budgets, but research suggests it can increase deployments to communities which have already been identified, rightly or wrongly, as high-crime zones.

"Historical arrest data about a neighbourhood may reflect racially biased policing practices," Shepherd warned.

"Such data will deepen the risk of over-policing in the same neighbourhood, which in turn may lead to more arrests, creating a dangerous feedback loop."

When artificial intelligence and algorithms use biased historical data, their profiling predictions will reflect that. "Bad data in, bad results out," Shepherd said.

West 'using dirty methods'

Russia's top diplomat tells Belarus strongman who faced months of protests over his disputed re-election

AFP, MINSK

Russia's foreign minister accused the West of interfering in Belarus yesterday as he met strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko who has faced months of protests over his disputed re-election.

Sergei Lavrov held talks with Lukashenko and other top officials in the capital Minsk, in the latest show of Russia's support for authorities in its ex-Soviet neighbour.

Thousands of protesters demanding Lukashenko's resignation have taken to the streets of Minsk every weekend since an August 9 election that saw the 66-year-old claim a sixth term in office.

Protesters believe political novice Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, 38, who took her jailed husband's place in the presidential race, was the true winner.

Moscow has continued to back Lukashenko since the protests erupted, with several meetings between senior officials from both sides in



recent months.

Speaking at a press conference with his Belarusian counterpart Vladimir Makei, Lavrov accused the United States and several European countries of "gross interference" in the domestic affairs of Belarus.

"The wise Belarusian people are able to sort themselves out without any outside prompting and intrusive offers of unsolicited mediation," Lavrov said.

Lukashenko has accused Western countries of

orchestrating the demonstrations and conspiring to have him removed after 26 years in power.

Lavrov said the West is "using dirty methods of so-called colour revolutions, including manipulating public opinion, supporting forces that are openly anti-government and promoting their radicalisation".

Several Western leaders have refused to recognise the results of the election and voiced support for Tikhanovskaya, who fled to EU member Lithuania shortly after the vote.

The European Union has slapped sanctions on Lukashenko and a number of his allies citing election rigging and a violent police crackdown on demonstrators.

Belarus police detained thousands of protesters in the first days of the demonstrations, with many reporting torture and abuse in custody.

They have continued to regularly arrest demonstrators and opposition figures, and several people have died during the protests.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Australian-British lecturer freed in Iran prisoner swap

An Australian-British academic jailed for spying by Iran has been released after two "traumatic" years behind bars, in a swap for three Iranians linked to a botched Bangkok bomb plot. Middle East scholar Kylie Moore-Gilbert said yesterday that departing Iran was "bittersweet" despite "injustices" endured during more than 800 days detained in the country's toughest prisons. "I came to Iran as a friend and with friendly intentions," she said, praising the "warm-hearted, generous and brave" Iranian people, despite what she called a "long and traumatic ordeal". The 33-year-old was arrested by Iran's hardline Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in 2018, after attending an academic conference in the holy city of Qom in central Iran.



Two Indian soldiers killed in terror attack in J&K

Two Army soldiers have been killed in a terrorist attack near the HMT area on the outskirts of Jammu and Kashmir's capital, Srinagar, police said yesterday. The soldiers were part of an Army patrol team that came under heavy firing from terrorists, police said. The Army team was deployed to secure roads for security convoys. "Three terrorists started shooting at our Army soldiers. Two jawans were critically injured and reportedly died of injuries. Jaish has active movement here, by evening we'll identify the group. Terrorists fled in a car and were armed. Two are probably Pakistani and one local," a senior police officer was quoted by news agency ANI as saying.

Explosion rocks Greek-operated tanker in Saudi port

An explosion rocked a Greek-operated oil tanker docked at Saudi Arabia's port of Shuqaiq on Wednesday, Greek officials said, in an attack that a Riyadh-led military coalition blamed on Yemeni rebels. The blast on the Maltese-flagged Agrari tanker follows a string of attacks by the Iran-linked rebels on Saudi oil infrastructure, highlighting the growing perils of a five-year military campaign led by the kingdom in Yemen. The tanker was "attacked by an unknown source" while it was preparing to depart from the Red Sea port of Shuqaiq, its Greece-based operator TMS Tankers said, adding that no injuries were reported. "The Agrari was struck about one meter above the waterline and has suffered a breach," TMS Tankers said in a statement.

SOURCE: AFP, NDTV



(L) Team members of Swayong. (R) Swayong's Founder, Swatil Mahmud, at the 'Rage against rape' protests in front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.



PHOTOS: MONON MUNTAKA

Dismantling social injustices through storytelling

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Founded by Swatil Mahmud, Swayong is an inclusive platform that addresses women's issues through myth-busting and storytelling. It intends to provide women with a safe space to express themselves, while inspiring others. "Swayong means individuality, and every person's story is important to us," Swatil asserted. The platform was created in June this year, while the idea was conceived as Swatil came across people from different walks of life during her undergraduate education at Sunway University, Malaysia. She realised that regardless of country and society, everyone faces harassment and injustice.

Swatil saw the pandemic and the subsequent months of isolation as the ideal opportunity to launch Swayong, as people were spending plenty of time on the internet. "We were tired of waiting for others to do things and decided to initiate the changes that we wanted to see. We felt that there was a dire need for meaningful content and conversations," said Swatil's sister, Kazi Mitul Mahmud, Co-founder, Swayong.

The organisation was declared as runners up in Digital Khichuri Challenge 2020's Ideation Competition. Through

their work, they addressed gender-based issues faced by female frontline warriors, including healthcare workers, hospital staff and journalists.

As a survivor of child abuse, Swatil appreciates the power of storytelling. "Stories connect with more people and encourage them to share their personal experiences," she said. She opened up about the abuse to her sister, realising that acceptance and tolerance are important pillars of familial relationships. "Elders need to provide children with the space to share their experiences and appreciate their courage," Swatil added. She also emphasised on the role of school authorities in shaping the minds of children. "They must ensure safe spaces in the campus and teach young boys how to behave, thereby busting patriarchal standards," she further said. "Making sex education compulsory in all educational curriculums will also mitigate the problem."

Swayong's activities are currently virtual, due to the ongoing pandemic. Their first campaign, entitled 'ShorirJarShiddhantoTar | Your Body, Your Choice: Breasts & Bra Series', intended to celebrate all features of the female body, and called for an end to sexualisation

and objectification. They collaborated with WeMen View for another online campaign, shedding light on the alarming rise in cases of sexual harassment in public places. They also participated in Rise of Youth Community Global's 'Silent the Silence' campaign, featuring stories of transgender individuals. "The main challenge was gathering the stories for this series as these people felt afraid and ashamed to share their tales of injustice," she said.

They also collaborated with Wander Woman, a social platform for female travellers of Bangladesh, to conduct a campaign called 'Horrors of Travel'. "The number of solo female travelers has increased immensely in the past few years, but amidst the 'Instagram-worthy' pictures, there are tales of violence and horror, raising questions on how the world treats women who travel alone," Swatil added. This campaign was fueled by an incident of harassment faced by both the founders during a trip to Sunamganj.

Swayong's members were also active participants of the 'Rage against Rape' protests, organised by Feminists Across Generations. Swatil gave a heartfelt speech at the protests in front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. After her speech,

a girl came up to her with teary eyes and hugged her, as a gesture of solidarity. "It was a powerful experience, and I will never forget the warmth of that hug," Swatil said. Swayong also introduced a campaign, featuring stories from the protests to connect with more people.

The organisation is currently supported by a group of young volunteers called, 'Swayong's Warriors' and the founders have arranged online capacity building sessions to train them. Their other initiative includes live sessions under the banner 'AngurFolTok'. They will use this platform to address issues such as problematic song lyrics and workplace challenges for female frontline workers. "It is a model that deviates from the typical jargon-heavy webinars and encourages guests and participants to be candid," Swatil added.

Moving forward, Swayong will organise an awareness week on the transgender community, and they will work with Bangladesh Development Project, an organisation based in the USA, to share first-hand accounts of garment factory workers' experiences in the industry during the pandemic. The stories have been collected and are scheduled to be shared from Swayong's online profiles this month.

Nasif Imtiaz looks to tell meaningful visual stories

SUMAIYA KABIR

Photographer Nasif Imtiaz's name comes up amidst those whose art transcends borders and makes us Bangladeshis proud. His photographs bring forth a face of society that not all of us might have the heart to process, but one that will always be worth discussions.

Behind all his heartfelt images lies a long and challenging journey that began in 2011. Even though it wasn't until 2014 that he got his hands on some professional equipment, it was as early as 2012, when for the first time, his photographs were featured in an exhibition at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. It was part of a photography contest at North South University, where he

Geographic's Instagram photography community 'Your Shot' to *The Huffington Post* in Germany and Columbia University, his captures have been featured far and wide.

From the crucial scenes of the Rohingya crisis, to the unforgettable fire breakout in Chawkbazar and the vibrant celebrations of Durga Puja and Holi, Nasif is always present at all the right places at the right times to immortalise fleeting and important moments.

His most recent photography project, titled *Can't Remember Anything*, documents the many faces of mentally unstable patients and their everyday lives at the Pabna Mental Hospital. He tells stories of patients who have lost their sanity from domestic violence,



PHOTO: COURTESY OF NASIF IMTIAZ

Kamlapur Railway Station.

What makes these photographs come to life is that Nasif doesn't just click zoom on his lenses or use a drone – he goes as up and close to his subjects as possible. "I talk to them and get to know their story in details. I take my time to convince them that their photographs are secure with me. I earn their trust and I truly empathise," he shares. "I travel to a lot of different places for my work. My subjects range from mentally unstable patients to homeless people on the streets. I am always exposed and at risk. I have received severe threats from people, who I believe really could've taken my life if they'd wanted to."

Interestingly, Nasif is also a lyricist. He has written many popular numbers, sung or composed by celebrated artistes such as Fuad and Rafa.

Nasif loves making everyone happy through his work. He recognises that wedding photography is no longer as simple as it used to be and not everyone can afford it these days. So, every wedding season, he offers to officially take photographs for people on their special day for free. "Men may not care much for it, but women do. How can they not keep pictures of the best day of their lives?" he adds.

His latest wedding photographs were of a blind couple. All of his work, mainly focusing on human rights issues such as drug abuse, child labour and mental health awareness, can be found at www.nasifimtiaz.com.



'Holi Festival' by Nasif Imtiaz

was completing his BBA. Nasif recalled that at the time, his only gear was a mobile phone with a 2 MP camera.

"It is all about deciding which moment to capture – that's where the art is," says the internationally published young documentary photographer. From National

a divorce, or a business deal gone wrong, and of those who have forever been left behind, with no guardian returning to take them back home, even though they have been cured.

Another notable work by him is one that he spent more than two years on – surreal images of drug-consuming orphans at the

www.youthop.com
YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Aquaculture, Environment and Society Plus 2021

The Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Aquaculture, Environment and Society Plus (EMJMD ACES+) offers a unique opportunity to study in up to four centres of European excellence in aquaculture research and learning: Scotland, Crete, France and the Netherlands. It will also allow you to

gain the practical and theoretical skills needed for a successful career in aquaculture through industry-led research programs, internships and fieldwork.

DEADLINE: February 15, 2021 | Fellowships

2021 Dorothy Marchus Senesh Fellowship for Women in Peace and Development Studies from Countries in the Global South

The International Peace Research Association Foundation invites applications for the Dorothy Marchus Senesh Fellowship in Peace and Development Studies for Women from countries in the Global South. Dorothy Senesh was a long-time activist for international peace and justice. Her

husband, Lawrence Senesh, established this fellowship following her death in 1989. The first award was made at the IPRA 25th Anniversary conference, July 1990, in Groningen, Netherlands and has been made biennially ever since.

DEADLINE: January 16, 2021 | Awards

FASPE Journalism Program 2021

FASPE is an intensive, two-week study program in professional ethics and ethical leadership. FASPE is neither a Holocaust studies course, nor a genocide prevention program. Rather, the curriculum is designed to challenge Fellows to critically examine

constructs, current developments and issues that raise ethical concerns in their professions in contemporary settings in which they work.

DEADLINE: January 7, 2021 | Fellowships



FASPE Journalism
 APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN
 DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: January 6, 2021
 PROGRAM DATES: May 21 – June 4, 2021

Fellowships at
 Auschwitz
 for the Study of
 Professional Ethics

FASPE-ETHICS.ORG

Govt made good progress in getting Covid-19 vaccines

We now need a prudent vaccine policy and a strong cold chain network

IT is reassuring to learn that Bangladesh will secure nearly 100 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines from two sources by next year. The government will buy 68 million doses from Gavi under a global arrangement called COVAX and another 30 million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from the Serum Institute of India via Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd. According to officials of the health directorate, the country expects to receive the first shipment of vaccine doses from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, between February and June 2021. However, the government is yet to decide which section of population will get priority in getting vaccinated first. Since it will take a really long time to get our entire population vaccinated, those who are most vulnerable to the virus must be vaccinated first.

According to health directorate sources, the government is developing a National Vaccine Deployment Plan to determine the priority population for the vaccines, which it is supposed to complete within a day or two. Priority is likely to be given to the healthcare workers, including doctors, nurses, health management and support workers, technicians who are directly involved in treatment and other related activities. As the government sources say, this will be done in line with the recommendations of World Health Organization and the foundational principles of the COVAX collaboration, a global effort to improve poorer countries' access to vaccines. The frontline professionals, such as members of law enforcement agencies, journalists, and people aged above 60 with comorbidity, are likely to receive the shots in the second phase. However, the population aged under 18 may not be vaccinated in the first and second phases.

So far, the progress made by the government in getting the vaccines and the plans for determining the priority population seem to be well-thought-out. Now, focus needs to be given to the issues of vaccine deployment—the cold chain, necessary equipment, transportation and human resources. The government needs to assess if our existing cold chain network under the EPI programme is capable of preserving and delivering such a huge volume of vaccines scientifically or whether there is any need for upgradation of the cold chain. The government must consider the fact that after procurement, vaccines need to be transported to the remote parts of the country and administered rapidly at the right temperature. Without an appropriate cold chain network, the efficacy of the vaccines might be compromised.

At the same time, the government needs to ensure stringent screening at airports and make sure that people wear masks even after vaccination. If a new strain of the novel coronavirus enters the country and spreads, vaccination may not be sufficient to tackle it, as feared by the health experts.

The great man is no more

His legend will live on

AT the age of 60, Diego Maradona, one of the greatest players to have ever played the game of football, has sadly passed away. We mourn the death of the Argentine maestro along with the rest of the world, but there is little doubt that his legacy will live on, especially in Argentina.

Maradona was a footballing genius. Perhaps only a handful of players have ever changed or impacted the game as much as him. Among his many great achievements, Maradona's performance at the 1986 FIFA World Cup—leading Argentina to victory—will forever be remembered as one of the best moments in football history. While England fans still have nightmares of his famous “hand of God” goal during the Quarter Finals of that tournament, Maradona's second goal in that match, which saw Argentina through to the next round, was voted by FIFA as the greatest goal in the history of the World Cup.

But Maradona was not a one-trick pony. Even though he is best known globally for his performances for Argentina, the true extent of his greatness was apparent in the fact that Maradona almost singlehandedly led Napoli to their only two Serie A titles in the late 1980s—when the Italian league was considered to have the toughest defence in the world of football.

Always a charismatic character, Maradona also led his country as manager during the 2010 World Cup. Although he never quite achieved the same success in his managerial career that he had as a player, his Argentine side was praised for their entertaining football. And that is what he was, a true entertainer.

Some may look back and wonder what Maradona might have achieved if not for his off-the-pitch troubles and antics during his playing days. But as is often the case with so many of the greats, perhaps there can be no genius without a bit of madness. And when it comes to the “beautiful game”, none perhaps typified it more fittingly and with the kind of grace as did Maradona.

Maradona will always remain Argentina's footballing god. But the rest of the world also will remember him as one of the most gifted and entertaining athletes to have graced any sporting field.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

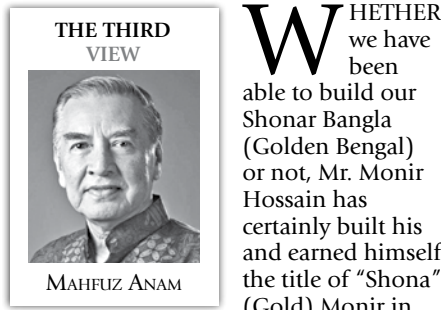
letters@thedailystar.net

Men's reproductive health is vital too

Reproduction has long been portrayed as a “women's issue.” But paying attention to men's reproductive health, like women's, is also important and it has the potential to improve life for the generations to come. By singularly focusing on women's health, we risk losing sight of the unknown and unaddressed reproductive risks associated with men's bodies. Further discussion on this issue might shift the focus of some of the most contentious debates around reproductive policies. We need to break the stigma and talk in depth about the sexual and reproductive health of men and women alike.

Iftekhar Ahmed Sakib, Dhaka

Shonar Bangla's Shona Monirs



WHETHER we have been able to build our Shonar Bangla (Golden Bengal) or not, Mr. Monir Hossain has certainly built his and earned himself the title of “Shona” (Gold) Monir in the process. Not to be left behind, his able assistant, North Dhaka's councillor of the 44th ward, also earned his title of “Shona” Shafiq. Their forte: gold smuggling, money laundering and illegal land transactions in the pricey real estate scene of Dhaka and its outskirts.

Monir rose from being a salesman in the New Market and Gausia area in the early 90s. He saw his bosses sell smuggled goods and came to learn the ropes of the game. He was a fast learner and, from the mid-nineties, started his own small smuggling business transporting contraband goods in his personal luggage on Dhaka-Bangkok-Dhaka flights, bringing in watches, perfumes, gold, etc.

Having earned some money, he opened his gold shop and entered the magic world of Rajuk, the official body that regulates everything related to the city's physical growth, including zoning, planning and land allocation. His luck changed when he found himself a patron in the housing and public works minister of 2000, and his wealth surged between 2001 and 2006 when he was able to lay his hands on a development project in Dhaka's Badda area acquiring, according to media reports, 192 plots in that area alone as well as land in other areas and being owner of two towers—Safa and Zamzam—in Uttara, a suburb of Dhaka, amassing a wealth in excess of Tk 1,000 crores.

Then there was the driver, Abdul Malek, of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), who made his own “Shonar Bangla”, making a fortune of Tk 1,000 crores, owning 24 flats, three multi-storied buildings in Dhaka and a dairy farm on its outskirts.

A 4th-grade accountant of DGHS and his wife laundered Tk 284 crores and now own properties in Canada, Australia and Malaysia.

Former Jubo League leader Ismail Hossain Chowdhury Samrat ran a gambling racket and made so much money that he gambled away Tk 219 crores in two casinos in Singapore between 2011 and 2018.

Two brothers from Faridpur, Sajjad

Hossain Barkat and Imtiaz Hasan Rubel—patronised by the brother of a former powerful minister—amassed 2,450 bighas of land in seven years, forcing people to sell their land and using the police to intimidate or harass them through false cases when needed.

Enamul Huq Enu, former vice-president of the Ganderia unit of AL, and his brother, joint secretary general of the same unit, have 20 houses, 128 flats, 25 kathas of land, and Tk 19.11 crores in

of Monir?

Recently, a Prado SUV has been gifted to a state minister by Monir. He has two MPs' tax-free luxury SUVs in his possession. One has been sold to Monir for around one crore taka. The sale of an MP's tax-free car is only permitted after five years of use. How could this particular MP sell his tax-free car only after one year and a half?

During this same period, Rajuk had 12 chairmen, varying in tenure from 1 to 3



File photo of Rab arresting Monir Hossain from the Merul Badda area in Dhaka.

91 bank accounts, all earned from their illegal casino business.

The above stories are not the results of investigative journalism but official investigations by the police, CID and Rab; some are from the reports of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). Most of them are in custody.

Returning to our first story of Monir, putting aside his gold and currency smuggling, his biggest achievement—and the way to his megabucks—was the stranglehold he was able to establish over Rajuk in the last 19 years (2001 to 2019). During this period, we had nine ministers and state ministers heading Rajuk, most of them for very short periods, but three—one from BNP and two from AL—had five-year terms each. We know that Monir's wealth soared during the tenure of the BNP minister. The question is, what happened during the rest of the period? Didn't the subsequent two ministers, completing five-year terms each, see the havoc that was being wrought by the likes

years. What was the role of the chairmen in reining in people like Monir and councillor Shafi? It has been reported that Monir and Shafi had an office in the Rajuk Bhaban. In an earlier Rajuk investigation, files of 71 land cases were found in this office.

Yet nothing happened. Monir was able to make 9 ministers and 12 chairmen look the other way as he twisted Rajuk's rule and made his fortune.

Hidden within each of the above stories is the failure of the institutions of governance that are supposed to protect public interest.

In the nineties, when he was a small-time smuggler, bringing goods in his luggage, what were our customs officers doing at the airport? Any passenger on that route knew well that not all travellers were what they appeared to be, and their large checked-in luggage and impossible-to-carry cabin bags all looked a bit out of place. Didn't the same thoughts occur to the customs intelligence?

PHOTO: COLLECTED

THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE PROJECT

Do I Belong?

The Academic Experience Project is a faculty-student collaborative work aimed to glean insights about the experiences of tertiary-level students. Each Friday, The Daily Star publishes an op-ed highlighting its findings. Today's is the fourth article of the series.

IRFAN AHNAF and SYED SAAD ANDALEEB

“Country roads, take me home, to the place I belong.”

JOHN Denver felt at home in West Virginia. Similarly, students want to feel at home in their academic institutions. At least that's what a recent survey by The Academic Experience Project, conducted on university students of Bangladesh, has shown. Common sense makes one wonder why this simple concept has been ignored for decades by those who are charged with reimagining and redrawing the immense possibilities of higher education.

Two vital factors, routinely ignored by academic administrators, are “assurance of safety” and “social integration” that bring about the feeling that you will be safe and an integral part of the social fabric of your institution. Both features are associated with being at home. Somehow the authorities have failed to take the necessary steps to make the students feel welcome and at home. In many of the universities, students have been looked at as little more than sources of revenue.

Most of the renowned universities in Bangladesh are located in the capital; some are in other major cities such as Chattogram, Sylhet or Khulna. This means that students from all over the country travel to these cities, particularly to Dhaka, to pursue higher education. This includes ethnic and religious minorities from the Chittagong Hill Tracts and those from the villages and the suburbs. Many of these students are hardly accustomed to urban life and are living away from their loved ones for the first time. To ensure that they have a satisfactory academic experience, it is important for the authorities to make them feel safe and welcome within their academic institutions.

The following programmes—by no means a comprehensive list—are suggested by the Academic Experience Project to make students feel more at home.

Accommodation Facilities: The university authorities ought to make sure that there is sufficient accommodation for all students who need it. The facilities should be well-managed. Basic hygiene guidelines should be strictly followed. Since these facilities will literally be the “home” of the students for the duration of their stay, a well-kept dorm will go a long way in making the students feel safe, which was one of the most important

satisfaction-driver of students according to the study.

Strict Action on Violence: Bangladesh student politics is often heated and violent. The well-publicised death of Abrar of BUET is one of many examples of student political activists going overboard with the “disciplining” of their peers. Whether or not student politics ought to be banned should be at the discretion of the university, but they should double down on violence and ensure that transgressors are punished to help create a “safe” environment in which academic pursuits can thrive.

chemical as well as societal changes, the process must begin with earnestness. The universities should appoint and train therapists who can offer students expert assistance to deal with a myriad of different mental health issues that accompany the stressful task of pursuing higher studies. These steps will make students feel more integrated with the institution and provide social support.

Mentorship programmes: Some universities have this feature in place, but it is far from being widely practiced in Bangladesh. Each student can be assigned a senior mentor who helps

and integrated within the university. The teachers should respect students as co-creators of knowledge and make students feel comfortable approaching them with new ideas, as well as legitimate grievances and complaints. Given their position, teachers can make or break a student life experience and should use their influence positively.

University students are the nation's future. A grossly overlooked factor is their academic experience that can be greatly enhanced depending on how they are made to feel in the university environment. The steps we suggest will



To ensure students have a satisfactory academic experience, it is important for the universities to make them feel safe and welcome within their institutions.

Counselors: Each university should have a sufficient number of counselors and psychologists easily accessible to the students. Their interactions with the students should be bound by strict rules of confidentiality—this will make the students feel comfortable about approaching them.

The topic of mental health is taboo in Bangladesh. Institutional steps should be taken to address this taboo so that students do not feel intimidated or embarrassed to admit that they need help. While this would require large-scale

facilitate the process of adjusting to a new academic institution, as well as provides valuable insights with regard to life on campus which the senior has gained from experience. The mentor can also make social integration easier and introduce the student to other like-minded people with whom they will feel comfortable spending time.

Teachers: The role of the teacher in the life of the student is multi-faceted, and its significance can hardly be exaggerated. They should be actively involved in making sure that the students feel safe

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

potentially enhance that experience by making them feel safe and involved: a feeling of being at home. This “nurture factor” will likely better equip them to deal with the real-world problems of tomorrow to take Bangladesh forward!

Irfan Ahnaf is working on his MBA degree at IBA, University of Dhaka. Syed Saad Andaleeb is Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Pennsylvania State University, and former Vice-Chancellor, BRAC University. The article is a result of his collaboration with the IBA students to turn the spotlight on higher education in Bangladesh. For more information on The Academic Experience Project, contact Dr Andaleeb at bdresearchA2Z@gmail.com.

The road to development is ‘always’ under construction



metropolis. The signboard has been put up on the fences surrounding the pillars of the overhead rail line and assorted building materials near Agargaon, telling commuters and pedestrians: “We sincerely apologise for the temporary inconvenience.” As road construction signs go, this seems pro forma, except for the fact that it’s accompanied by other promotional signboards that basically offer a reward for the trouble taken: a green, smart, gridlock-free city once the metro rail gets operational. Who wouldn’t want that?

But this “temporary” inconvenience happens to be the longest that Mirpur residents have faced, for five years and counting. And the road that is about to host this miracle of a rail line now lies in tatters, causing endless sufferings, and making the promised future seem more distant every day. For me, the image of that inanimate signage offering empty apologies has come to be a metaphor for the anaemic state of our development policy. It asks you to wait and suffer silently, for the sake of a future that will be transformative, although there is no way of knowing if that indeed will be the case or if that future will be imminent.

In recent decades, the drive for economic growth in Bangladesh has spawned a vast number of development projects, big or small. A lot can be said about how effective those have been or will likely be. But what strikes me more, after having lived through the protracted birth pang of Metro Rail, is that we clearly have a finish problem when it comes to development. Any analysis of the history of these projects will demonstrate that they suffered one

of the following unfortunate outcomes: Most completed projects were handed over well after their initial deadlines; many had to revise deadlines for several times, prompting significant cost escalations; many saw artificially inflated prices drive up their budgets; many of the projects were never finished; some never started at all, even after a budget had been allocated; some got pulled down by bureaucratic deadweight; some exist in name only, while the enthusiasm for others petered out mysteriously. Worst of all, many projects, far from addressing the problem they were meant to, ended up being counterproductive. The capital’s flyovers are not the only examples.

How these projects end up, both midway through their construction and post-completion, is a far cry from the rosy pictures drawn of them in the initial phrases. It reminds me of the editor of Clark Gable’s journalist character in the classic Hollywood film *It Happened One Night*. After the latter’s failed attempt to produce a scoop, the editor memorably comments: “You think you’ve got a great yarn and then something comes along and messes up the finish.” Similarly, something always seems to come along and mess up the finish of our development projects.

Three cases recently reported by *The Daily Star* show how some of the smaller projects end up post-completion. In one, you have a public library in the Nottun Bazar area of Tahirpur Upazila, Sunamganj. Since its construction thirty-three years ago, it has been used for everything except what it was intended for: a place to read. Because there are no books to read. Instead, the two-storey building is now used variously as a de facto community centre, an indoor sports club, an officers’ club, and an auditorium for meetings and seminars used by local officials and public representatives. The “library” was originally built to encourage reading habits among the residents of this backwater town surrounded by wetlands.

In the second case, you have a nursing institute in Pabna which, even after two years of its construction, is yet to become operational, thanks to the negligence of the



‘We seem to be running around in circles, with an endless stream of old and new projects jostling for public money and space simultaneously.’

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HUQ

authorities concerned. The health ministry and Diabetic Association of Bangladesh started the project through a public-private partnership in 2013. Construction of the three-storey building ended within the scheduled time in 2018, a feat achieved by few projects in Bangladesh. But then “something came along” and the Public Works Department (PWD) stopped short of handing it over as, we are told, it has yet to put the finishing touches to the building, while the electric and power supply lines remain uninstalled. As we wait for the mercy of the PWD to move the needle on this important public health institute, the building risks being damaged due to lack of maintenance.

A similar fate also awaits a trauma centre in Habiganj’s Bahubal upazila. It was constructed in 2013 but has yet to launch operations, due to lack of electricity

and gas connections. The facility is part of a government project aimed to build 10 trauma centres on six national highways to provide emergency treatments to the victims of highway accidents. Like many “ghost” medical centres spread across the countryside, it now exists in name only.

What’s common to these projects is that they have been hamstrung by lack of support upon completion which proves that a project, regardless of how slow or fast it is completed, means nothing if it is not put to its intended use. Those that are ongoing also suffer from myriad problems during their execution period. We have seen how the twin challenges of cost escalations and deadline extensions have bedevilled multiple projects in recent years including billion-dollar megaprojects like Dhaka Metro Rail, Padma Multipurpose Bridge, or Dhaka Elevated Expressway. We’ve seen how corruption,

inefficiency, lack of foresight, and the red tape culture—four frequent collaborators in almost all our public works and services—have combined to jeopardise their execution. It, then, must be one of these influences that led several ministries and divisions to declare as “complete” 157 unfinished development projects marked for the 2018-19 fiscal year, as a report launched by the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the planning ministry in March this year shows.

True, there have been projects that finished admirably on time, and within budget. But those are so far and few between—and the number of ill-conceived and ill-executed projects is so great—that it created a profound distrust in the ability of the current development policy to deliver the future it promises. Something must be wrong with how we’re approaching the concept of development. Today, we seem to be running around in circles, with an endless stream of old and new projects jostling for public money and space simultaneously. The road to development is “always” under construction, their scars equally visible in cities and across neighbourhoods, leaving in their wake a long trail of sufferings. Ask anyone what image they have of “development” and you’ll be surprised to know how many have come to despise it, despite acknowledging its importance for the goals we’ve set as a nation.

Many of the infrastructure and power projects that are now underway may be profoundly impactful, transforming the lives of millions of people in ways we may not yet imagine. But that future must not be at the expense of our present—our happiness, safety and wellbeing. We must make a balance between our needs in the present and our ambitions for the future, and find a way to ensure we don’t pit one against the other. And we must fix our finish problem so that projects end up right where, and when, they were meant to be, shutting the door on all avenues of exploitation.

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16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gendered violence: The paradox of the routine and the spectacular



for seminars and candle-light vigils organised across the world by feminist and social justice groups. I am particularly drawn to the livestreams, and vociferous chants of activists—mixed by gender, age, class, occupation against the cityscape of Dhaka. “We want freedom, not protection” is the rallying cry. A rising trend in sexual violence in recent months has instigated intensified attention, outrage and mobilisation across diverse constituents locally and in the diaspora.

UN Women informs us that sexual violence is a global phenomenon, indeed a “global epidemic” with 35 percent of women and girls facing it in some form in their lifetime. Only 40 percent of victims of rape report it to authorities, while numbers of actual cases going to trial and being fully adjudicated remain appallingly low. In Bangladesh, over a nine-month period in 2020, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) reports a total of 975 rapes of women and girls, 208 gang-rapes, 191 attempted rapes, 41 cases of suicide following a rape, 216 child victims of rape and 44 child victims of gang rape. ASK also notes that the numbers in each category have risen steadily over the last several years. Stunning as the statistics of violence against women are—and reporting of it in the media has certainly strengthened recently—honing in on specific cases reveals not only the ingrained cultures of violence, stigma and shame but also, paradoxically, cultures of impunity and silence.

Focusing on the paradox here, I find that the more things seem to shift and progress in the realm of gender violence in some instances, the more they also appear to remain the same. An epidemic perhaps is a misleading concept with regard to gender violence which, unlike epidemic-prone diseases, neither erupts suddenly nor ends with a cure-all vaccine. Rather, taking a long view of gendered oppression brings the focus back to society and, more importantly, actors and institutions that allow the problem to continue.

In the United States where I reside, this paradox colours a generalised perception that certain populations, namely those in the Global South and especially in Muslim societies, are prone to extreme



ILLUSTRATION: NAHFIA JAHAN MONNI

continues, as a tool of subduing the Native population, dehumanising them and breaking their spirit. The legacies continue, of course, when we look at the alarming statistics of 1 in 3 Native women likely to be raped in their lifetime. And whereas most rapes are intra-racial, in the United States, in the case of Native women, non-Native men are the majority of assailants; and non-Native men also are not legally bound by tribal criminal sanctions. The point here is that even as the United States touts itself as a beacon of democracy and humanitarianism, it obscures its own violent and racist history of misogyny and policies that have made and continue to make certain populations more vulnerable to extreme violence. And that structural violence against vulnerable populations—including rape of women of colour—has been foundational to nation-building and the imagination of Self and

that of the Other in this country. Further, patriarchy—although central—alone is an insufficient category to comprehend and illuminate the sanctioned and political underpinnings of rape.

Here, I would like to spotlight three recently reported cases of sexual assault in Bangladesh, which have captured the attention of media, legal and cultural advocates. One case involved a gang rape of a woman on the premises of a college campus in Sylhet. Six members of Chhatra League, the student front of the ruling Awami League, assaulted the young woman who was on a holiday with her husband. The men were known to be associates of influential local political elites, and despite various prior reported crimes against them involving illegally acquired weapons, extortion and harassment of women, they had been empowered to wield power and roam the streets with impunity.

The second case occurred in Khagrachhari, Chittagong Hill Tracts, and involved nine Bengali men breaking into the house of a Chakma family, gang raping a disabled girl in the presence of her parents. This recent case brings back memories of another case in July 2018 in the same area, involving an 11-year-old child who was raped and murdered allegedly by members of the Bengali community. The third case, and possibly one that incited the most broad-based outrage across the nation, involved the gang rape of a woman in Begumganj, Noakhali, whose assailants subsequently released a video clip of the assault. The main perpetrator in this case also had multiple prior charges against him, one even of murder. He had repeatedly raped the woman at gun point over the last year. He asked for money from the victim, and threatened her with continued sexual assault by his associates if she did not comply.

I emphasise these three cases to draw attention to the paradox of attention and impunity, to the routine and spectacular ways gender violence manifests and operates. The rising trend in numbers is not a new phenomenon. But firstly, I would like to suggest that the continuing and brash impunity that empowers certain individuals and groups to enact violence is a simultaneous and intensifying trend. Secondly, the rape of ethnic minorities in the Hill Tracts is sanctioned by a double impunity of militarised and gendered oppression where sexual violence against indigenous women has long been a tool to subdue, threaten and terrorise the Jumma communities. Indigenous women’s bodies here stand outside the attention and protection of social and legal systems—their bodies deemed “rapable”

as a metaphor of colonial violence, conquest and occupation. Thirdly, even while subjected to rape repeatedly, the victim in the third case did not report to the police because she feared that a woman in her position—socially and economically vulnerable—would not be taken seriously, let alone meriting justice.

Most egregiously, of course, rape—a routine violation of the vulnerable—was made spectacular by the circulation of the video clip, gathering attention and calls for mobilisation. Rising trends, increased reporting, new laws, and social advocacy have not protected the vulnerable, ethnic minorities or economically marginalised. On the other hand, the rising mobilisations by advocacy groups—certainly something to be commended—have done little to diminish the culture of impunity which empowers certain individuals and groups to act without consequences. In a recently broadcasted webinar hosted by Sarbojonkotha, scholar-activist Rahnuma Ahmed noted that men accused of sexual violence and men standing trial in such cases repeatedly state that they would not have committed such crimes if they thought they would be prosecuted. Dr Ahmed’s findings are corroborated by legal experts on the webinar who noted that the conviction rate for rape in Bangladesh is below 1 percent. Moreover, a multi-country study conducted by the UN found that among men in Bangladesh who admitted to committing rape, 88 percent of rural respondents and 95 percent of urban respondents said that they had faced no legal consequences. Every-day violence enacted on the structurally vulnerable does not incite or instigate mass movement, let alone justice. Spectacularising the event—as we saw in the Begumganj case—made it worthy of attention and reaction.

The victimised in the Begumganj case has been entitled *Shahoshika* by activists in solidarity to continue the work of justice and awareness. In the words of Shahoshika, all women are threaded together in the violation and harm done to her. So what then enables some of us to look away and perhaps focus on certain enactments of violence over others? Shahoshika reminds us that women across strata of class, status, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality have been stripped naked by the naked power of impunity. The question remains whether the present structures of power can enable a recognition of that hierarchical yet mutual vulnerability and urgently insist on a freedom based on reciprocity and justice across lines of power.

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CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	reading	7 Online icon
1 One of a bear trio	30 Clip	8 Upscale homes
5 Mass units	32 Swiss peak	9 Goopy stuff
10 Heartburn	33 Singer Torme	11 Creamy sauce
12 Traditional foe	34 Draw	17 Make better
13 Of the kidneys	35 Pizzeria buy	20 Gladdin
14 Muscat native	37 “Don’t Cry for Me” singer	21 Words to the maestro
15 Soccer’s Hamm	39 Asian peninsula	23 Shoulder ornament
16 Handful of	40 Phone sounds	25 Bed item
18 Huck’s pal	41 Big wave	26 Strike caller
19 Toward the wake	42 Prudent	27 Corkscrew pasta
21 Fast runner	DOWN	28 Orchestra pieces
22 Princes, e.g.	1 City of northern Italy	29 Gofer’s work
24 Modify	2 Unfair hiring	31 Make fun of
25 Act hoity-toity	3 Fiesta prop	33 Diner buy
29 Watch	4 One-time link	36 Animator’s frame
	5 Get bigger	38 Oath
	6 Brink	

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1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
10				11		12			
13						14			
15				16	17		18		
19			20			21			
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	25	26					27	28	
29					30				31
32				33			34		
35			36			37	38		
39						40			
41							42		

11-21

YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

A	M	P	E	D		A	L	P	H	A
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ACC sues 23

FROM PAGE 12
a contract in this regard.
According to the contract, Semacity would buy bitumen from the UAE and then sell it to KTM in Nepal.
Without examining the loan repayment ability of Semacity, the board of AB Bank, chaired by Wahidul, sanctioned a \$15 million loan on June 28, 2015, according to the case statements.
The money was credited to Semacity's current account on June 29, 2015. Upon the request of Rashid, the bank later transferred the money to the account of First Manhattan Energy Co on June 30 that year.
From First Manhattan's OBU account, about \$4.5 million was transferred to Shook and Book LLP in Singapore on March 31, 2016, about \$1.2 million to First Manhattan's USA account and the rest of the money was returned to Semacity's OBU account.
Semacity then applied for another loan of \$14.5 million. Though Semacity had not repaid the first loan, the then top AB Bank officials sanctioned the new loan.
The money was later transferred to different bank accounts in the UAE and the USA, added the case statements.

The bank officials failed to show any document to prove whether Semacity bought and sold bitumen with the money. To date, only \$9.4 million has been repaid.
"It appears that they laundered the rest of the money," reads the first information report of one of the cases.
In the similar way, AIZ Communications Pte Ltd and Euro Cars Holdings Pte Ltd were given loans of \$10 million and \$14.4 million respectively between 2014 and 2016 by AB Bank's OBU.
To date, \$6.44 million has been repaid. Rest of the money has been laundered, say the case statements.
Using Semacity \$20.1 million or Tk 160.8 crore was laundered, using Euro Cars \$7.55 million or Tk 60.4 crore was laundered and using AIZ

Communications \$1.86 million or Tk 14.88 crore was laundered, according to the statements.
The Daily Star tried to reach AB Bank Managing Director Tarique Afzal over phone for comments, but he did not answer.
This correspondent sent him text messages, which were not answered either.
Former foreign minister and BNP leader M Morshed Khan, sponsor shareholder of the bank, nominated Wahidul as a director of the bank on December 12, 2007.
Wahidul became the bank's chairman in July 2008 and held the post till December 2017.
'GOLDEN MONIR'
In a notice issued yesterday, the ACC asked Monir to submit information about his own and dependants' movable and immovable properties as well as the undeclared properties that they have acquired since 2009, said ACC Secretary Dilwar Bakhth.
Earlier, the anti-graft watchdog conducted a primary enquiry and found that Monir possesses wealth worth over Tk 600 crore. The ACC has asked Monir to submit the wealth statements within 21 working days, according to the notice.
It also said that action would be taken against them under the ACC act if they failed to submit the statements within the stipulated time or if they provided the commission with false information.
Monir was arrested by the Rab following a raid on his home in the capital's Badda on November 21. A Rab team recovered foreign currencies of 10 countries worth around Tk 9 lakh, 600 tolas of gold ornaments, Tk 1.09 crore in cash and five SUVs during the raid.
The Rab claimed the arrestee amassed wealth worth over Tk 1,050 crore through forging Rajuk documents, gold smuggling and other crimes and owns at least 200 plots in Badda, Nikunja, and other areas of the city and also in Keraniganj.

WHO warns of `infodemic'

FROM PAGE 12
United States found that US President Donald Trump has been the world's biggest driver of Covid-19 misinformation during the pandemic.
In April, Trump mused on the possibility of using disinfectants inside the body to cure the virus and also promoted unproven treatments.
Since January, AFP has published more than 2,000 fact-checking articles dismantling false claims about the novel coronavirus.
"Without the appropriate trust and correct information, diagnostic tests go unused, immunisation campaigns (or campaigns to promote effective vaccines) will not meet their targets, and the virus will continue to thrive," the WHO said.
'UNPARALLELED SCALE'
Three vaccine developers -- Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca/Oxford University are leading the pack -- and some governments are already planning to start vaccinating their most vulnerable this year.
But with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or WhatsApp acting as vectors for dubious facts and fake news, "disinformation has now reached an unparalleled scale," said Sylvain Delouee, a researcher in Social Psychology at Rennes-2 University.
Rory Smith of the anti-disinformation website, First Draft, agreed.

Not easy for vulnerable

FROM PAGE 1
Al-Amin had to navigate the wheelchair through speeding buses and cars as there is no footpath on that side of the road. People travelling back to BSMMU from its fever clinic have to walk to either the Shahbagh intersection or towards Hotel Intercontinental in the opposite direction, cross the road and walk back to BSMMU.
"My father needs to be admitted urgently, but it took three days to take the coronavirus test, including today [Tuesday]. I don't even know when I will get the report. Today, I saw many people who gave their samples two days ago, but they still haven't gotten the report," Al-Amin told The Daily Star.
"We have no other way to come here [BSMMU] other than through the Shahbagh intersection or the Hotel Intercontinental intersection. What makes it more difficult is that there is no footpath here," said Al-Amin.
Abu Taher said he had gotten the report which showed he was Covid-19 negative yesterday, but he said hospital authorities told him that he would have to wait one or two weeks as there are currently no seats.
Abu Taher said that since he was staying at a relative's house, waiting that long would be difficult.
Patients being pushed on wheelchairs with vehicles rushing by them has become a common sight in the Shahbagh area. This reporter and a photographer of this newspaper witnessed several such sights between Monday and Wednesday.
Patients have to face this hardship

due to the fever clinic being situated outside the hospital. The ongoing Metro Rail construction work has also made it difficult for pedestrians. Patients said the hardship was greater for critical patients or those with physical disabilities.
People were seen gathering in front of the fever clinic from 7.30am on Tuesday and before the gate was opened at 8.30am, the initial line of 8-10 people grew to about 25-30.
As the line stretched on the road, waiting patients were splashed with water from potholes on the street as cars rushed by.
Abdur Rahman, a freedom fighter from Sunamganj and one of several waiting in line, said, "They [hospital authorities] said we would get the result today, but are now saying different. We thought we could go back to Sunamganj today after meeting the doctor but it may not be possible."
His attendee Abdul Halim said, "A freedom fighter is facing this kind of harassment here... what will general people do?"
Brig Gen Dr Zulfiqur Ahmed Amin, director (hospital) of BSMMU said, "We can now do at least 500 tests a day -- we use two PCR machines, sometimes three. I didn't get any information about not getting results in time or any kind of service problems. I will try to find out."
"Sample collection inside the hospital is for admitted patients in the corona unit and doctors of BSMMU," he said. When asked about patients of other units, he said if other units have critical patient, they allowed them to submit samples there.



People wade through a water-logged road after Cyclone Nivar's landfall, in Chennai yesterday. The severe cyclone slammed into India's southern coast, killing at least five people and uprooting trees and power lines.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Tricky autopsy gives doctors hard times

FROM PAGE 1
"I have conducted over a hundred autopsies of bullet-hit or splinter-hit bodies. But we do not find bullets or splinters every time even after cutting them," he told The Daily Star.
"Sometimes the body becomes horrific after having a series of cuts," he said.
The autopsy of Salauddin, however, is not an isolated case. The doctors at different morgues go through similar experience often due to a lack of the x-ray machine that allows the doctors to see what is inside the body in just a few minutes without having to cut it open, said forensic medicine experts.
They said no morgue in Bangladesh has the x-ray machine, which has widely been used in the countries including India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
"The forensic medicine department has long been neglected. I have personally conveyed this to the authorities a number of times, but to no avail," said Sohel Mahmud, also an associate professor of the DMC forensic department.
FALTY AUTOPSY REPORT
Doctors said none of the morgues has the instruments like electric blades, trays, special knives and special boxes to keep evidence or modern labs.
Due to the lack of proper equipment at the morgues, investigators often have to do with faulty autopsy reports,

said officials at Police Bureau of Investigation, a specialised police unit.
Despite having evidence of murder, officials often find it difficult to reach a definite conclusion because of the faulty autopsy report.
"The condition of the morgues should be improved immediately," Mostofa Kamal, special superintendent of PBI, told The Daily Star.
He said doctors still conduct autopsies the old way that can hardly give proper pictures. Besides, evidence often gets damaged as the bodies are not preserved properly.
"We've already recommended supplying modern instruments to morgues, providing adequate training to doctors and appointing morgue assistants for the sake of accurate results from the autopsy," he added.
MORGUE SITUATION
There are three morgues in the capital. Besides, the general hospitals in the districts have one morgue each.
Of the morgues, the one at Dhaka Medical College is still regarded the best in the country and it receives on average eight to 10 bodies daily for autopsy.
According to DMC morgue sources, bodies of five victims suspected to have suffered bullet wounds were sent for autopsy in the first six months of the year. Of those, two were from areas

under Khilkhet, two from Shahbagh and one from South Keraniganj police stations.
In one of the bodies from Khilkhet, doctors recovered around 25 pellets and a bullet. For that, they had to cut them into pieces.
At the DMC morgue, there are four refrigerators with the capacity to keep four bodies each.
Out of the four, one refrigerator has been out of order for years, and one is occupied with the bodies of two foreigners. Only two are functioning with the capacity to keep only eight bodies at a time.
If several bodies suspected to be carrying bullets are sent to the morgue in a day, the doctors will have to keep two or more in one refrigerator as such an autopsy takes time.
Prof Abul Kalam Azad, principal of the college, said they have already made a list of equipment required for the forensic department and communicated with the ministry.
"We hope necessary equipment will come soon," he added.
Prof Harun Or Rashid, former forensic department head of Sir Salimullah Medical College, said, "The department has no proper or modern instruments. We have to work with this limitation. The authorities should focus on it, as a fault in the report may change the course of investigation."

Trump order

FROM PAGE 12
inauguration.
The White House order says Trump is pushing to streamline the federal bureaucracy, increase accountability and make it easier to clear out "poor performers." The federal government employs about 2 million people in total.
The executive order would "expedite the hiring of political appointees into jobs without regard to merit and place them in roles best served by career civil servants—including economists, scientists, and data analysts," the Democrats' letter said.
House and Senate Democrats asked the nonpartisan Congressional Government Accountability Office to monitor implementation of the order this week, warning it could result in "a mass exodus" of federal employees in coming weeks.
Critics call the move part of an ongoing assault on government bureaucracy that has drained expertise and skills during the Trump administration.
The White House Office of Management and Budget has requested to reclassify 88% of its workforce of 425 workers to the new category, Real Clear Politics reported this week. OMB did not return repeated requests for information.
The order has drawn fire from the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents 700,000 federal and Washington, DC government workers, and the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents 150,000 federal workers.

N Korean pole

FROM PAGE 12
as having a slight, athletic build, and the Herald said the authorities made him display his jumping abilities to prove he had vaulted the fence and not simply climbed over.
The military's working theory is that he more likely was able to shimmy up an iron pole and then jumped over the barbed wire at the top, according to the Chosun Ilbo, a leading South Korean daily newspaper.
Regardless, officials have called for an urgent probe. "An investigation is planned to find out details about the man, including how he had [crossed] and whether he wishes to defect," the joint chiefs of staff of the South Korea military said in a statement.
He was seized by South Korean soldiers on November 4, but the military waited until this week to reveal the claim that he had been able to leap over what is supposed to be an impenetrable barrier,

উন্নয়নের গণতন্ত্র
শেখ হাসিনার মূলমন্ত্র

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Upazila Health & Family Planning Office
Ukhia, Cox's Bazar.
E-mail :- ukhia@uhfpo.dghs.gov.bd

মুজিব ১০০
১০০ বছর
মুজিব বর্ষে যাত্রা বাত
এগিয়ে যাবে অনেক দূর

Memo No: UHC/Ukhia/2020/1296

Tender Notice

Invitation for Tender (IFT) for Procurement of Diet & Linen (Laundry service) for Upazilla Health Complex, Ukhia, Cox's Bazar in the financial year 2020-2021.

01	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.	
02	Agency	DGHS	
03	Procuring Entity name	UH & F P.O, Ukhia, Cox's Bazar.	
04	Procuring Entity District	Cox's Bazar.	
05	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM), (Lot by Lot).	
06	Tender Name	Procurement of Diet and Linen (Laundry service) in the financial year 2020-2021.	
07	Budget and source of funds	Revenue (GOB)	
08	Packages	Description	Price of Tender Schedule (only each, Non refundable)
	Package No- PG1	Purchase of Diet	750/- (Taka Seven Hundred Fifty only)
	Package No- PG2	Purchase of Linen Laundry services	500/- (Taka Five Hundred only)
09	Name and addresses of the Office		
	a) Tender Schedule Selling Place	Office of the Civil Surgeon, Cox's Bazar.	
	b) Tender Schedule Receiving Place	Office of the Civil Surgeon, Cox's Bazar.	
	c) Tender Schedule Opening Place	Office of the Civil Surgeon, Cox's Bazar.	
10	Tender Schedule Selling Date	Tender booklets will be sold from the date of 29-11-2020 to 17-12-2020 during the office hour (9:00 am to 5:00 pm). No Tender booklet would be sold after schedule date and time.	
11	Tender Dropping	20-12-2020 at 10:00 am. to 12.01 pm	
12	Closing Date and Time	20-12-2020 at 12.02 pm	
13	Tender Opening Date and Time	20-12-2020 at 12.30 pm	
14	Description of Terms and conditions	Detailed description in Tender booklet.	
15	Description of Goods & Related Services	Detailed description in Tender booklet.	
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS			
16	Name of Procuring Entity	Dr. Ranjan Barua Rajan	
17	Designation of Procuring Entity	Upazila Health & Family Planning Officer	
18	Address of Procuring Entity	Upazila Health & Family Planning Office, Ukhia, Cox's Bazar.	
19	Contact details of Official Tenders	Email: ukhia@uhfpo.dghs.gov.bd	

Note:

a) Price of Tender schedule would be paid by Treasury Challan into the Code No: 1-2711-0000-2366 through The UH&F PO, Ukhia, Cox's Bazar by The Sonali Bank, Cox's Bazar branch with CTR by Accounts Office, Cox's Bazar.

b) If the date of Selling, Receiving and Opening of Tender is disturbed under any unavoidable circumstances, The next working day will be applicable for the same respectively.

c) To be submitted photo copy of trade license, VAT registration and TIN certificate when collect tender schedule by the application of won letter head pad.

d) Corrigendum if necessary in future will be a part of this notice. The authority reserves the rights to accept or reject any or all Tender without assigning any reasons what so ever.

(Dr. Ranjan Barua Rajan)
Upazila Health & Family Planning Officer
Ukhia, Cox's Bazar.

GD-1894

Like a distant memory, brought back in ‘colour’

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Growing up, Diego Maradona seemed like a ghost from the past for someone who had little experience of watching live football during the 90s. For those of us born after the infamous 1986 World Cup in Mexico -- a tournament which people to this day claim the Argentine won singlehandedly -- Maradona was already fading from memory following the scandals of 1994.



But there in lay Diego's magnificence, his charm. For he had achieved the unfathomable and staked his claim to the hearts of people all over the world and Bangladesh never really let go of this footballing deity.

Two goals, as if separated by eons, but only scored in the space of four minutes, further laid siege to the madness that is Diego Maradona in Bangladesh as the Argentine produced perhaps the two most talked-about moments in footballing history in the same game against England during the 1986 quarterfinal in Mexico.

Chattogram demolish Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

Gazi Group Chattogram began the Bangabandhu T20 Cup on a high as they registered a comprehensive nine-wicket win over Beximco Dhaka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Chasing a meagre target of 89, Chattogram cruised through on a brisk 79-run opening stand between Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das.

Liton was dismissed after making 34 off 33 balls and smashing three fours and a six while Soumya remained unbeaten on 44 off 29 with two sixes and four boundaries.

Mushfiqur Rahim's Dhaka were asked to bat first and kept losing wickets at regular intervals.

Naim Sheikh hit a 23-ball 40 with the help of three fours and three sixes, but none of the others were able to make an impact.

Chattogram skipper Mohammad Mithun rotated his bowlers well and Shoriful Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Mosaddek Hossain and Taijul Islam shared two wickets each and bundled out the opponent for a very low total.

It will be important for Dhaka to return with a better approach after losing a second consecutive game and skipper Mushfiqur will have to shoulder more responsibility and guide the rather young side.

SCORES IN BRIEF:

Dhaka: 88 all out (Akbar 15; Shoriful 2-10, Mustafizur 2-13, Mosaddek 2-9, Taijul 2-32)

Chattogram: 90 for 1 (Liton 34, Soumya 44 not out)

Result: Chattogram won by 9 wickets.



Within those four minutes, he had pulled off something so cheeky with the infamous 'Hand of God', that it would earn him the tag of 'cheat' for years to come. But as was often the case with Maradona, he went and did something even more inexplicable, taking on the entire English defence -- which appeared to be in a trance and clutching at straws -- escaping tackles and earth itself with his mazy run and scoring what would later be known as the 'Goal of the Century'.

Light and darkness, Maradona in his true essence. This was in fact a recurring pattern as he lived his life unapologetically, like a troubled artist whose genius continued to draw people in even long after his descent into darkness.

My earliest recollections of Maradona involved colour posters at home strewn across the study

table wall, glued in by family members. As a young person, this was a man I did not know but yet he was always familiar, living in the words of those around me.

The posters told tales of intense tough tackling on the Argentine playmaker, who would get up and go about his business -- his character just as mesmerizing as his football. For many, Maradona was a real-life superhero out of some Greek mythology slaying nine-headed Hydra. In many ways, he was the living embodiment of a rebel who spoke truth to power and a close personal friendship with Fidel Castro raised his profile as a player and icon even in the remotest of territories.

My only recollection of Maradona playing live came during the 1994 World Cup. It was past midnight and I only remember

my father trying to wake me up to watch Maradona; I could barely keep my eyes open.

In later years, Brazil's Ronaldo, Zinedine Zidane and Ronaldinho would become part of our collective footballing identities and with the arrival of the internet, finally Maradona's feats became more accessible. I remember being mesmerized, unable to connect to the dream that was Maradona, to the football I was used to seeing. He would grow into a hero for many who missed out on watching him during his playing days, his legend brought back to us in colour.

"There was stupefaction and scandal, a blast of moral condemnation that left the whole world deaf. But somehow a few voices of support for the fallen idol managed to squeak through, not only in his wounded and dumbfounded Argentina, but in places as far away as Bangladesh, where a sizable demonstration repudiating FIFA and demanding Maradona's return shook the streets," Eduardo Galeano, the eminent Uruguayan journalist, wrote in his famous book Football in Sun and Shadow, portraying the humane connection that Diego had with the world.

A legend, there was never a dull moment with King Diego. He belongs to the world. A true people's champion.



A one-minute silence was observed in memory of football legend Diego Maradona during yesterday's Bangabandhu T20 Cup matches at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Rajshahi cruise after Nazmul fifty

SPORTS REPORTER

Skipper Hossain Nazmul Shanto's crisp fifty guided Rajshahi to their second consecutive win, this time by a comfortable four-wicket margin over mighty Gemcon Khulna in yesterday's first Bangabandhu T20 Cup fixture at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Chasing a modest 147-run target on a good batting wicket, Nazmul gave the momentum right at the top with 55 off 34 balls, which included three sixes and six fours.

Adjudged player of the match, Nazmul made it look easy as the left-hander played some delightful strokes and provided a steady start.

Later, twenties from Rony Talukdar, Fazle Mahmud and Mohammad Ashraful, who was unbeaten on 25, took them to an easy win.

Earlier, Khulna skipper

Mahmudullah Riyad elected to bat and, much like in their first game on Tuesday, Khulna's top order once again failed to provide the start they needed.

It was a mixture of disciplined bowling from the Rajshahi bowlers and some poor shot selection from the batsmen that prevented Khulna from posting a fighting total.



The experienced Imrul Kayes departed for his second consecutive duck while Anamul Haque, as has become the norm, looked promising at the start but he too failed to convert the start and was dismissed for 26.

Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was one again unable to make an impact with the bat. After striking two boundaries, he fell for just 12 in pretty similar fashion to his dismissal in the first game-- pulling a short ball straight to square leg.

Mahmudullah also departed early and it was the hero of the first game, Ariful Haque, who once again helped his side stave off humiliation. His unbeaten 31-ball 41, which included three sixes and two fours, and young Shamim Hossain's 35 helped Khulna post 146 for six.

Pacer Mukidul Islam picked up two wickets while Ebadot Hossain, Mahedi Hasan, and Arafat Sunny took a wicket each for Rajshahi.

SCORES IN BRIEF:

Khulna: 146 for 6 (Ariful 41 not out, Shamim 35; Mukidul 2-44)

Rajshahi: 147 for 4 (Nazmul 55, Rony 26, Ashraful 25 not out)

Result: Rajshahi won by 6 wickets.



'If you love football, you love Maradona'

ANISUR RAHMAN

When news of Diego Armando Maradona's passing filtered through on the night of November 25 in Bangladesh, the grief that took hold in the country was as if a mischievous, magnetic boy next door died and not a footballing genius who lived 10,000 miles away and imbued everything he touched with the brightest colours.

Born and raised in the darkness of Villa Fiorito, a poor area on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, it was not just Argentina that Maradona lit up with his exploits; he ignited the world. People here found immense joy in his genius, his impossible talent and defiance of established expectations. In Bangladeshis' eyes, he was the boy next door -- the rare one that through his joie de vivre, impossible talent and penchant for triumphing against all odds gave others like him the gift of aspiration.

"After waking up, I heard Maradona passed away and I really felt that I lost something valuable because he is not only an iconic footballer but also a great human, who was so popular locally and globally," said Mohammad Kamrul Islam Mamun, a service holder in a private company.

A banker named Partha Ghosh said,



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Boca Juniors turned off all the lights and lit up Diego Maradona's box.

"Maradona for me is the greatest thing that happened to me in life. I love him as much as my father and it's like my old man died," Cristian Montelli, 22, a fan of the star's former club Boca Juniors said with tears in his eyes. Argentines lined up in the streets of Buenos Aires on Thursday to say goodbye to football great Diego Maradona.

"Maradona was very popular among people of all walks of life. Everyone looked sad at work and it seemed they were struggling to pay attention today [Thursday]."

Architect Maruf Hossain believes Maradona's loss is a deep one for the world as he took football to a different level not only in terms of technical ability but also popularity in parts of the world that in the 1980s and early '90s were not considered mainstream, like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and some African countries.

"He was very much like a boy next

Bangladeshi fans who never lost their love for him despite some infamous off-field incidents. Bangladeshi fans also had a lot of sympathy for Maradona because he was never allowed to play freely on the ground."

National striker Nabib Newaj Jibon said, "If you love football, you should love Maradona. I became his fan after watching his videos. He was best in his time although he had to face a lot of fouls from opponents, which are now bookable offences." Former national footballer and coach Julfikar Mahmud Mintu believes Maradona was an unbelievable player who won the hearts of Bangladeshi fans with his brilliant performance, nothing else.

"To be honest, I am as shocked by the demise of Maradona as I was by [the death of] Badal Roy. Maradona has been a golden boy of Fiorito and he was also the same to me because I started to follow him in 1986 as a footballer in the Pioneer League."

"Maradona for me is the greatest thing that happened to me in life. I love him as much as my father and it's like my old man died," Cristian Montelli, 22, a fan of the star's former club Boca Juniors said with tears in his eyes. Argentines lined up in the streets of Buenos Aires on Thursday to say goodbye to soccer great Diego Maradona.

India tour gets underway today

REUTERS, SYDNEY

The plans for India's tour of Australia have been ripped up and redrawn dozens of times over the last eight months but the action finally gets underway with the first one-day international at the Sydney Cricket Ground on today.

It was at the same venerable ground on March 13 that Australia last hosted international men's cricket, with the hosts beating New Zealand by 71 runs to snap a five-match losing streak in one-dayers.

The 48,000 seats were empty that day as the Covid-19 pandemic began to bite but Australia's relative success at containing the virus means up to half of them will be occupied on Friday.

India's squad will be raring to go after coming out of two weeks of quarantine, while Australia's players will be reunited after preparing in two separate groups to satisfy biosecurity protocols.



Virat Kohli's tourists are the second ranked ODI side in the world and will be looking to get into their groove in the three 50-over and three Twenty20 matches that precede the four-match test series around the new year.

"It's important to start well in the white-ball series," India vice-captain KL Rahul said. "We are playing for the country after a while. We enjoy coming here and playing hard cricket."

Skipper Kohli will return home after the first Test to attend the birth of his first child.

Finch said he thought the unusual preparations would not have an impact on the Australian players, who will stand in a circle barefoot to recognise the country's indigenous people before the match.

"I think everyone's on the same page in terms of how we want to play one-day cricket and build up some really good momentum," he told reporters on Thursday.

Bayern, City through to round of 16



Atalanta celebrate their 2-0 win against Liverpool at Anfield. The visitors scored twice in four minutes to deliver a surprise victory and blew qualification from Champions League Group D wide open.

PHOTO: TWITTER

AGENCIES

Bayern Munich and Manchester City qualified for the Champions League round of 16 on Wednesday, while Real Madrid beat Inter Milan in a group nevertheless still topped by Borussia Mönchengladbach and Liverpool lost at home to Atalanta. Holders Bayern Munich failed to hit top form but did enough for a 3-1 win over visitors Salzburg to book their spot in the knockout stage with two games to spare. Manchester City booked their place in the knockout stage following a display far more dominant than the final scoreline suggests but manager Pep Guardiola has backed his attacking players to hit top gear after sealing qualification to the last 16 with a 1-0 victory at Olympiakos Piraeus. Real Madrid claimed a first-ever win at San Siro, beating Inter 2-0 while Atalanta scored quickfire second-half goals to earn a comfortable 2-0 win over a toothless Liverpool. Though Liverpool still lead the group on nine points, both Atalanta and Ajax Amsterdam, who beat bottom side Midtjylland 3-1, are now two points behind with two games left to play. Atletico Madrid huffed and puffed against Lokomotiv Moscow but had to settle for a disappointing 0-0 home draw which left them with plenty to do if they are to reach the knockout stages. Porto comfortably beat Olympique de Marseille 2-0 away to move to the brink of qualifying.

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WHO warns of 'infodemic'

Says fake news threatens Covid-19 vaccine distribution

AFP, Paris

As early as February, with the global pandemic spreading fast, the World Health Organization issued a warning about an "infodemic", a wave of fake news and misinformation about the deadly new disease on social media.

Now with hopes hanging on Covid-19 vaccines, the WHO and experts are warning those same phenomena may jeopardise roll-out of immunisation programmes meant to bring an end to the suffering.

"The coronavirus disease is the first pandemic in history in which technology and social media are being used on a massive scale to keep people safe, informed, productive and connected," the WHO said.

"At the same time, the technology we rely on to keep connected and informed is enabling and amplifying an infodemic that continues to undermine the global response and jeopardises measures to control the pandemic."

More than 1.4 million people have died since the pandemic emerged in China late last year, but three developers are already applying for approval for their vaccines to be used as early as December.

Beyond logistics, though, governments must also contend with scepticism over vaccines developed with record speed at a time when social media has been both a tool for information and falsehood about the virus.

The WHO defined an infodemic as an overabundance of information, both online and offline, including "deliberate attempts to disseminate wrong information".

Last month, a study from Cornell University in the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Most of the people who crowded Chattogram city's new Fishery Ghat area Wednesday morning are not following the health guidelines, as if the pandemic is over. Experts apprehend a second wave of Covid-19 in winter as infections are rising.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

CLIMATE CHANGE

Dhaka seeks partnership with the UK

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka seeks a strong partnership with the UK to address the fallout of climate change that poses a threat to lives and livelihoods of millions of people.

At a virtual meeting with UK State Minister Lord Ahmed on Wednesday, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam expressed his expectation for a strong engagement of the UK both for Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) and Global Centre on Adaptation (GCA) South Asia.

Shahriar hoped that Bangladesh and the UK would build momentum ahead of COP26 due in November next year for a resilient world.

He said Bangladesh being a non-emitter country has constantly been bearing the burden of incessant carbon emission of the developed countries. For climate change mitigation and adaptation, Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Swechhasebak League leader beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

A ward-level leader of Swechhasebak League was beaten and hacked to death in Barura upazila of Cumilla yesterday.

The victim was Jahirul Islam, 36, general secretary of ward-5 Swechhasebak League under Barura municipality, Moinul Islam, a local Awami League leader and chairman of the upazila, told The Daily Star.

Abu Ishahak, chairman of Uttar Shilmuri union in the upazila, said the incident happened around 2:00pm when Jahir, son of Abdul Malek of Jinsar village, was taking part in an arbitration between two groups of people in Jibonpur Hashem market area.

"During the arbitration, one of the groups brought hired goons in a show of strength. At one point, a chaos ensued and Jahir was attacked with bamboo sticks and sharp weapons," he said, but could not confirm who carried out the attack or what was the arbitration for.

Doctors declared Jahir dead after he was rushed to Barura Upazila Health complex.

Ikbal Bahar Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Barura Police Station, said the body would be sent to Cumilla Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Cargil calls on Bangabandhu

Shamsuddoza Sajan

NOVEMBER 27, 1972

BANGABANDHU, CARGIL TALK AID PROGRAMME

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and World Bank Vice-president Peter Cargil have a 45-minute talk at the Gono Bhaban today. Problems of flood control, food and the future aid programme are discussed at the meeting. The discussion also covers the bank's role in the development of Bangladesh. While discussing flood control problems, Bangabandhu emphasises on short-term projects along with long-term projects. He also emphasises on training and dredging of river channels.

It is learnt that the World Bank will take up short-term flood control and water development schemes in Bangladesh. These schemes could be taken up during the next fiscal year, pending the finalisation of the first five-year plan of Bangladesh.

JOURNALIST TEAM CALLS ON PM

A 10-member delegation on behalf of working journalists of Dhaka and Chittagong meets Bangabandhu at the Gono Bhaban today. In an hourlong meeting, the working journalists discuss various problems of the profession with the PM. Bangabandhu gives them a patient hearing. He also assures them of looking into their problems seriously.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



Up a notch

DU ranks 134th among Asian unives

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University has ranked 134th, climbing one step from last year, in a list of Asia's top 1,000 universities.

The data was published on the website of the UK-based Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings on Wednesday.

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) ranked 199th.

Singapore National University was ranked the best.

A total of 11 universities of Bangladesh have made it to the list.

Bangladesh's North South University ranked 228th, Brac University ranked somewhere between 271st and 280th, Independent University between 350th and 400th, Daffodil International University, East West University and United International University between 401st and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

N Korean 'pole vaults to freedom'



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A North Korean defector has left authorities in the South baffled after claiming to have vaulted over an almost 10ft high fence during his audacious escape.

The man, in his late twenties, was interrogated upon his capture in South Korea and claimed he was a former gymnast who "jumped over the 3-metre fence" between the two countries in the demilitarised zone, a Seoul official told The Korea Herald.

The news has sparked urgent questions in South Korea over how the man was able to cross the heavily guarded border without triggering any alarms.

The defector, said to be a civilian, was described

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

BUSINESS

Expand stimulus packages as second wave looms

Experts tell govt dialogue

The government should think of rolling out more stimulus packages to ensure a quick economic recovery and protect firms and people as the threat of a second wave of coronavirus infections looms, experts said yesterday. Given the uncertainties going forward, the government should be ready to expand the size of the stimulus packages, said Mercy Miyang Tembon, World Bank's country director, at a dialogue organised by the finance ministry.

STORY ON B1



PRAYER TIMING NOVEMBER 27

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-10 12-30 3-45 5-19 7-00
JAMAAT 5-45 1-15 4-00 5-22 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

JOB SECURITY

Trump order can spark mass firings

Warn lawmakers, watchdog groups

REUTERS, Washington

US government civil servants could face mass firings under an executive order before President Donald Trump leaves office, and Democratic lawmakers, watchdog groups and unions are scrambling to block it.

Thirteen House Democrats, including Gerry Connolly, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Government Operations and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, on Tuesday urged appropriators in a letter to reverse the October order in their next spending bill.

The October 21 order allows agencies to reclassify workers involved in policy-making to a new "Schedule F" category without the job protections they have now. The agencies must complete their reviews by January 19, the day before President-elect Joe Biden's

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



A black-capped kingfisher resting on a tree branch at Ukilmani in the Sundarbans. This species is found mainly near the coast in mangrove forests and along estuaries and rivers. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TAMZEED ALAM TAKEN



LAUNDERING Tk 236 CRORE

ACC sues 23

AB Bank board in 2015 okayed loan for 3 fake companies; money siphoned off to US. UAE, S'pore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed three cases against 23 people, including former AB Bank chairman M Wahidul Haque, for their alleged involvement in laundering about Tk 236 crore to the USA, the UAE and Singapore.

The cases were filed following an enquiry for about three and a half years, said ACC sources.

In another development, the anti-graft watchdog yesterday sought information on the wealth of arrested Monir Hossain alias "Golden Monir" and his wife Raushan Akhter.

The ACC in two of the three cases sued 23 people while 21 were made accused in the other.

According to the case statements, three companies -- Semacity General Trading LLC, ATZ Communications Pte Ltd and Euro Cars Holdings Pte Ltd -- which only exist on papers, applied for loans from the private bank's offshore banking unit (OBU) in Chattogram.

Semacity, which claims to be a general trading company, is owned by UAE citizen Fatima Abdulla Mohammad Al Karrani and Bangladesh-born Canadian citizen ANM Tayebur Rashid, the statements say.

Rashid is also a co-owner of First Manhattan Energy Co situated in Chattogram. His business partner Bimal Raj Bastula is a Nepal-born US citizen. Rashid had a current account with AB Bank's OBU. He applied for a loan of \$20 million to the bank on May 03, 2015 for selling bitumen to KITM, a Nepalese company. Semacity and KITM had signed

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1