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FAMILY LIFE DURING PANDEMIC

# Lost rhythm in new reality

*It was hard on women in particular amid financial hardship, greater unpaid care, domestic work, violence*

NILIMA JAHAN

It was not the family reunion that she had hoped for.

In May last year, Fahmida Akhter (not her real name) returned to her village home in Bogura district after losing her job as a medical assistant at a private hospital in Dhaka. The 32-year-old lost her job, as others like her did, when doctors halted their private practices at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

Her husband, a recent undocumented migrant to Germany, also returned home in June after struggling to find a job for seven successive months during which Covid-19 broke out and lockdown ensued in the European nation.

While she had been working in Dhaka and her husband trying his luck abroad, she had been forced to leave their child in the care of his grandmother in their village. The small family had not lived together under one roof in the last five years.

But since their long-awaited reunion in June, the couple and their eight-year-old son have been living in severe financial hardship with no work and their savings run out.

"It really hurts when you fail to afford the food your eight-year-old son wants to eat. I don't have the balance in my phone to call my dearest ones to share my feelings, or contact people for a job," said Fahmida.

More worryingly, domestic violence has become a frequent affair.

She said her husband has increasingly become frustrated -- unable to repay Tk 25,000 he had borrowed from relatives as well as not being able to find a job to support the family.

"Last month, for the first time in my life, he beat me severely after a heated argument. I couldn't protest since I don't have the option of taking a break from this life," said Fahmida.

"Now I'm worried about our son, as he never saw us quarrelling before. I know we are just going through bad days -- still it has become incredibly difficult to cope with this suddenly changed situation."

**NEW REALITIES**

Financial hardship and a lack of social activities have led to increased rifts among families, shows a recent survey by Manusher Jonno Foundation.

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A sand carrying vessel being unloaded on the Buriganga in the capital's Basila area to fill low-lying land. Changing the nature of any land is prohibited by law but such activities are often seen on the rivers around the capital. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## UNOs are rulers of upazilas

*Says Upazila Parishad Association claiming elected people are swept aside*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Upazila Parishad Association has alleged that upazila nirbahi officers (UNOs) are playing the role of rulers at the upazila level.

Speaking at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday, leaders of the platform complained that the bureaucratic attitude of the UNOs was creating obstacles to the activities of the public representatives.

Upazila Parishad President Harun-Rashid Hawlader said although there are elected representatives in an upazila parishad, an official (UNO) of the republic is acting as the ruler of the upazila ignoring everything.

"Some administrative officials are involved in a conspiracy to establish a public administration system without public representatives by bypassing democratic decentralisation," he said.

The association alleged that government officials at the upazila level were conspiring to establish feudal rule by secluding the public representatives. There is a lack of coordination at the field level due to the unlawful conducts and activities

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**BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES**

## Disorder, communalism must stop: Bangabandhu

January 3, 1973

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

**FOREIGN CONSPIRACY AT WORK**

Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today says that some elements are trying to create disorder and communalism. He adds that those elements know that they would not succeed in tarnishing his image before the people of Bangladesh. They are doing it only to tarnish his image before the outside world so that the flow of relief from abroad ceases and he is in difficulty, says Bangabandhu.

Addressing a mammoth public meeting at Patuakhali the prime minister reiterated that the aim of his life is to bring peace and happiness to the people of Bangladesh, to ensure food, clothing and education to them and to keep up the prestige of Bangladesh before the world community.

Bangabandhu urges people to resist corruption, bribery, theft, robberies and other anti-social activities. There must be people of golden heart to build "Sonar Bangla", he adds.

Bangabandhu points out that his government has successfully averted famine belying the apprehension that at least 50 lakh people were to die of starvation. "We provided food to every village, whatever be the quantity," he adds.

The prime minister returns to Dhaka today afternoon after his

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## Onion prices tumble as imports from India start

STAR REPORT

The price of onions has dropped to Tk 10-15 per kilogram as the import of the daily essentials from India started yesterday.

The price of local variety of onions is Tk 35-45 per kg, while that of imported ones is Tk 25 to 35 as of yesterday, according to the data provided by Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

A week ago, the price of the local variety was Tk 45-60 and imported variety Tk 30-45 per kg.

Yesterday, Indian onion import through the Hili land ports of Dinajpur resumed after 108 days as the Indian government on Monday lifted the export ban of the important ingredient, after it had imposed ban on onion export to Bangladesh on September 14 last year.

A Indian truck carrying 19 tonnes of onions

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## 350,000 years old human tool found in cave



MAIL ONLINE

Archaeologists believe they've found the oldest known tool used for grinding or scraping, dating back some 350,000 years.

Found in the Tabun Cave in northern Israel, the implement is a cobbler, a type of small rounded stone, and predates homo sapiens by at least 50,000 years.

Previously, such tools weren't thought to have been introduced until much later, approximately 200,000 years ago.

It was used by prehistoric hominids for 'delicate

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MASS INOCULATION DRIVE

## India holds vaccine drills

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday staged nationwide drills to start one of the world's biggest coronavirus vaccination programmes as the drug regulator prepared to approve the first vaccine.

A government panel on Friday recommended emergency use of the AstraZeneca-Oxford University shot and the first injections could be given in the coming week after the Drugs Control Authority of India gives final approval.

India, which has the world's second highest number of pandemic cases -- more than 10.2 million -- has set an ambitious target of inoculating 300 million of its 1.3 billion people by mid-2021.

Serum Institute of India, the world's biggest vaccine producer, has already stockpiled tens of millions of doses of AstraZeneca's Covishield ready for the campaign and 96,000 health workers have been

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## Iran to enrich uranium up to 20pc: UN

*Guards chief vow response to 'any action' amid US tensions*

AFP, Vienna

Iran has informed the International Atomic Energy Agency that it intends to produce uranium enriched to up to 20 percent purity, well beyond the threshold set by the 2015 Vienna accord, the UN nuclear watchdog said Friday.

"Iran informed the agency of its intention to enrich uranium at a rate of up to 20 percent in its Fordow underground plant, to comply with a law recently passed by the Iranian parliament," an IAEA spokesperson told AFP.

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**PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 3**

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:30 7:00  
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:35 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Teachers taking new textbooks by a boat to distribute among their students in Rangamati town's Razbari Ghat area yesterday. They use boats and waterways as many educational institutions are located in remote areas of Chattogram Hill Tracts.

PHOTO: ANVIL CHAKMA

## US Covid cases top 20m mark

*Slow vaccine rollout draws criticism in many countries*

AFP, Washington

The United States marked the New Year on Friday by passing the extraordinary milestone of 20 million Covid-19 cases, after global celebrations welcoming in 2021 were largely muted by the pandemic.

The US has floundered in its efforts to quell the virus, which is spreading rapidly across the country and has already caused more than 347,000 deaths -- by far the highest national death toll.

Worldwide hopes that Covid-19 vaccines will bring a rapid end to the pandemic in 2021 have been shaken by the slow start to the US vaccination program, which has been beset by logistical problems and overstretched hospitals.

Nearly 2.8 million people in the US have already received their first jabs, but the figure fell well behind the 20 million inoculations that President Donald Trump's administration promised by the end of 2020.

The desperate race to vaccinate is set to dominate the coming year, with the coronavirus already having killed at least 1.8 million people since emerging in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

German firm BioNTech said Friday it was racing to ramp up production of its Covid-19 jab to fill a shortage left by the lack of other approved vaccines in Europe.

Countries including Britain, Canada and the United States approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine earlier, and have since also greenlighted jabs by US firm Moderna or Oxford-AstraZeneca.

"The current situation is not rosy, there's a hole because there's an absence of other approved vaccines and we have

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