

The Hally



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Your Right to Know

Jamadiul Awal 24, 1442 Hijri

"When someone is killed by a car or hacked to death by robbers, people consider it as a criminal offence. Then why does a woman's character become relevant when she is raped and murdered?" KHUSHI KABIR. COORDINATOR AT NIJERA KORI



"This is an emergency of the highest magnitude. ... In the next 13 days, this dangerous man can do further harm to our country." US HOUSE SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI ON IMPEACHING TRUMP



"I read a lot of things and plenty of people said I was out of form so it was nice to come back into form, if that's what you want to call it." AUSTRALIA BATSMAN STEVE SMITH AFTER SCORING 131 IN THE THIRD TEST AGAINST INDIA. PAGE 11





Activists demonstrate in front of Jatiya Press Club demanding justice for the schoolgirl who died due to excessive bleeding after she was raped on Thursday. Such demonstrations took place throughout the day in different parts of the capital yesterday. Amid widespread protests across the country, the government last year amended a law to include death penalty as a punishment for rape.

PHOTO:

RAPE, MURDER OF O-LEVEL STUDENT

Doctor confirms rape, finds injury marks

Autopsy conducted; father files case; accused gives confessional statement before court, sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The female O-level student, pronounced dead on arrival at a private hospital in the capital on Thursday was raped and she died due to hemorrhagic shock and excessive bleeding, a forensic expert at Dhaka Medical College said yesterday.

"We found injury marks both in her genital and rectum," Dr Sohel Mahmud, head of the forensic department at the DMC, told reporters after conducting the autopsy.

He said there were no wounds in other parts of the body.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Dr Sohel said, "Of course, it's a rape... more than a rape, I would say. We have found evidence ...

On Thursday night, the girl's father, a

businessman, filed a case with Kalabagan Police Station against Fardin Iftekhar



Fardin Iftekhar Dihan

Dihan -- an 18-year-old who has recently passed his A-level examinations -- over the rape and murder of his daughter.

A Dhaka court recorded confessional statement yesterday and sent him to jail, said police. Three of his friends,

who were detained for questioning, have been released. They, however, will be kept under police watch, said police sources.

In the case statement, the girl's father said Dihan tricked his daughter, a student of an English-medium school in Dhanmondi, into going to his flat in Kalabagan's Dolphin Golly on Thursday and raped her

when Dihan's family members were away. The girl bled profusely and fainted. Dihan then took her to hospital to deflect blame, said the statement.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Money Laundering Interpol issues red notice for PK Halder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Interpol yesterday issued red notice against Proshanta Kumar Halder, also known as PK Halder, who allegedly laundered over Tk 10,000 crore of four non-banking financial institutions (NBFIs) abroad, following a request from Bangladesh Police.

Mohiul Islam, assistant inspector general of National Central Bureau (NCB) at police headquarters (PHQ), confirmed to The Daily Star.

He said they pointed out the probable location of PK Halder and sent documents related to the case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to

Other allegations that were brought against Halder were also sent to Interpol, he said, adding, that The International Criminal Police Organization examined the documents and issued red

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Man held over rape of thirdgrader in Feni

A CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Police arrested a 22-yearold man on charges of raping a 10-year-old girl in Daganbhuiyan upazila of the district on Thursday night. Abdul Karim Hridoy,

of Momarizpur area, was arrested soon after the girl's mother filed a case, police said.

Senior Iudicial Magistrate Abdullah Khan sent him to jail yesterday after recording the third grader's statement, said Imtiaz Ahmed, officer-incharge of Daganbhuiyan

Police Station. The officer added that Hridoy took the girl to a secluded orchard when she was returning home in the evening and raped her.

He fled as locals rushed to the scene after hearing the girl scream, the OC added.

Her mother filed the case soon afterwards, he said, adding that the girl was taken to a hospital.

VACCINE ROLLOUT PLAN

Key issues still unresolved

Big challenges ahead for mass inoculation

MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

The government has yet to resolve several key issues before rolling out the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, expectedly from the second week of February.

The mobile app for registering people willing to be vaccinated and to create a database of people aged 60 and above, those with comorbidities

has yet to be launched. Besides, the health care authorities of the country have

yet to decide whether people to be vaccinated should go through mandatory antibody tests so as to avoid

wastage of the much-sought-after coronavirus vaccine. The country has so far arranged for the delivery of 9.8 crore doses of

the vaccine -- 3 crore from Serum Institute of India and 6.8 crore from the COVAX facility -- to inoculate 4.9 crore people, each to be administered

Frontline healthcare professionals along with people aged 60 and above and those with comorbidities like cancer, diabetics and hypertension will be vaccinated in the first phase, according to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) officials.

Meanwhile, the DGHS has been struggling to prepare a database for the elderly people. Besides, there is also no database of people with comorbidities.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



OXFORD VACCINES FROM INDIA

- 3 crore doses for 1.5 crore people
- **50 lakh** doses to arrive in each instalment
- Purchase cost \$5 per dose

VACCINES FROM GAVI

- **6.8 crore** doses for **3.4 crore** people
- Estimated cost **\$1.6-2.0 per** dose
- These vaccines will cover **20**% of country's **17.28 crore** population

WHO WILL NOT GET VACCINES

- Under-**18 people** (37% of the population) Pregnant mothers (About 50 lakh)
- **ADMINISTERING THE VACCINES**
- People will have to register for vaccination through mobile app
- There will be **10,400** vaccination centres
- up to upazila level
- Each vaccination team can vaccinate 150
- people a day
- 50 lakh people will be vaccinated in 12

COLD CHAIN

DGHS struggling to create

comorbidity

ready yet

database of people aged 60 and above, and those with

No decision yet on mandatory

Mobile app for registration

of people for vaccination not

antibody test to avoid wastage of vaccines

- >> DGHS will rent two cold storages of BADC for use as central store
- >> 714 freezers are in 64 districts. 193 more needed
- > 1.679 freezers are in **493** upazilas. **294** more needed

VACCINE WASTE MANAGEMENT Waste of vaccination

programme will be put into biohazardous waste bags. Vials and syringes will be broken and burnt before disposing them of in burial pits.



16 more die from Covid, 785 infected

Victim blaming

MUST STOP

Say rights activists

Whenever there is an incident of rape,

most people tend to say that it was the

her character, social class, outfit, sexual

student was published Thursday night,

many took to social media to blame the

Fardin Iftekhar Dihan confessed to his

role in killing the girl after raping her. The

doctor who did the postmortem also said

excessive bleeding due to injuries from the

Nevertheless, people on social media

keep saying that it was consensual sex

and should not be called rape. "The girl

went on a date with her boyfriend... If

the girl had any decency, she would have

never gone to her boyfriend's flat before

marriage," commented a Facebook user

under the post of a news report about the

A former teacher of the girl's school

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

wrote, "The boy shouldn't be blamed

alone. I am sure nothing must have

subsequent death of a 17-year-old O-level

At a Dhaka court yesterday, 18-year-old

girl or woman's fault, and question

After the news of the rape and

experience, and lifestyle.

rape led to her death.

Nilima Jahan

Bss, Dhaka

incident.

Bangladesh recorded 16 Covid-19 deaths and 785 fresh cases overnight.

The recovery count rose to 465,279 after another 833 patients were discharged from the hospitals during the period, a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)

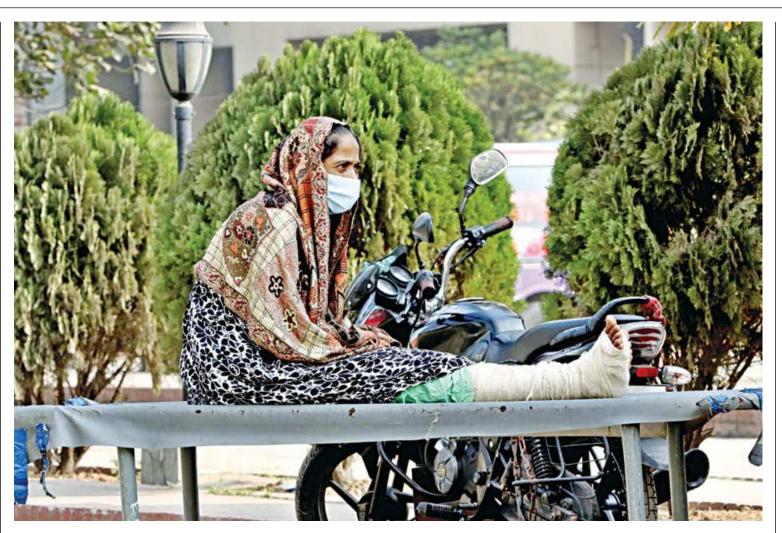
read yesterday. "Sixteen more Covid-19 patients died in the last 24 hours, increasing the death toll from the pandemic to 7,734," the release added.

It said the tally of infections has surged to 520,690 as 785 new cases were confirmed in the last 24 hours

A total of 13,681 samples were tested at 181 authorised laboratories across the country during the time.

Of the total sample tests in the past 24 hours, 5.74 percent tested positive, while 15.63 percent cases were detected from the total tests conducted so far, the release added.

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With her right leg in a cast, 55-year-old Nurjahan Begum sitting on a gurney in front of Mugda General Hospital in the capital as she waits to get tested for coronavirus. She needs a surgery immediately, but doctors at another hospital told her that they would operate only after she tests negative. Even though testing at Mugda General Hospital begins at 9:00am, Nurjahan went there around 7:00am yesterday to avoid being stuck in a long gueue. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN US CAPITOL RIOT

Calls for Trump's impeachment getting louder

Democrats say he must go; breaking 150-year-old tradition, Trump to skip Biden's inauguration

AGENCIES

Despite promises of smooth transition of power to Joe Biden, Congressional Democrats accused US President Donald Trump of inciting insurrection and weighed up impeaching him for a second time after supporters fired up by his false claims of election fraud stormed the US Capitol this week.

After two of his cabinet secretaries quit in protest following Wednesday's mayhem, an unusually tame Trump condemned rioters who rampaged in his name through a congressional session that certified Biden's victory, although he did not go so far as to congratulate or even say the name of his successor.

"This moment calls for healing and reconciliation," Trump said in a video released on Twitter after a temporary suspension, a jarring shift of tone a day after a rally in which he encouraged thousands of supporters to march

Trump said "those who broke the law, you will pay." "A new administration will be inaugurated on January 20. My focus now turns to ensuring a smooth, orderly and seamless transition of power," he said.

However, yesterday, he said he would not attend his successor's swearing-in.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

City

2020 ties with 2016 as hottest year on record

hottest year on record, the European Union's climate monitoring service said yesterday, keeping Earth on a global warming fast track that could devastate large swathes of humanity.

The six years since 2015 are the six warmest ever registered, as are 20 of the last 21, evidence of a persistent and deepening trend, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) reported.

1.25 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels -- was more alarming periodic natural weather event known as an El Nino, which added up to twotenths of a degree to the 2016 average, according Nasa and Britain's Met Office.

"It is quite clear that in the absence of El Nino and La Nina impacts on vear-to-vear temperatures, 2020 would be the warmest year on record," Zeke Hausfather, director of climate and energy at the Breakthrough Institute in

During an El Nino, which occurs every two to seven years, warm surface water in the tropical Pacific Ocean can boost global temperatures. La Ninas -such as one currently underway -- have

"2020 stands out for its exceptional warmth," said C3S Director Carlo

"This is yet another reminder of the urgency of ambitious emissions

wise database of people aged 60 and

above," DGHS DG Prof Abul Bashar

Mohammad Khurshid Alam told The

He did not say how long it might

The DGHS is still struggling to collect

Public health experts said antibody

data on people with comorbidities, he

tests would reduce wastage of vaccine

vaccine is not needed for them, they

The DG said the A2I (Access to information), health services

been working to develop a mobile app,

which is considered the first step in the

process, people will be notified through

He said officials have started training

Vaccines will be administered at

the health workers and preparing the

various government hospitals and

specialised hospitals across the country,

given to frontline workers of different

government officials, law enforcers,

defence personnel, freedom fighters,

media personnel and religious leaders.

aforementioned groups will get the

vaccine in the first phase; those aged 60

and above and having comorbidities in

those groups will get priority, said Prof

He said the government was

Bangladesh will get 50 lakh Oxford-

The government has given the

emergency use authorisation (EUA)

for the Oxford vaccine on Monday and

has also disbursed advance payment

of around \$59 million. It was initially

decided to administer vaccines to 25

lakh people each month, with each

inoculating 50 lakh people at one go.

Recent developments, however,

"We've got communication from

various sources suggesting that the

efficacy of the second dose of vaccine

is higher if administered in the latter

part of a 4-to-12-week timeframe after

the first dose," said a DGHS official,

administer 50 lakh dozes at one go. It

will also help relieve the pressure from

the huge demand for the vaccine," the

official said, adding that they were also

in discussions to include the national

cricket, football and hockey team

players and officials in the first phase of

Although the government has initially

planned to vaccinate 80 percent of

the population, leaving the remaining

20 percent for herd immunity, the

number may fall because of recent

It was recently decided not to

vaccinate people below 18 years of

WHO WILL NOT BE VACCINATED

"In that case, we are planning to

person to be given two doses.

preferring not to be named.

the vaccination plan.

developments.

preparing the priority list for vaccination

Astrazeneca vaccine shots in each

instalment every month from Serum

But not everyone in the

professional groups, he added.

In the first phase, vaccines will be

The frontliners include health

xpiry date, said Prof Khurshid.

venues to vaccinate people.

said the DG.

Khurshid.

in the first phase.

Institute of India.

vaccination programme.

Daily Star on Sunday.

take to create the database.

reductions to prevent adverse climate impacts in the future."

In 2015, the world's nations vowed

to cap global warming "well below" 2C, and 1.5C if possible.

A subsequent report from the UN's climate science advisory panel, the IPCC, left no doubt that 1.5C was the safer threshold.

With just over 1C of warming so far, the world has seen a crescendo of deadly droughts, heatwaves, flood-inducing rainfall, and superstorms made more destructive by rising seas.

2020 witnessed a record number, for example, of hurricanes in the Atlantic that the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) ran out of letters in the alphabet to name them.

Some regions last year experienced warming well beyond the global average, according the Copernicus report, based largely on satellite data. Europe's average surface temperature

across 2020 was a searing 2.2C over the pre-industrial benchmark -- and nearly half a degree above 2019, the previous record vear. Warming in the Arctic region was

even more spectacular, with northern Siberia and parts of the Arctic itself nearly 7C above mid-19th century levels. Wildfires across Siberia lasting well

into the autumn released a record quarter billion tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, equivalent to the annual emissions of Spain, Egypt or Vietnam, and a third more than in 2019, the previous record year.



About three-four people taking drugs under the red blanket on a footpath near the High Court premises in the evening yesterday. Mostly homeless people are often seen taking drugs on relatively quiet streets in the capital.

Doctor confirms rape, finds injury marks

show her as an adult person to

"lessen the merit of the case". They

Police earlier said Dihan had taken the victim to Anwar Khan Modern Hospital in Dhanmondi area on Thursday afternoon. Doctors at the private hospital said she was brought

CONFUSION OVER VICTIM'S AGE Kalabagan police had requested the DMC forensic department to find out the age of the victim through medical

In the case statement, the age is mentioned as 17. According to her passport, the victim was born on October 9, 2003.

But police in their inquest report said she was 19.

To determine the age, forensic experts suggested conducting medical tests on the body. As the department concerned at the hospital was closed yesterday, the body was handed over to the family without the tests.

"There are some issues regarding the age. We can't tell you the age now. Although we could not carry out the tests yesterday, we can still find out the age using samples from her body, including her teeth, and relevant documents," said Dr Sohel.

Kalabagan Sub-inspector Jakir Hossain, who prepared the police inquest report, said they mentioned the age as 19 based on the death certificate issued by the authorities of Anwar Khan Modern Hospital.

The death certificate, however, says the age is 17.

Asked, the SI said, "That's why we've requested the forensic department to determine the age.'

accused police of trying to save the accused as "he is from an influential "The accused is a son of a former district registrar. His relatives are quite influential people. The accused

is two years older than my daughter," said the victim's mother. Dr Sohel said the actual age would be determined by the court.

Asked, the forensic expert said they would conduct DNA profiling to determine whether one or multiple persons were involved in the incident. Doctors would also see if any sedative was used, he said.

He said the cause of the death would be known after getting the post-mortem report.

In the death certificate, the cause of the death is mentioned as hemorrhagic shock due to post-coital

In the inquest report, police said the victim died due to excessive bleeding and it could be a case of rape. The report said her weight was 45kg.

'IT'S MURDER'

Eldest among three siblings, the victim wanted to become a doctor. Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, her mother said she was a meritorious student and used to attend online classes of six coaching centres.

She was about to sit for her O-level final exams in four months.

The mother said their world turned Meanwhile, the victim's family phone call at 1:18pm on Thursday. blaming.

alleged that police were trying to Dihan called her and informed her that her daughter had suddenly fell sick and that he was taking her to hospital.

"I want justice from the prime minister. My daughter just can't die like this. She has been killed," the mother said.

Meanwhile, police yesterday urged everyone not to "exaggerate" the issue on social media, saying that they were working to crack the case.

Sajjadur Rahman, commissioner (Ramna zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, made the call while talking to reporters at the Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh (CRAB) in the capital's Segunbagicha.

PROTEST People from different walks of life, including students, held rallies in the

capital yesterday, protesting the rape and murder of the victim. In the morning, protesters under the banner of "Bangladesh against

Rape and Injustice" attended a rally at the Press Club. The demonstrators urged to boycott all rapists and oppressors. In the afternoon, another group

of protesters under the banner of "Pritilata Brigade" held a rally in Shahbagh area, demanding an end to all violence against women in plain land and in the hills.

A section of students held another rally in Dhanmondi 27 area to push for their four-point demand, including bringing all sexual assaulters and murderers to book and upside down after she received a taking stern action against victim-

Victim blaming

happened without the girl's consent... Didn't she know the guy?"

Naher of Jahangirnagar University said, The offence of the perpetrator must be given more importance, because sexual violence doesn't only exist outside of home.

people consider it as a criminal offence. Then why does a woman's character become relevant when she is raped and

nothing to do with who the victim is, how she dresses or whether she has an affair, she told The Daily Star.

Taqbir Huda, research specialist at Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, who leads the Rape Law Reform Now Campaign, said "Whenever a rape gets reported, we see a large section of society normalising the crime and implying that the rape was almost

by stretching the concept of 'boys will be boys', you are essentially telling men and boys to go and rape a girl to death, because we'll always find a way to put

"As long as we keep telling women and girls to 'avoid' getting raped instead of teaching boys not to rape, such incidents will repeat."

and behaviours, instead of holding men accountable."

The victim-blaming even extended to the girl's parents. Some demanded they be punished for letting their there was no question about the kind of environment at home and school and

According to Ain o Salish Kendra, at least 1,627 women were raped and gang-raped across the country in 2020. Of them, 53 were killed after rape and

14 died by suicide. The number of rape victims was

1,413 in 2019 and 732 in 2018, ASK mentioned in its 2020 annual report.

Interpol issues

"The Interpol sent the red notice to its offices in different countries. The red notice will remain valid for next five years," he said.

days after NCB of Bangladesh Police requested Interpol to issue a red notice against Halder.

The announcement came three

reports, Halder is now in Toronto and the director of P&L Hal Holding Inc, a Canadian corporation.

The three other NBFIs from which Halder allegedly embezzled crores of taka are International Leasing and Financial Services Limited (ILFSL), FAS

Halder came to limelight during the anti-casino drives in 2019. The ACC launched an investigation into the involvement of 43 people, including

him, in the illegal casino business. The ACC, on January 8 last year, filed a case against Halder on charges of illegally amassing wealth worth Tk 275

crore. In connection with the graft case, on

January 4, the ACC arrested Shankha Bepari, an associate of Halder. On the following day, the High Court (HC) issued a travel ban against

25 accomplices of Halder, including his

a court order. He joined NRB Global Bank as its

managing director in 2015. Several enquiries over embezzlement

are pending with the ACC.

summoned seven persons to appear before it this week to face questioning over embezzlement of over Tk 3,500 crore from Peoples' Leasing.

"We are working on it. We are exploring the NID database and that would make it easier for us to create an area-

Besides, around 50 lakh pregnant mothers will not be vaccinated as a precaution in the first phase, said DGHS

Those who were infected will also not be vaccinated. According to international protocol, those who were infected do not need vaccines as they have already developed antibodies, said

According to updated DGHS data, 4,63,480 people have recovered till

Since many people are asymptomatic and have developed antibodies, the

The government has so far decided to procure those vaccines suited for the existing EPI (Expanded Programme on Immunization) cold chain, department, and the ICT ministry have capable of storing vaccines in 2-8 degree Celsius.

The Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine, which has already been in After completing the registration emergency use in developed countries an SMS about the vaccination date and Health Organisation (WHO), requires place. After vaccination, the DGHS will a cold chain of between -112 and -76 give people a vaccine card containing degree Celsius, which Bangladesh can

professionals, public representatives,

vaccine shots from COVAX, a global vaccine alliance, not before May. Bangladesh would get vaccine shots for 20 percent of its population from COVAX, which is around 6.8 crore doses, at a cheaper price of around \$1.6

Officials said a coronavirus vaccine will arrive at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport from Pune via

director of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd, told The Daily Star that each vaccine carton will contain temperature monitoring devices during transportation so that records of a 20-

suggest that the authorities might go for transferred from the warehouses to government-designated sites.

> airport. There would be various layers in the vaccine carton. We will finally open the carton in the governmentdesignated place. The device will then give data of whether the temperature was compromised in any place," Papon

warehouse in Dhaka and also purchasing some specialised vehicles

work will be completed to receive the vaccines," he added.

Papon said a vial will consist of 10

administered 28 days after the first one, he added, hoping that if all approvals are fulfilled, the vaccines are likely to arrive at the end of January or early

percent of the country's over 170 million population, according to Bangladesh

officials.

an official.

January 6. VACCINE PROCUREMENT PLAN

and has got the approval from the World the batch number of the vaccine and its ill afford with its existing cold chain. In that context, Bangladesh has decided to purchase the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, which has recently

gotten approval in the UK and India for emergency use. The government has signed a tripartite agreement with Serum Institute of India and its local agent Beximco, a Bangladeshi pharmaceutical company, to buy three \$5 per dose.

The country is expected to get the three crore vaccine shots in six instalments, with the first instalment of 50 lakh expected to arrive in the country in the second week of February, said a

to \$2 per shot.

He said the vaccines will be

He said they are preparing a to transport vaccines from airport to warehouse to government-designated

Pence the acting president.

"The president is unfit," Kinzinger said. "And the president is unwell.

on Thursday reported that Pence is opposed to using the 25th Amendment to force Trump from office. While Pence has not spoken publicly about invoking the mechanism, never used before in US history, the newspaper cited a person close to the vice president saying he is against the radical move.

The Times said Pence's stance is supported by several cabinet members. Meanwhile Democrats in the US House of Representatives said that if the 25th Amendment is not invoked they will move quickly to impeach

Assistant House Speaker Katherine Clark yesterday said if Pence and other cabinet members do not remove Trump from office, then impeachment proceedings will start next week. Democrats in the House of Representatives were due to hold a conference call to discuss this at noon

department on Thursday confirmed that US federal investigators were examining everyone who might have played a role in the violence - and that includes considering possible charges against Trump.

only the people who went into the building," said acting US attorney Michael Sherwin, Washington's top federal prosecutor. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, who is married to Republican

at the Capitol. On Thursday evening Education Secretary Betsy DeVos became the second cabinet member to quit, telling Trump in a letter that such "behavior

of staff who is now US special envoy to Northern Ireland, and the deputy national advisor, Matt Pottinger, an architect of Trump's hawkish line on China. The torrent of condemnation

came as Capitol Police said Officer Brian Sicknick had died at a hospital of injuries sustained during clashes with the crowd-waving mob, which overwhelmed police and forced their way into the legislature. It was the first law enforcement

death from a day of violence which

also left four protesters dead, including

a woman who was shot and killed

by police. Three other deaths were reported on the Capitol grounds, but the circumstances remained unclear. Bipartisan anger has mounted since the riot over the failure of law

enforcement to prevent the mobs from entering Congress. Steven Sund, the chief of the 2,300-strong Capitol Police, handed in his resignation, and lawmakers vowed

a thorough investigation on security

16 more die

FROM PAGE 1

Among the total infections, 89.36 percent patients have recovered, while 1.49 percent died so far since the first Covid-19 positive cases were reported in the country on March 8. Among the 16 deaths, 13 were male

and three female, the press release read, adding one was in his 40s while 14 were above 60 years and one was between 11 and 20 years. According to the division-wise data, 14 deaths took place in Dhaka

division and rests are in other

divisions. Among the total 7,724 fatalities, 4,262 deaths occurred in Dhaka division, 1,428 in Chattogram

the press release. A total of 3,331,491 samples have

Calls for Trump's impeachment getting louder Mick Mulvaney, a former Trump chief

"To all of those who have asked, I will not be going to the Inauguration on January 20th," Trump tweeted, making formal what many had long assumed: that Trump would eschew the traditional step of personally demonstrating the peaceful hand-off of power to President-elect Joe Biden. He'll be the first outgoing president to skip his replacement's inauguration in

more than 150 years. Meanwhile, the two top Democrats in Congress urged his immediate removal, fearing damage he can still

inflict in his less than two weeks left in the world's most powerful job. And the editorial board of The Wall Street Journal piled on, calling for Trump "to take personal responsibility

Biden, who won seven million votes more than Trump in the November 3 election as well as a decisive edge in the vital state-by-state Electoral College, declined on Thursday to address demands for Trump's removal but accused him of an "all-out assault on

the institutions of our democracy." "Yesterday, in my view, was one of the darkest days in the history of our nation," Biden said at an event to introduce his nominee for attorney general, respected judge Merrick Garland, who if confirmed will quickly need to decide whether to prosecute

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer urged Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment, which allows a majority of the cabinet to remove a president deemed unable to discharge his duties.

They threatened to impeach Trump for an unprecedented second time in the hopes that the Senate will oust him. "This is an emergency of the highest magnitude," Pelosi said, describing

Trump as a "very dangerous person." 'By inciting sedition, as he did yesterday, he must be removed from office," she said. "While it's only 13 days left, any day can be a horror show for America.' Reuters yesterday reported that

Pelosi also yesterday spoke to the top US military commander General Mark Milley about taking precautions to ensure that Trump cannot initiate hostilities or order a nuclear strike in

his remaining 12 days in office.

Few Republicans came forward to back such remedies, although Representative Adam Kinzinger, a frequent Trump critic within his party, said it was time to "end this nightmare" and also called for invoking the 25th Amendment, which would make

However, the New York Times

yesterday (17:00 GMT). In another development, US justice

"We are looking at all actors, not

Senate leader Mitch McConnell and is one of Trump's longest-serving cabinet members, announced she would resign over the "entirely avoidable" violence

was unconscionable for our country." Others who resigned included

division, 445 in Rajshahi division, 539 in Khulna division, 239 in Barishal division, 294 in Sylhet division, 350 in Rangpur division and 177 in Mymensingh division, according to

so far been tested since the detection country.

of the first Covid-19 cases in the

Don't 'interfere' over US unrest: **Hungary PM**

AFP, Budapest

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, one of President Donald Trump's main supporters in the EU, yesterday cautioned against interfering in "America's business" over the unrest in Washington this week. Foreign leaders including in the EU

have roundly condemned pro-Trump

protesters after they stormed the US Capitol building in anger over his election defeat. But the nationalist Hungarian leader cautioned against criticising

events in other countries during a state radio interview. "We should not interfere in what is happening in America, that is America's business, we are rooting for them and we trust that they will manage to solve their own problems,

said Orban.

Anthropology Professor Ainoon

Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, said, "When someone is killed by a car or hacked to death by robbers,

murdered?' The mindset of men is the cause of frequent incidents of rape, and it has

"When you treat rape as inevitable

the blame on her.

Umama Zillur, founder of KOTHA, a programme that addresses the attitudes, behaviours and conditions that support, condone and lead to sexual violence, said the victim-blaming on social media was just another reflection of how "comfortable we are with demonising women and their actions

daughter have too much freedom. But society that leads men to feel entitled to women's bodies," she added.

FROM PAGE 1

According to Canadian media

Finance and Investment, and Reliance

mother Lilaboti Halder. On the last week of December, the ACC seized Halder's two flats and six acres of immovable properties following

of crores of taka from NBFIs by Halder

The anti-graft watchdog has

The year 2020 tied with 2016 as the

Last year's record high -- a soaring because it came without the help of a

Oakland, California, reported AFP.

the opposite cooling effect.

Key issues still unresolved age. This age-group constitutes 37-40

Bureau of Statistics data.

crore Oxford vaccine shots at a cost of

DGHS official. He said they were expecting to get

Delhi. From there it will be kept at a Beximco warehouse. Nazmul Hasan Papon, managing

day cold chain could be preserved.

"We will inspect physically in the

"We hope by January 15, all our

doses of the vaccine. The second dose should be

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

PIRANHA

ver a century ago, in late 1913, Teddy Roosevelt went on an expedition in Brazil to navigate the mysterious and uncharted river called the River of Doubt. The hardship of the trip is unthinkable today. Roosevelt's team ran out of food and had to rely on hunting parrots and monkeys. Malarial mosquitoes tormented and sickened them. They were followed by suspicious Indians who could have attacked and killed them any time. They brought along canoes only to find they were unsuitable for the rivers they needed to travel on.

But the trip also revealed many new things to the adventurers.

Roosevelt and his colleagues, for the first time, saw an unusual fish in the river. The voracious fish had sharp teeth. One day, on the riverbank, Roosevelt's second in command, Colonel Randon, absent-mindedly put his bare foot in the water. In one bite the fish ate his little toe.

In another incident, Roosevelt witnessed a spectacle created when part of a river was dammed off. The fish therein were forced to starve for a few days, after which a cow was pushed into the river. Large numbers of these fish stripped the cow to its bones in a short time in front of his eyes.

In both in both these incidents the fish was the Piranha.

Piranha is actually a group of fish found in rivers of South America. There are several dozen species of the fish, most of them concentrated in the Amazon, but also present in other large river systems such as the Orinoco and the Paraguay. Depending on the species Piranhas grow between five and fourteen inches long. They are unremarkable looking flat fish resembling a coloured version of Rupchanda. The best known (or perhaps most feared) species is the Red-bellied Piranha.

The defining feature of the



Piranha in distress.

Piranha is its teeth. The upper and lower rows of sharp teeth are finely serrated and interlaced so that when closed, they fit tightly like zippers. Powered by strong jaws, the Piranha produces one of the most forceful bites of any living

For these reasons, the Piranha has a fearsome hold on popular imagination. But is this justified? The fish rarely attacks humans; fatal attacks are even rarer. Although it is known as a voracious carnivore, the Piranha is actually omnivorous, eating plant matter (fruit and seeds) along with fish. The common belief that it is attracted to blood is also a misconception.

Nature has its own rules: it often turns the tables on its predators.

In summertime, when the water is low in the rivers and streams. birds such as storks and herons hunt for Piranhas. The only time I saw a Piranha was under these circumstances. In Brazil's Pantanal, high on a bare tree, a Wood Stork perched holding a Piranha in its bill. For a few minutes it flipped the fish this way and that to find purchase. The fish looked sad and helpless dangling from the bird's mouth, its feared teeth amounting to naught. The bird, having found a convenient hold on the fish, flew away with it, presumably to consume it in privacy away from prying tourist eyes.

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

The inequalities in online education

Students in rural areas lag behind due to poor infrastructure

NILIMA JAHAN

Most days of the week, Jagannath University student Ayesha Nijhum is seen sitting in an open field near her house in Gazipur's Kapasia. The second-year student of management attends online classes on her cellphone for about two hours and prefers the field over her house due to the better signal reception in the open area.

She said they started attending two classes online, five days a week, from July. But she had to miss many classes due to lack of stable internet connection in her village, although marks are still assigned to regular attendance.

Mita, a third-year Farhana student of management studies at Government Titumir College, affiliated under Dhaka University, said teachers sometimes end up cancelling classes as only one or two students join the online lectures, although they have over 400 students.

Although the pandemic prompted universities to move their classes online, poor internet connectivity is disrupting the learning process of a large number of students like Ayesha and Farhana, who have been staying at their village homes since the universities closed in March. The closure has been extended till January 16, 2021.

The 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics found only 5.6 percent of households in the country have access to a computer and 37.6 percent of households have internet access.

University Grants Commission in August asked public universities to prepare a list of students who cannot attend online classes for not having smartphones.

Thirty-nine public universities sent lists of 41,501 students who need assistance. The UGC decided to provide these students with Tk 8,000 each interest-free loan so that they can buy smartphones to attend online classes.

According to UGC Secretary Ferdous Zaman, UGC already sent the money to the respective university "The funds on December 15.

who need the money, and disburse it on their own. As far as I know, some students already received it, while others will get it soon," he said.

CHALLENGES

- Poor connectivity
- >> Limited access to smartphones
- Cost of mobile data
- >> Technical issues in video call >> Hampered communication

RECOMMENDATIONS

Training for teachers **《**

Infrastructural support «

RURAL STUDENTS STRUGGLE TO CATCH-UP

The Daily Star spoke to 20 students of different public universities and colleges who said they have not been able to reap the benefits of remote learning due to poor connectivity and lack of smart gadgets.

Before the pandemic, students could do their assignments and projects at their university computer labs.

"Now when we are asked to complete an assignment in 30 minutes and email it after converting the file to PDF, many of us simply cannot do that on time. This will affect our results," said Ayesha, also listing creating presentations as a major hurdle in this time.

Anwar Hossain, a fourth-semester student of Islamic studies at Dhaka University, said a communication gap exists due to online learning, which affects the lessons.

He said the learning dynamic is heavily affected by the mechanics of video communications platforms. "Often the videos get paused in the live feed due to server issues and by the time they resume, students have

university authorities will scrutinise already missed out the point the teacher was making," he said.

Teachers spend a significant amount of time behind roll calls. "Sometimes, over 25 minutes of an hour-long class is spent taking

attendance," said Anwar. Sumaiya Chowdhury, a first-year student of Eden Mohila College, said the unavailability of books and journals in the form of ebooks negatively affects their learning.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Experts say slow internet connections or limited access in rural areas can contribute to students falling behind academically.

Although the government took steps to widen the reach, it has to ensure affordable and accessible e-learning methods, they added.

"The biggest impact of Covid-19 is the learning loss," said noted educationist Rasheda K Chowdhury.

"Students must be provided appropriate infrastructure and subsidised internet connection immediately. Otherwise, online classes will not be useful for those in rural areas," said Rasheda, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education.

In a recent survey on the impact of Covid-19 on youth's education, Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre (BYLC) found that students of certain regions and institutions were disproportionately affected.

The most affected were those who hail from indigenous communities, madrasas, and remote areas including chars, islands, and hills, according to the survey conducted among 698 college and university students and five private and public university teachers in October.

The study recommended students be given digital infrastructural support and subsidised access to the internet by telecommunication operators, along with the state-owned Teletalk.

It stressed the need for accelerating process of providing interest-free loans to students, arranging training for teachers and providing free access to e-learning resources -- e-books, online journals, articles, and online courses.

Covid-19 antigen testing starts in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Antigen testing for Covid-19 has started in Chattogram from Tuesday on a test basis. Initially, the service is limited only to Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) laboratory at Fauzderhat, said officials of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Each test will cost patients Tk 100, said sources in BITID.

Contacted, Dr Sheikh Fazle Rabbi, civil surgeon of Chattogram, said a total of 1,000 testing kits have been given to BITID primarily for antigen testing.

"Only BITID has been given permission for Covid-19 antigen tests in Chattogram for now" he said, adding, "The government will decide about expanding the test after evaluating the outcome of this programme."

Experts said what sets antigen testing apart from RT-PCR tests is that results can be known within half-an-hour of testing, compared to at least 24 hours for RT-PCR

An antigen test reveals if a person is currently infected with a pathogen. Once the infection is gone, the antigen disappears. This test is considered highly accurate for certain kind of patients and can provide results in minutes.

On the other hand, RT-PCR, considered

a gold-standard technology for Covid-19 detection, traces pieces of the virus through analysing sputum or mucus samples collected from the human body -- nasal and throat.

"But the problem with antigen tests is that its scope is limited to patients with symptoms who come for testing within four days of showing these symptoms. In other words, it's not very effective for asymptomatic patients," said Prof Dr Shakeel Ahmed, in-charge of BITID laboratory. "This is why it's not recommended for all."

"Samples of patients, who have symptoms but tested negative for Covid-19 (after antigen testing), are being tested through RT-PCR to be reconfirmed," he said. "No additional charge is kept for the test," added Prof Shakeel.

"To evaluate the quality of antigen tests, we will compare the results with that of RT-PCR tests with a good number of samples,"

Contacted, Dr Hasan Shahriar Kabir, Chattogram divisional director of DGHS, said if the result of Covid-19 antigen test proves to be authentic, other establishments across the division will be allowed to conduct the test.

At present, apart from Chattogram district, the government has permitted the test only in Brahmanbaria, he said.

'Missing' teen found dead in pond

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A teenage boy was found dead in a pond near his house in Gazaria upazila of Munshiganj yesterday, 18 days after he had reportedly gone missing.

The deceased was identified as Md Hasan Mia (17), son of Md Shamim

Hosen, said police. According to family sources, Hasan had been missing since December 21 last year.

The body bore several injury marks, said Md Rois Uddin, officer-in-charge (OC) of Gazaria Police Station.

Hasan's family said they looked for him during the last 18 days, but to no avail, added OC Rois Uddin.

Police recovered the body around 11am after locals found the body floating in the waterbody, said the police official.

The body was sent to Munshigani General Hospital morgue for autopsy, he added.



Workers shout their slogans, fists raised and flags drawn. Under the banner of National Garments' Workers Federation, they brought out a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday, demanding security benefits for all RMG workers. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Councillor Posts

AL rebels resolute to contest CCC polls

Arun Bikash Dey, Ctg

Many Awami League rebel candidates for Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) councillor race are determined to contest the polls, despite the party's strict order of not doing so.

The election has been deferred to January 27 from March 29 last year due to Covid-19, according to Election Commission.

Among the pro-AL councillors elected in the last polls in 41 wards, 14 failed to get party backing this time. Of them, 12 submitted nomination papers and did not withdraw candidacy despite warning from party leaders.

The candidates believe they have "voters' support from grass roots". Many of them also alleged that they fell victim to "conspiracy" and "injustice". Mahbub-ul-Alam Hanif, joint general

secretary of AL, at a programme in the port city on December 19 reiterated the intention of taking action against those who would compete for the councillor posts, defying party decision.

He also warned them that they would not be given party nomination or support in any polls in future.

Abul Fazal Kabir Ahmed Manik, who was elected councillor of ward-14 in the last CCC polls, said AL is not backing him

this time. "Councillor polls is non-political. So, there is no question of defying party decision," he said.

Immediate past councillor of ward-33 Hasan Murad Biplob echoed him. Similarly, Abdul Quader said he will

vie for the post in ward-28 as per "locals' demand". About the warning, he said he has been serving the party for 37 years. "If the party does not evaluate my contribution, I have nothing to say," he added. Saber Ahmed, who was elected

councillor in ward-32 in the last polls, however, said he would have withdrawn candidacy, if it was possible. Now, there is no scope to do so, and top party leaders did not hold any meeting with them regarding the matter. AL insiders said the party will not take

any action against such rebel candidates right now, considering possible damage to the campaign for mayoral post. They will face the music after the election is held. Contacted, AJM Nasir Uddin, AL

Chattogram city unit general secretary and member secretary of AL election management committee for CCC polls, said the party is strict in its decision of taking stern action against the rebel candidates.

The former CCC mayor said, "If anyone wants to stay in the party, they must follow its decision.

Two killed in road accident

Our Correspondent, Pabna

Two women were killed as a truck hit a batteryrun three-wheeler on Bogura-Nagarbari highway at Parkola in Sirajganj yesterday morning.

Police seized the truck out its driver managed to

The accident also left two persons injured, said law enforcers.

Kajoli Begum (60) and Saleka Begum (62) from Parkola Guchchhogram in Shahzadpur upazila, Sirajganj died on the spot, said Shahzadpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shahid Mahamud.

The injured -- Md Anser Ali (38) and Mukta Khatun (25) from the same village -- were undergoing treatment at Shahzadpur Upazila Health Complex, the OC added.

He said the accident took place around 8am as the truck driver lost control over the steering. A case was filed in this

conection.

A boy shows off his catch of the day to a friend, both beaming after a successful fishing run at Barishal's Bakerganj upazila yesterday. The littlest things in life can end up in a shared moment of happiness with a friend.

Nilufer Zafarullah chairman of **IUB's ESTCDT**

STAR REPORT

Nilufer Zafarullah has been elected chairman and Madar vice chairman of the Education, Science, Technology



and Cultural Development Trust (ESTCDT), the founding trust of Independent University, Bangladesh and Chittagong Independent University for 2021-2022, says a press

Nilufer is currently the chairperson of Midland Bank Ltd. An architect by profession, she has contributed to education and development sectors remarkably for more than 25 years. Nilufer was a lawmaker in the 9th and 10th parliament.

Tanveer Madar started his own logistics and allied companies in 1987 as managing director and later formed an association of the International Freight Forwarders as its general secretary. He is now the chairman of Hellmann Worldwide Logistics.

Election

FROM PAGE 12 Bangladesh currency. The petrochemical complex will facilitate the utilisation of natural gas deposits in Bangladesh.

PM APPRAISED OF REMITTANCE **DIFFICULTIES**

Dr AFA Sayeed, member, community relations commission, UK who is currently on a visit to Bangladesh met Bangabandhu yesterday and presented a memorandum on behalf of the Bangalees in the UK.

The nine-point memorandum highlights, among other things, the inconvenience faced by the Bangalees in remitting their earnings to Bangladesh which takes two to four months to reach the destinations. The memorandum also deplores the present arrangement of entry in Bangladesh Airport where incoming Bangalees are treated like captive home-coming crowds. The government is also requested to make provisions for the right of dual nationality to enhance the morale and stability among the Bangalees in the UK.

Source: January 10, 1973 issues of Dainik Bangla, Bangladesh Observer and Dainik Ittefaq

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Healthcare workers arrange vaccine boxes during a nationwide trial run of Covid-19 vaccine delivery systems, at a temporary vaccination centre in Mumbai, India yesterday.

Fake NID for Tk 1.5 lakh

brokers involved in processing documents for bank loans. They usually target loan defaulters seeking fresh loans.

City

If the Credit Information Bureau (CIB) report of the client is found to be unsatisfactory and so he is declared ineligible to get a loan, the brokers take him to another group of brokers who work at the EC

The client and the bank-related brokers then make a deal with the EC office brokers and the process begins to make a second NID card with the help of some data entry officials.

The brokers get a commission on the loan once it is released.

DB officials involved in the investigation said they have already found evidence of Tk 14 crore in loans being collected from different private banks using forged NID cards in the last one year by different

Madhusudan Das, assistant commissioner of DB police, coordinating the investigation, said

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mother-in-law.

Your 13 great

grandchildren

miss you a lot.

Shehnaz, Tasneem,

Riya, Nina & Shabu

received information of loans being taken from different banks with forged documents.

We have sought assistance from Bangladesh Bank for CIB reports. We will conduct a drive against these people who forged documents after e get the reports," he added.

Meanwhile, on December 22, the NID wing handed over a broker to Rapid Action Battalion after he was found trying to reduce an NID card holder's age by 10 years.

The arrestee was identified as Bahadur, who had promised to change the date of year of an applicant named Nur Jalal Sheikh in exchange of Tk 1.5 lakh. Nur said he already paid Tk 1.05

lakh to Bahadur as he badly needed to reduce 10 years from the NID card to secure a permanent job, reads a statement of the NID wing.

On August 30, EC filed a case against the JKG Health Care chairman people with the help of the syndicate. Dr Sabrina Arif Chowdhury for obtaining a second NID card.

The biggest case of NID fraud was reported from Chattogram in 2019 this is a high priority case and they when several people were arrested

Nasa's new telescope

looks like but what it is made of.

used to detect the \$10 quintillion asteroid.

Its final aim, and arguably the most important, of the

spacecraft is to look for water ice and frozen organic

molecules, which could help scientists better understand

how often life sustaining materials form in other bodies, and

therefore give a better idea of where alien life could develop.

2025, before setting off on its two year-long mission.

SPHEREx is set to launch between June 2024 and April

During that time, it will map the entire sky four times

This is because chemical elements absorb and radiate

The map built from SPHEREx's information will also

using spectroscopy - breaking near-infrared light into

individual wavelengths - to detect not just what a material

wavelengths of light differently; it is the same technique

be able to estimate an object's distance from the Earth,

meaning that it will be three-dimensional. "That's like

going from black-and-white images to color; it's like going

from Kansas to Oz," said Allen Farrington, the SPHEREX

project manager at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

for making NID cards for Rohingyas. Besides, a syndicate was found selling land of one MA Wadud in Kushtia after forging his NID card in the same year.

Brig Gen Mohammed Saidul Islam, director general of NID wing, said, "Exemplary punishment is meted out to those who are involved in this irregularity, regardless of the organisation he or she belongs to. There is an inquiry committee to check the crime and the commission takes action on the basis of the recommendations of the committee.'

He told The Daily Star that to stop such crimes, they were working to make facial recognition and iris scanning mandatory for citizensto receive fresh NID cards.

Officials in the NID wing said staffers responsible for giving input of any NID file into the server now have to provide their digital signature every time for each file after it is prepared by a data entry operator.

Besides, there has been a shuffle among EC officials after the recent arrests, they added.

RMG worker

FROM PAGE 12 any money for family expenditures.

At one point, the conversation turned into a feud and became violent as Sumon told Habibullah that he could not even provide milk to his infant child, she said.

Sumon went out of the house making the statement but Habibullah followed him and stabbed him to death just outside their house, she added.

The incident happened around 12:30am yesterday. Hearing Sumon scream, locals rushed to the spot and sent him to Narayanganj General Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Aslam Hossain, officer-in-charge of Fatullah Model Police Station, said the body was sent to morgue for autopsy.

Sumon's brother Mohammad Rubel filed a case against Habibullah. Meanwhile, police arrested the accused and placed him before a

The district's Senior Judicial Magistrate court recorded Habibullah's confessional statement and sent him to jail.

Mirza again

district court last evening.

FROM PAGE 12 from unidentified mobile numbers and fake IDs.

"A conspiracy is on to kill me." he claimed, adding that all the conspirators are involved in AL politics. He also raised questions about

lawmakers in greater Noakhali. At yesterday's rally, Mirza said, "The Awami League will get three to four [parliamentary] seats in greater

the fairness of elections and some

Noakhali region if a fair election is held." AL candidates would be defeated in rest of the seats, he said, adding that it would be hard for the defeated

AL leaders to find a way to escape. "I must tell this. Otherwise, they will not correct themselves," he

He said unscrupulous government officials in the administration should be held accountable for their actions. Although people's right to food has been ensured in the country, their

right to vote is yet to be established, Mirza added. He urged AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to take stern action against party leaders if they are

found involved in corruption, drugs abuse or guilty in scandals involving Mirza also pledged that if he wins

the mayoral polls, he will ensure gas connections in the municipality within next three months.

Local AL leaders attended the rally.

Pakistan PM accuses Shia protesters of 'blackmail'

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday accused Hazara Shia protesters of blackmailing him, as they refused for a sixth day to bury the bodies of miners killed in a brutal attack claimed by the Islamic State

The 10 miners from the minority community were kidnapped near a remote coal mine in the southern province of Balochistan on Sunday by IS, a Sunni extremist group.

Shiite protesters, numbering up to 3,000, have since blocked a road on the outskirts of Quetta, capital of the oil- and gas-rich province, demanding better protection as well as a visit from Khan.

country's prime minister should be blackmailed like this, otherwise everyone will start blackmailing the prime minister,"

Khan said in Islamabad. He said he would only visit Quetta once the funerals had taken place.

The community's refusal to bury the bodies is symbolic in Muslimmajority Pakistan, where according to Islamic culture people should be buried within 24 hours, before the

Ethnic Hazaras make up most of the Shia population in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan -- the country's largest and poorest region, rife with ethnic,

sectarian and separatist insurgencies. Hundreds have been killed over the past decade in attacks by Sunni militants, who consider them heretics. The Central Asian features of Hazaras have made them easy targets.

Several solidarity protests have taken place across Pakistan this week and Pakistani Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai has offered her support.

I am short of words to express my grief over the brutal killings of Hazara miners. This is not the first time that this has happened. But I hope it is the

"I request that PM @ImranKhanPTI meet with the victims' families as soon as possible.'

IS is affiliated with the local militant group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which previously had links to Pakistan's Taliban.

Poorest nations can expect

"That's how countries in Africa and South Asia, and other countries around the world of these 92 that are less able to afford vaccines, are actually going to get vaccines.' VACCINES PIPELINE

The WHO granted emergency validation to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on December 31, paving the way for countries worldwide to give swift approval to its import and distribution.

According to the WHO's overview of candidate vaccines, 63 have been tested on humans, 21 of which reached final-stage mass testing.

A further 172 candidate vaccines are being developed in laboratories with a view to eventual human trials.

"There is a really big pipeline of vaccines that are coming through,"

We are in active review of the data on other vaccines and we do expect to be emergency-use listing additional vaccines in the coming weeks and the next months.

"We have 15 manufacturers that have contacted us believing that they have the data that are required to meet these highest standards.

As for the new mutations of the virus detected in Britain and South Africa, WHO experts have said that while they seem more transmissible, there is no indication that the current vaccines would not work against those variants -- and the vaccines are easily adaptable in any

"The evaluation about whether the all is under way." said O'Brien However, "the kinds of changes

being seen in these variants are not felt to be likely to change the impact", she 'NEUTRALISES KEY MUTATION'

German company BioNTech said yesterday a preliminary study shows that its vaccine works against the key mutation in coronavirus variants uncovered in Britain and South

Tests have shown that "antibodies from people who have received the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine effectively neutralise SARS-CoV-2 with a key mutation that is also found in two highly transmissible

strains," said the German company of the vaccine it developed with US group Pfizer.

The EU has struck a deal to double its supply of the BioNTech/Pfizer coronavirus vaccine to 600 million doses, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday.

Authorities in the 27-nation bloc have been hit with rising criticism that the vaccine rollout that started December 27 has been too slow, especially compared with countries such as the United States or former EU member Britain, reports AFP.

Britain's regulators and France's national health authority gave the green light to a jab developed by US firm Moderna yesterday.

In India, the second phase of the nationwide vaccination drive against Covid-19 took place across 737 districts yesterday. The first massive dry run was held on January 2.

The Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan recorded its first virus death after 10 months of seeking to isolate itself from the pandemic, with a 34-year-old man dying after testing positive on December 23.

ARTHRITIS DRUGS

Treating critically ill Covid-19 patients with Roche's Actemra or Sanofi's Kevzara arthritis drugs significantly improves survival rates and reduces the amount of time patients need intensive care, study results showed on Thursday.

The findings, which have not yet been peer-reviewed, showed that the immunosuppressive drugs - Actemra, also known as tocilizumab, and existing vaccines will be impacted at Kevzara, also known as sarilumab reduced death rates by 8.5 percentage points among patients hospitalised and severely ill with the pandemic disease, reports Reuters.

Meanwhile, China has sealed off two cities south of Beijing, cutting transport links and banning millions of residents from leaving, as authorities move to stem the country's largest Covid-19 outbreak in six months.

The pandemic has so far broadly been brought to heel by Chinese authorities since its emergence in Wuhan in late 2019, with small outbreaks swiftly snuffed out using mass testing, local lockdowns and travel restrictions.

Let Bangladeshi

He suggested that Malaysia

might consider widening its tariff concession for greater market access of Bangladeshi products. The state minister said Malaysia

is Bangladesh's trusted friend and partner with which Bangladesh enjoys strong bilateral relations since its independence. A considerable number of Bangladeshi workers and professionals are living in Malaysia and contributing immensely to the economies of both the countries.

Shahriar requested the high commissioner to extend all kinds of cooperation to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and find a solution to the current migrant issue. In reply, Hazanah Md Hasim

assuring him of taking the issue of the stranded Bangladeshi workers and students to her higher authorities and hoped that it would be resolved of the Rohingyas.

The state minister noted that Malaysia is an advanced economy and a development hub in the Asia Pacific region and is doing remarkably well amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Referring to the recalibration programme for regularisation and voluntary repatriation of migrant workers, Shahriar expressed gratitude to the Malaysian government for standing beside the Bangladeshi expatriates during the pandemic.

He also thanked Malaysia for its strong political and humanitarian support in favour of the Rohingyas and sought a pro-active role from both ASEAN and Malaysia for safe and sustainable repatriation of the refugees to Myanmar.

Shahriar appreciated Malaysia's establishment of a field hospital in Cox's Bazar dedicated to treatment

Pakistan jails militant

FROM PAGE 12 2008 that left 166 people dead.

Delhi has long seethed at Pakistan's failure to hand over or prosecute those accused of planning and organising the attacks.

Lakhvi was detained in 2015 over the attacks but released months later. The government slapped him with a series of detention orders but judges repeatedly cancelled them.

He was designated a terrorist by the

United Nations in December 2008 for being associated with LeT and al-Qaeda.

Earlier this year, Pakistan also arrested firebrand cleric and alleged mastermind of the attacks Hafiz Saeed, who heads the Jamaat-ud-Dawa, a wing of LeT. Saeed was later jailed by a court for

five years and six months on terror charges. He has denied involvement in the

attacks.

Education Engineering Department Chuadanga www.eedmoe.gov.bd Date: 07/01/2021 Eng.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer

Memo No. 37.07.1800.009.00.001.21/305

e-Tender Notice No. xen/eed/chu/01/Furniture(VE.NGSS)/2020-2021

e-Tender (LTM) is invited in the e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following works. Details are given below.

SI. No.	Package No.	Tender ID No.	Description of works	Tender document last selling (date & time)	Tender closing (date & time)	
01	e-GP-EED/CHU- VER-FUR-1	534379	Manufacturing and Supply of Furniture for Academic Building for 6 Classroom of Alokdia Romela Khatun Secondary Girls School Category C3 in Sadar Upazila of Chuadanga District.	24/01/2021 15:00	25/01/2021 15:00	
02	e-GP-EED/CHU- VER-FUR-2	534380	Manufacturing and Supply of Furniture for Academic Building for 5 Classroom of Kutubpur Secondary School Category C1 in Sadar Upazila of Chuadanga District.	24/01/2021 15:00	25/01/2021 15:00	
03	e-GP-EED/CHU- VER-FUR-3	534381	Manufacturing and Supply of Furniture for Academic Building for 9 Classroom of Kunia Chandpur Adarsha Secondary School Category C4 in Sadar Upazila of Chuadanga District.	24/01/2021 15:00	25/01/2021 15:00	
04	e-GP-EED/CHU- VER-FUR-4	534382	Manufacturing and Supply of Furniture for Academic Building for 5 Classroom of Barogangni Secondary School Category C1 in Alamdanga Upazila of Chuadanga District.	24/01/2021 15:00	25/01/2021 15:00	
05	e-GP-EED/CHU- VER-FUR-5	534383	Manufacturing and Supply of Furniture for Academic Building for 9 Classroom of Harokandi Boleshwarpur Secondary School Category C4 in Alamdanga Upazila of	24/01/2021 15:00	25/01/2021 15:00	

Chuadanga District. This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any

registered banks branches up to abovementioned date & time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd). Md. Zahadul Karim

> **Executive Engineer** Chuadanga Tel: 0761-62657 E-mail: ee_chu@eedmoe.gov.bd

China fights new clusters as US death toll soars

AFP, Pékin

China sealed off two cities and imposed travel restrictions on 18 million people yesterday in an effort to eliminate fresh coronavirus clusters, as the United States reported a record number of deaths from

Authorities in the two cities south of Beijing cut transport links and instituted mass testing after 127 infections were recorded in the region over the past week.

They joined Australia's third-largest city in taking an ultra-cautious approach to the pandemic, with Brisbane announcing a lockdown over a single infection.

The responses to the relatively small outbreaks contrasted sharply with the chaos surrounding runaway infection figures in many other parts of the world.

The United States reported a daily record on Thursday with nearly 4,000 deaths, while the toll in Brazil hit 200,000.

Many countries in east Asia however have managed to deal with outbreaks more effectively, and China yesterday moved to contain its largest cluster in six months with its usual tight restrictions.

The northern cities of Shijiazhuang and Xingtai, home to more than five million people, were effectively sealed off.

passenger Long-distance transport in both cities was suspended as of yesterday, and highways were closed. Flights to and from Shijiazhuang were cancelled, and trains suspended.

Orders to remain in their local areas were placed on everyone in Shijiazhuang and Xingtai, as well as surrounding regions.



The lockdown in Brisbane comes a day after Japan announced a month-long state of emergency to deal with its latest surge in infections, sowing doubt about the viability of the Tokyo Olympics this summer.

Around the world, there are few signs of the virus abating, with nearly 1.9 million people known to have died worldwide and 87 million confirmed cases.

Travellers arriving in England and Scotland will soon be required to show negative coronavirus tests, officials said yesterday, as they try to curb the spread of new strains.

The UK government had previously argued against the requirement, which has already been introduced in other countries, saying quarantining of those arriving from high-risk countries was more effective.

Now international travellers arriving in England will be required to present a negative Covid-19 test taken within the last 72 hours, the Department of Transport said.

The measures, which also apply to British nationals, will come into effect from early next week. Passengers who do not comply with the regulations face a £500 (\$678, €552) fine.



A woman skis in an apple orchard at the Kolomenskoye Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, in Moscow, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

NYT: Trump has discussed pardoning himself

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump has said he is considering pardoning himself in discussions with aides since the November election, the New York Times reported. The newspaper cited two unidentified people with knowledge of the discussions.

"In several conversations since Election Day, Mr. Trump has told advisers that he is considering giving himself a pardon and, in other instances, asked whether he should and what the effect would be on him legally and politically," the Times reported.

The newspaper said it : was not clear whether he had discussed the matter since the storming of the US Capitol by his supporters on Wednesday.

Riot exposes racial inequality too "No one can tell me that if it had been a group of vowed to crack down on what he called lawlessness

REUTERS. Washington

The United States' stark racial inequality was on display after a mob of predominantly white supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol with ease on Wednesday then left with few immediate consequences, according to Washington residents, activists and politicians, including President-elect Joe Biden.

The rioters broke through barricades, smashed windows, snatched souvenirs and entered Congressional offices and chambers, some taking photographs with police. Some carried trophies with them as they walked out.

Police officers in charge of security held off using tear gas until intruders had reached the heart of the building, where they roamed freely, ransacking

US media reported that some law enforcement officials even opened doors for them.

The lack of security and limited police response, despite weeks of promotion of the pro-Trump protest that sparked the riot, was in sharp contrast to the largely peaceful Black Lives Matter protests in Washington six months ago.

"My mom said if you did this you'd be shot," Beatrice Mando, who works for the district and attended BLM protests last year. "She is right. There would be hundreds dead, if not more, had this group been Black."

In a speech on Thursday, Biden agreed there was a sharp contrast.

Black Lives Matter protesting yesterday, they wouldn't by "hoodlums" and "thugs." have been treated very, very differently from the mob

of thugs that stormed the Capitol," he said. The United States saw a summer of widespread



demonstrations against racial injustice that began in May following the killing of George Floyd, a Black man who died as a Minneapolis police office knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

In Washington, participants in those protests said their reception was very different. "There were cops at every intersection in DC. There

were cops at all the monuments, at the Capitol, in front of the White House," said Abby Conejo, 29, who works at a small business in Washington.

The Black Lives Matter protesters in Washington had been faced with rows of masked National Guard troops at the Lincoln Memorial in June, as Trump

One evening, baton-swinging police fired smoke canisters, flashbang grenades and rubber bullets to drive peaceful protesters away from the White House, so that Trump could walk to a nearby church and be photographed holding a Bible.

"They treated us like the enemy," Conejo said. Where was that anger and rage yesterday? Why were these people treated like friends?"

Local residents said they worried that the police response was so muted there may be a repeat.

Charles Allen, a DC council member who represents the area, said he and his neighbors are used to First Amendment demonstrations and large gatherings.

"That was not what this was. This was an insurrection. This was domestic terrorists coming into our city and trying to overtake the Capitol," Allen said, adding it was traumatic for the neighborhood.

"I think that people will feel emboldened that

they can do this and I think on top of it, they feel emboldened because they left with souvenirs," he

Among the mob who stormed the Capitol were individuals who waved Confederates flags and wore clothing carrying insignia and slogans espousing white supremacist beliefs.

"It felt like abuse to see not just white privilege but white supremacy in action," said Makia Green, a Black Lives Matter organizer in Washington. "To see the bias from the government, from the police."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Nuke deal: Iran won't rush for US's return

Iran is in no hurry to see the US return to a 2015 nuclear deal with major powers after Joe Biden takes office this month, its supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday. "We are in no rush and we are not insisting on their return. Our demand, which is both logical and rational, is the lifting of sanctions" that outgoing US President Donald Trump reimposed after quitting the deal in 2018. "If the sanctions are lifted, the return of the Americans makes sense." Since 2019, Iran has gradually suspended implementation of most of its key obligations under the nuclear deal.

Republican Loeffler admits defeat in Georgia Senate race

Republican Kelly Loeffler on Thursday conceded her closely watched Senate race in Georgia, with Democratic wins in the state's two runoff elections sealing the party's control of the chamber later this month. "Earlier today I called Reverend Warnock to congratulate him and to wish him well in serving this great state," the businesswoman said in a video message. Loeffler, who will serve out the remainder of her term, had planned to object in Congress on Wednesday to the certification of Joe Biden's November 3 victory. But after the violence that day at the Capitol, which was overrun by mobs of supporters of Trump, the senator changed her mind, saying she could not oppose certification

Indonesia frees cleric linked to Bali bombing



A radical cleric linked to the Bali nightclub bombings was freed from prison yesterday, stirring grief and anger among victims nearly two decades after more than 200 people, mostly foreign tourists, were killed in Indonesia's worst terror attack. Abu Bakar Bashir, 82, is seen as the spiritual leader of Islamist terror network Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which was responsible for the massive blasts that ripped through a pair of packed bars in October 2002. The preacher was released after completing an unrelated jail term for helping fund militant training. Bashir had been previously jailed over the Bali bombings, but that conviction was quashed on appeal.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

FARMERS' PROTEST IN INDIA

Talks fail to break deadlock

The Indian government and representatives of protesting farmers failed to reach an agreement on contentious new agriculture laws yesterday and said they will meet again in a week's time.

Tens of thousands of farmers have been camped on the outskirts of the capital New Delhi for over a month, calling for the repeal of laws introduced by the federal government, which says the legislation is aimed at modernising the country's antiquated agricultural sector.

Farm leaders say the laws are an attempt to erode a longstanding minimum support price for their produce and want a full repeal of the laws.

"The government has constantly said that if the unions give any other option besides repeal, then the government will consider them," agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar told reporters after the eighth round of talks between the two sides.

"But despite long discussions, no options were

presented today, and that's why the discussions have ended here."

The two sides will meet again on Jan. 15, he said. "There was a heated discussion. We said we don't want anything other than repeal of (the) laws," Hannan Mollah, one of the farm leaders told reporters. "We won't go to any court, this (repeal) will either be done or we'll continue to fight."

Mollah added that the protesters would proceed with a rally during India's Republic Day celebration on Jan. 26 if their demands have still not been met.

The majority of India's farmers sell their produce largely to small retailers at a much lower price than the government guaranteed price - offered to only a fraction of farmers.

They fear that with the introduction of the new laws, big retailers like Reliance Industries will enter the market to buy their produce at a lower price, while the government may slowly dismantle the current system of procurement at the guaranteed price.

Police detain a member of the Hindu nationalist and right-wing federation of cattle protection Bhartiya Gau Raksha Dal shouting slogans for the protection of cows and demanding cows to be declared national animal during a protest in Hyderabad, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

জীবনের জন্য বিজ্ঞান "শেখ হাসিনার দর্শন, সব মানুষের উন্নয়ন"





"বিসিএসআইআর ঢাকা ও চট্টগ্রাম কেন্দ্রে নিরাপদ ও স্বাস্থ্যকর শুটকী মাছ প্রক্রিয়াকরণ এবং ইনডোর ফার্মিং গবেষণা সংক্রান্ত সুবিধাদি স্থাপন" শীর্ষক প্রকল্প, বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রণালয়

নংঃ ৩৯.০২.০০০০.০৩০.০৫.০০৩.২০/০৩৫

GD-42

তারিখঃ ০৮/০১/২০২১

	হ-দরপত্র বিজ্ঞাপ্ত	
Tender ID	Name of work	Tender closing & opening date and time
528707	Construction of Civil, Electrical and related works steel shade 20200 square feet, Steel super structure building 4 storied-22500 square feet (approximate).	08-Feb-2021 15:00

Resoulbourn মোঃ রেজাউল করিম প্রকল্প পরিচালক

Identical twins not so identical!

AFP, Paris

Genetic differences between identical twins can begin very early in embryonic development, according to a study Thursday that researchers said has implications for how these siblings help scientists tease out the effects of nature

Identical -- or monozygotic -- twins come from a single fertilised egg that splits in two.

They are important research subjects because they are thought to have minimal genetic differences.

This means that when physical or behavioural differences emerge, environmental factors are presumed to be the likely cause. But the new research, published in the journal Nature

Genetics, suggests that the role of genetic factors in shaping these differences has been underestimated. Kari Stefansson, head of Iceland's deCODE genetics, and his team sequenced the genomes of 387 pairs of identical

twins and their parents, spouses and children in order to track genetic mutations. They measured mutations that occur during embryonic growth and found that identical twins differ by an average

of 5.2 early developmental mutations. In 15 percent of twins, the number of diverging mutations is higher.

When a mutation happens in the first few weeks of embryonic development, it would be expected to be widespread both in an individual's cells and in those of their offspring.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh

Office of the Superintending Engineer E/M Circle, Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229 File No. 30.31.2600.413.03.016.17/45

Date: 06/01/2021

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd). Package information is available in tender notice under e-GP System Portal.

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches. Detailed Name of Work, Tender ID and Closing Date & Time are as follows.

Cicoling	Date a Time are as follows.		
SI No.	Name of work	Tender ID	Opening and closing date & time
1	Providing installation testing & commissioning of Sub-station equipment incl. other related E/M works for Irshal Colony Askona at HSIA.	524539	27-Jan-2021 12:00

Further information and guidelines is available in the e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk.

নং-৩০.৩১.০০০০.৫১.১৬.০০১.২১/১৫ তারিখঃ ০৭/০১/২০২১খ্রিঃ

Md. Jakaria Hossain

Superintending Engineer (E/M)(C.C) E/M Circle, CAAB, Dhaka

Badhon on playing Muskan Zuberi in Śrijit Mukherji's thriller adaptation

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Dr Azmeri Haque Badhon won the 2nd runner-up title at Lux Channel i Superstar 2006, before making her way into acting. She is also a nonpracticing dentist.

The celebrated Bangladeshi artiste will be playing the role of Muskan Zuberi in acclaimed Indian director Srijit Mukherji's first Hoichoi original series, "Robindronath Ekhane Kawkhono Khete Aashenni", based on Mohammad Nazim Uddin's Bangladeshi thriller novel of the same name. Other cast members include Anjan Dutt (Kharaj Khasnobis), Rahul Bose (Nirupam Chanda), Anirban Bhattacharya (Ator Ali) and Anirban Chakrabarti (OC Tapas Sikder).

This series is among Hoichoi's slate of 25 new originals, for their fourth year. In a recent video interview with The Daily Star, titled A & E Talk with Elita, Badhon shared her experience of working on the project and more.

Initially, Srijit Mukherji wanted to shoot this thriller adaptation in Bangladesh, with an entirely Bangladeshi cast. The director has said that he always wanted to cast Badhon in the role of Muskan Zuberi. "I received a few Whatsapp messages from Srijit Mukherji at the beginning of the pandemic. He wanted to speak to me about the role. I was in self-isolation at the time, and I genuinely thought I was hallucinating!" explained Badhon. "I didn't believe it. I even ignored his texts, until producer Shahriar Shakil got me in contact with him.'

Badhon read the novel right after speaking to Srijit Mukherji, and even started rehearsing scenes from the script. "Srijit Mukherji recorded the dialogues of my co-artistes and sent me the recordings through Whatsapp, so that I could rehearse," she added.

However, the director's plans of working on the series with Bangladeshi actors were interrupted by the pandemic. As a result, he decided to move forward with the series in India, with an Indian cast. At the time, he wanted to cast Paoli Dam in the role, but that did not work out due to scheduling conflicts. Eventually, Srijit Mukherji went back to his first choice

With the assistance and cooperation of the High Commissions of Bangladesh and India, Badhon went to Kolkata in December 2020, to begin working on the project. The cast and crew are shooting with all the precautions, including Covid-19 testing, when needed.

"I am thankful to the author Mohammad Nazim Uddin for creating a wonderful, multifaceted character like Muskan Zuberi — every actor waits for a role like this," shared Badhon. "I am



completely fascinated by her."

Badhon has been visiting the sets, even on days where she does not have any scenes to shoot, just to watch the others at work. "All the actors in the series are brilliant. Besides, working with the likes of Srijit Mukherji, Rahul Bose and Anirban Bhattacharya is the experience of a lifetime," she said. "Rahul Bose is incredibly humble. As a co-actor, he made me feel really comfortable on the sets. I don't have any direct scenes with Anjan Dutt, but there is a point in the climax of the story, where audiences will get to see me in the same frame as him, alongside all the other characters, which is exhilarating!'

Badhon also took up singing for the project, since the character of Muskan Zuberi, an ardent admirer of Rabindranath Tagore, is a good singer. l am not a very musical person," shares Badhon. "But I learned singing for this role, right from the basics, for three months. Starting from Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, I learned to play a few, easy songs on the harmonium. I may not be good at singing still, but I wanted to get the body language and the essence of the character right. I will be lip syncing to another singer's voice in the series." Moreover, Badhon is thankful to

Hoichoi for giving her a platform to

explore her skills. "Our industry has plenty of talented and eager individuals who want to do good work, but we lack the production and the technical support," she said. "To that end, I appreciate Hoichoi's commitment to supporting young, promising artistes."

In 2018, Badhon received the complete guardianship and general custody of her only daughter, after a hard-fought legal battle. She spoke about that day in her life, in an emotional moment during the interview. "It was raining heavily on the day of the final verdict, and I felt that Mother Nature was celebrating with me," shared a tearful Badhon.

She further said, "Sadly, women and girls in our society hardly get the opportunity to learn how to speak up for their rights. When girls who have gone through difficulties in their lives, come up to me and say that I give them the courage and confidence to fight for their rights, I feel an immense sense of accomplishment." She further added that motherhood gave her the strength to fight against all odds and stand firm on her beliefs.

On the work front, Badhon also wrapped up director Abdullah Mohammad Saad's forthcoming project. She described working with him as one of her biggest learning experiences.

Gazi Rakayet on his latest film, "The Grave"

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Renowned actor and director Gazi Rakayet started his career on stage, where he honed his craft as an actor. He won Bangladesh National Film Award for Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Dialogue and Best Story for his debut directorial "Mrittika Maya" (2013) and the Best Supporting Actor award for his role in the film Anil "Bagchir Ekdin" (2015). His film, "Gor" (The Grave in English), was recently released, to much acclaim. It is said to be the first English feature film released in the country. The esteemed director talks to The Daily Star about his latest project.

What made you select the script for "Gor"? I had made a tele-fiction with the same story a while back, and since then, I had dreamt of making a feature film with it. I had wanted to highlight our country to international audiences with the film, and the script was perfect for the

Why did you decide to release the film in English? Many of our films are earning praise internationally, after they are given proper subtitles in English. I thought that a film natively in English would be easier for audiences abroad to grasp. Some may think that it was for show-off, but in reality, it was necessary – so we shot in both English and Bengali. I believe that "Gor" will be appreciated in the international arena, because of this very reason.

Where did the film's shooting take place? The shooting took place in my home village of Shinepukur in Dohar. We cleared space in a jungle situated there, and created the set there, overlooking a char. Uttam Guha was the art director for the film, and I must say, he did a brilliant job. We shot the film in October and November.

Tell us about acting in "Gor". Why did you cast yourself in that particular role?

That role was one of the most important ones in the film, and I will admit that there were many artistes who could have played it. However, would they have given enough time to that role? Maybe they would, maybe they wouldn't. A lot of homework and consideration was needed for the role, so I decided to take matters into my own hands. Now, I am glad that I could give my all to

How challenging was the film to complete? It was doubly challenging to complete, as it was shot and dubbed in both English and Bangla. Moreover, it is a government granted film, so the expectations were also very high. We rehearsed for a week before the shooting even began.

The lack of planning can be the biggest roadblock to completing any film, so I would say that all filmmakers should extensively plan their work before getting into action.



Looking back at Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin's enduring legacy

In conversation with Mainul Abedin



Badhon in "Rabindranath Ekhane Kawkhono Khete Aashenni'





(L) The Shilpacharya in his studio. (M) This sketch by Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin was recently auctioned to raise funds for Covid-19 relief. (R) Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin (R) with a young Mainul Abedin. RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

Zainul Abedin is considered to be the founding father of Bangladeshi modern art. He was honoured with the title, Shilpacharya, which translates to 'the master of art'. He made undeniable contributions to art creation and education in Bangladesh. On his 106th birth anniversary (December 29, 2020), the Faculty of Fine Art building in University of Dhaka, was named Shilpacharya Zainul Bhavan, in honour of him. On the occasion, his youngest son, Engineer Mainul Abedin, shared anecdotes and memories of his father with The Daily Star.

'My father was a very busy person, always immersed in his art and institutional responsibilities," shares Mainul Abedin. "He used to take us out on boat rides. He liked scenic beauty, and brought it to life on his canvas frequently. We would often wake up

to ten to twelve new artworks by him in the morning, after an outing. It was astonishing!"

Zainul Abedin was awarded the Rockefeller Foundation Travelling Fellowship in 1956 and visited several countries across the globe at the time. "I was only four years old then and I had the rare opportunity to visit my father in New York, along with my mother. I still remember bits and pieces of the journey," shares Mainul Abedin. "I visited several countries, including Belgium, France and Italy among others, with my father, very early on in my life.'

Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin was the founding principal of the Government Institute of Arts and Crafts in 1948. We now know this institution as the Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka — our very own Charukola. He also founded Bangladesh Arts & Crafts Foundation in Sonargaon,

Narayanganj. He fought to uphold and preserve the rights of the rural craftsmen and their works, throughout

According to his son, one of the greatest regrets of the maestro's life was not being able to accomplish all his envisioned goals related to arts



Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin

and crafts.

"He had plans to create a 'Folk Village' on the premises of Bangladesh's Folk Art Museum, where local artisans and craftsmen from across the country could work and carry out research," says Mainul Abedin, reflecting on his father's hopes.



Mainul Abedin

"He envisioned a place where artisans could work on traditional creations with pottery, metal, silver and wood among many other mediums and forms of art. Though the museum was founded by his initiative in 1975, unfortunately, the 'Folk Village' concept never saw the light of day."

Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin immersed himself not only in artworks, but also in the art movement, education and preservation. More than sixty percent of the works in the Folk Art Museum were collected by the artist himself.

Mainul Abedin believes that there is a reflection of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin in all works of art in present Bangladesh. "The artists of our country are very progressive and talented. I expect them to reflect our country's heritage and roots in all kinds of

work," he savs.

Mainul Abedin also reflects on the

lack of interest in the history and legacy of art among some students. "Several students come to study in Charukola, but many of them don't know about the contributions and works of the maestros in the field," he shares. "If they fail to know about the history of the art movement in Bangladesh, how can we expect the general public to know the true history?

"People must know about the roots of their country and heritage,' Kohinoor Abedin, daughter-in-law of Zainul Abedin, shares, joining the conversation. "It is the young generation's responsibility to uphold and protect the cultural aspects of our country, along with keeping up with the pace of the changing times.

"Î salute Zainul Abedin, not just as my father, but also as the Shilpacharya. Now, I realise what a great man he was, in every aspect of life," concludes Mainul Abedin.



Covid-19 vaccine removes Bangladesh from its friendlist

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

Covid-19 has drawn all the attention since it broke out in China, or wherever the latest conspiracy places it. Since then, all the countries have been desperately looking for a vaccine, as was Bangladesh. But several fake IDs of vaccines left everyone confused and creating ample scope for catfishing.

But finally, Bangladesh found a Covid-19 vaccine profile with a seemingly real profile picture (Seemed to be real as its profile picture and other information were genuine) after months of searching and sent a friend request without further

Yes! Then the Covid-19 vaccine accepted our friend request and all the healthy men clapped for the probable solution of this 'unhealthy' situation.

It can undoubtedly be said that Covid-19 vaccine was getting numerous friend requests from both known and unknown countries. Bangladesh was lucky as its request was accepted before the maximum limit was reached.

However, Bangladesh made sure to knock the profile on messenger and also sent a text message. No one likes random friend requests and Bangladesh had the courtesy to make an introduction first.

Then after several hours of chatting with Covid-19 vaccine, Bangladesh and Covid-19 vaccine reached an agreement that Bangladesh would get millions of doses of vaccine soon.

This most awaited news brought forth a celebration in the country. Public holidays were announced to celebrate the news. The day Covid-19 saw Bangladesh's message was announced as the 'Friendship Day' which is supposed to be celebrated every year. Politicians were delivering their TedTalks on 'how to select a true friend' on television.

Some were on the edge of developing a theory, named, 'A True Friend: Myth or Reality based on their experience.

Unfortunately, everything didn't go well. To celebrate the public holidays, people gathered in huge numbers in various recreational and tourist spots. As a result, more people were infected and vaccine was in dire need. The spokesman of Bangladesh knocked Covid-19 in messenger again. But no reply came and the message wasn't seen either. While checking the ID of Covid-19 vaccine, Bangladesh discovered that its friend had suddenly removed it from his friendlist. Later, Bangladesh took several screenshots of the agreement with Covid-19 vaccine and posted those on 'Desperately Seeking Vaccine- DSV', an international group of unfortunate countries. But, no one gave a solution. Only a comment was made from a fake ID (Could be the Covid-19 vaccine's fake ID) mentioning that, "I heard that Covid-19 vaccine mistakenly accepted your friend request after reaching its friend-limit. It has more friends to send vaccine to. You don't have a chance as you are its 'accidental friend'."

BACK FROM THE BEACH





Facebook shop goes bankrupt by not using 'Apu, inbox for prices' policy

LUBNAN KHALEESI

A Facebook shop, which became a disruptorin-chief by listing the prices on the image of their products, recently declared bankruptcy.

Sweet Surprises, which sold the most random assortment of products ever, took the Facebook marketplace by storm when it launched earlier this year. Instead of having to inbox them for their prices, their page bravely displayed the prices right on the photos of their products.

This was an unprecedented move in the Bangladeshi market, where Facebook pages religiously maintained the "inbox for prices, please" message or the more annoying automated "check inbox" replies to price

"Things were going well initially. People applauded us and we got the Trend-Setter of the Year during last year's Good Business Awards. However, since the pandemic, things started to shift," Mehnaz Milon, owner of Sweet Surprises, said.

"People had so much free time on their hands that they started coming to the page and commenting on pictures, saying 'We can buy this for Tk 50' on products listed at Tk 500 or more. They all began to demonstrate this weird bargaining power-trip, which drove away customers," she said.

In time, Sweet Surprises' Facebook posts became the brewing grounds of one of Bangladesh's most talked-about price wars of the year. Other companies also got in on the action, talking up their pages on Sweet Surprises' posts.

Sweet Surprises, at the advice of a marketer, decided to brave the storm by continuing with their posts unchanged.

Amin Bari, head of social media of Sweet Surprises, admits the decision back-fired but stands by it. "We had tremendous engagement in the first few months. Thousands of comments, likes and shares. And you know engagement means sales, right?"

When pointed out that engagement did not really mean sales and it was usually people

tagging each other and saying "for you" or "buy me this", with no one really buying anything, Amin said that was the whole point of social media.

"Listen. Engagements are all we care about. That is basically my job. To drive up engagement. Everyone does it by not listing prices. Well, we wanted to do something different," he said.

While the exercise has failed, Mehnaz feels it is not over. "We plan on coming back next time. This time, not only will we not list prices, we will also not even show the product's picture. This way it will be a real surprise when people buy something. They won't even know what it is that they bought! We will take the market by storm," she said.

Whether that works or not remains to be seen. For now, there are high hopes for Sweet Surprises V2.

Lubnan Khaleesi cannot stop eating. And it's not even hunger anymore; just the thrill of tasting all kinds of food.

ROOSTING DUCKS

Confused Americans still wondering if that was a coup or not

OSAMA RAHMAN

The United States of America, a former colony of the United Kingdom, may not yet be ready for democracy.

Another disputed election, as has been happening in the country since before the George Bush fiasco, has once again alerted international election observers of possible foul play.

"The voting happened peacefully. Many people came, they voted and they left," Kajalie Ahmed, an election observer from Bangladesh, had said earlier. Yesterday, however, she sang a different tune.

"I felt watched when I was observing their election. Everything was tightly controlled. Our tours were guided. We couldn't walk into any centre we wanted," she told this newspaper.

Adiba Abbas, head of the World Democratic Association, believes the problem lies in America's nature of being a societal basket case.

This is a country fraught with many different problems. Everything for them is a race issue. And it is a very individualistic society, which celebrates individuals more than the collective. So democratic values will be hard to instil here," Adiba said.

Benyayoun Hussien, a political observer, said this uniquely American problem can have global repercussions. "This is a nucleararmed country we are talking about. It is also the only country in the world to have used nuclear arms. Maybe they are already producing more such arms. Such a country cannot be allowed to run this way, without the world finally interfering," he said.

"They need to have more transparency," he added.

"Yes. The ducks have come home to roost. But it's our problem. It's a white problem," an unnamed netizen said on a popular forum the day after protestors, if we can even call them that, stormed the US Capitol Building and stopped the congressional certification of the electoral

Their thoughts were echoed by others who felt the same, once again showing how divisive the supposed strong democracy is. Questions, however, are still being raised about what yesterday was all about.

"We know coups. We have done it many times over. We annexed Texas, invaded California, brought about regime change in Iraq, Afghanistan, all over Africa and even Europe," Bob Barker, an American citizen with the right skin complexion to make a statement, told this newspaper.

"This wasn't a coup. This was us exercising our democratic right to congregate and protest," he added.

Those within the corridors of power also agreed with Bob's assessment. "This wasn't a coup. This was an attack on democracy, engineered by the Russians and the Chinese," a spokesman for The Whitest House, said.

Pointed out that not one of the protestors seemed to be Russian or Chinese, the spokesman retorted asking whether any of the Libyan supporters who overthrew Gaddafi looked American.

In certain sections, however, yesterday's events are still seen as an absolute coup attempt. "We are a first-world country. How can we behave like disgusting third world countries? Yuck. I want to throw up just thinking about that," Karen Armstrong, a progressive, said.

Meanwhile, heads of states are scheduled to meet in the upcoming week where they will decide whether the American elections were fair or not, regardless of how the voters

"We need to give them some guidance. It is our responsibility as the world police," a spokesman for China said.



A Trump supporter sits in the office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who was forced to evacuate, in what was NOT a coup.

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LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY JANUARY 9, 2021, POUSH 25, 1427 BS

Trial of brutal murder of Bangladeshi maid in KSA

Local and KSA authorities must ensure justice is served

■ RIGHTENING details have emerged of a → female Bangladeshi domestic worker who was tortured and killed at her employer's house in Saudi Arabia. According to a report in The Daily Star published on Friday, Abiron Begum Ansar, a 40-yearold maid from Khulna who went to the kingdom in 2017, had to endure unspeakable horrors while cooped up in a Saudi household of eight members. According to her family, during her stay there, she was brutally tortured. Her employers would not give her food, and they would beat her, pour hot water on her body, and even put her head into a grill, they alleged. At one point, her family completely lost communication with her. After her lifeless body was flown back to Bangladesh on October 24, 2019—before being kept in a Saudi mortuary for seven months—family members who saw the corpse described it as "so horrible that we could not look at it".

This could have been yet another case of tortureleading-to-death of a hapless migrant worker, a group that remains as inconspicuous in their life as in their death. But subsequent developments in Abiron's case offer hope that justice, however delayed, may not be denied. The Daily Star report mentions progress in the trial of the case in a Saudi court, a rare instance in the country. The three accused arrested in the murder case have been denied bail, and the court will hear their case on January 20. If the victim family's demand for Qisas (or retributive justice), which forms part of the law in Saudi Arabia, is honoured, it will serve as a deterrent for other exploitative employers and set a legal precedent for similar cases in the future. This is especially significant for Bangladesh, which had to see about 500 bodies of its female migrant workers flown back over the last five years, at least 200 of them from Saudi Arabia alone. The law must be evenly applied to all responsible for those deaths, and Bangladesh must do everything within its power to ensure that justice is served and the usual suspects for the migrants' misfortune—local agents, recruiting agencies and corrupt government officials—aren't let off the hook.

Abiron's case also brings renewed attention to the deeply exploitative global multi-billion-dollar migration industry, where migrants, especially domestic workers, are subjected to frequent abuse with few rights and little freedom. Domestic workers, mostly women, have to suffer a litany of exploitation at the hands of their employers including forced labour, beatings, sexual assault and underpayment. But their sufferings and deaths often remain unacknowledged. Given how this industry works, involving multiple stakeholders, the policy options for both labour-sending and labour-receiving countries may be limited. But each has a duty to do its own part, in curbing corruption and reducing sufferings. The Bangladesh government must work harder and collaborate with its partners and counterparts to give its large migrant workforce a fighting chance to live and work with dignity.

Sharp rise in motorcycle accidents in 2020

When will road accidents be brought under control?

URING a recent press conference held at Jatiya Press Club, Nirapad Sarak Chai revealed that according to their findings, nearly 5,000 people were killed and 5,058 were injured in 4,092 different types of accidents last year, including rail and riverine incidents. Even though there was a steady decrease in the number of road crashes largely due to pandemicinduced restrictions on public transport, motorcycle accidents witnessed a hike in 2020 compared to the

Among all the vehicles responsible for accidents, the highest 1,127 were motorcycles while 698 were buses, 931 were trucks and 410 were cars and jeeps, and the rest are other types of vehicles. According to data from the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), 17.53 lakh motorcycle licences were issued against 30.32 lakh registered bikes, meaning 12.79 bikers must be riding without a licence, making our roads unsafe. The rate of bike accidents were 19 percent in 2019 and went up to 27 percent in 2020. According to Nirapad Sarak Chai, lack of proper monitoring and management; non-implementation of the Road Transport Act 2018 and the 111 recommendations given by a committee for reducing road crashes; unhealthy competition among drivers and lack of awareness among pedestrians are among the reasons behind the rise in road accidents.

Our history with road accidents is appalling to say the least, and calls for the immediate attention of all concerned authorities to make all-out efforts and properly implement the Road Transport Act 2018. Besides, swift initiatives should be taken to create mass awareness campaigns. The practice of wearing helmets (for motorcycle riders) and refraining from talking on mobile phones while on the roads, must be strictly monitored. The number of skilled drivers need to be increased, road dividers must be constructed wherever required and service roads need to be built along highways for slow-moving vehicles. Correcting the faults in road designs will also prove beneficial for road safety. Only if we make every effort necessary to bring back discipline on our roads, will we be able to put an end to the unnecessarily loss of life from accidents on our roads

An assault on democracy: What's next in the US?

BLACK, WHITE **AND GREY**



atrocious attack on the Capitol by Donald Trump supporters on Wednesday, the Congress has formally certified the victory of Joe Biden, some Cabinet members of the Trump

administration have resigned, and some are considering invoking the 25th Amendment of the US Constitution and removing Donald Trump from office. The highest ranking Democrat in the Senate, Chuck Schumer, has extended his support and Speaker Nancy Pelosi has threatened to start the impeachment process unless Trump is removed from office. A few Republican leaders have blasted Trump for his support of the failed insurrection, and the condemnations from home and abroad against these attacks have become louder. It is against this background that Trump has promised an "orderly transfer of power" to Joe Biden. In a taped video broadcast on Thursday evening, Trump effectively conceded and made a volte face about his support for those who ransacked the Capitol, saying "The demonstrators who infiltrated the Capitol have defiled the seat of American democracy."

But questions remain as to whether the assault on democracy has ended, whether Trump's promise is an attempt to buy time and avoid the possibility of impeachment, and how much impact the attack will have on domestic politics and the United States' image around the

The violence incited by Trump will have an array of negative impacts on both domestic politics and America's international standing. The negative impacts on domestic politics are due to the fact the attack was neither sporadic nor spontaneous, but a result of almost five years of deliberate undermining of democratic institutions. The physical attack was just one step from the rhetoric of Trump and his allies who incessantly denigrated the norms and institutions which are essential to democracy and responsible governance. Since his entrance to the political scene in 2015, Trump has imparted a siege mentality in his supporters, that they are being hounded by the deep state and that someone out there is hatching a conspiracy to take away their country from them. This, in conjunction with the call by Trump in Wednesday's rally to "Walk to the Capitol", was the final act of unleashing a mob. When Trump, who promised to have a "wild" protest, told his loyal supporters that "you will never take back our country with weakness"; the message was not subtle, but rather very loud and

clear. The deep anger against democracy found its most potent symbol—the Capitol, the citadel of democratic power. By trampling the culture of tolerance and pursuing divisiveness, Trump had sowed the seeds of anti-democracy; the attack was the fruit of that poison tree. Rhetoric was engendering violence, although in limited scale, but on January 6 it revealed

This dangerous anti-democratic mindset has been reared by the Republican party for quite some time. The silent embracing of the birther movement, the rise of the Tea Party in 2010 and the increasing rightward movement of leaders are just a few examples of how it was mainstreamed. The party will is bound to be a part of American politics, thus the mindset is unlikely to disappear after this incident. There is hardly any indication

In the past four years, violent White supremacist organisations have proliferated—QAnon and Proud Boys are cases in point. Members of the organisations are alleged to be at the forefront of Wednesday's mayhem. They have received Trump's unequivocal support as "patriots". He called upon them to "stand by" and they did, until he said, "Let us walk to the Capitol". He had enormous power and influence on them as the President, but whether they will remain loyal to him after his departure from the White House or find another person is an open question. Some of the Senators who objected to the election results might be vying for this job. Whether these organisations will increase violent acts in the future is unknown at

will find excuses and try to justify their actions using these images. Restoring the standing of the US on the global stage, a promise Biden has made, will be a difficult task. In the realm of foreign policy, this is Trump's parting gift to For the Western liberal world, the this point. Trump is definitely departing worrying lesson is, if it is possible in the US, it can happen anywhere. They are quite appropriately understanding that the attack was not only on a building; the very idea of democracy came under physical assault. This is happening in the wake of an ongoing global backsliding of democracy, pernicious polarisation, economic crisis and the global pandemic

which has weakened trust in government. Those who are questioning whether the United States can talk of democracy and insist on others to practice democracy, should take note that for the past four years, Americans have continued to engage in movements to preserve their democratic rights, that media have continued to unmask the authoritarian agenda of Trump, citizens have voted in a free and fair election and chosen their leaders, state-level administrations have withstood pressures from Trump and acted independently, the courts have thrown out at least 60 cases which were filed to delegitimise the elections, and Congress has ratified the will of the people. These are proof that institutions have weathered the crisis and can endure. The past four years have shown the fragility of democracy in the United States, but it is naive to write the obituary of democracy in the United States.

Perhaps the most discussed topic in the

global media since Wednesday was, does

the US have the moral authority to claim

and criticise others? The images broadcast

to the world on Wednesday created more

Undoubtedly, China and Russia, two

damage to the US' image than what was

countries which have been challenging

the liberal democratic global order, will

find arguments in favour of their model

of governance. Authoritarian rulers

done in the past four years.

to be the standard bearer of democracy

Besides, the crisis of democracy in the United States cannot be a justification for the absence of democracy in any country. The fundamental rights—from freedom of expression to vote freely—of citizens in any country cannot be contingent on whether the US is demanding it. Instead, it is imperative for the people of the respective country to restore it. Many of those who are lamenting the crisis in the United States are not doing it because they are disturbed to see democratic ideas trampled, but are rather trying to justify their support for authoritarianism.

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that the Republican party is ready to address the problem as a party. There are two reasons that the party will not shun the extremist ideology of which Trump is a product, and which he has succeeded in making the mainstay of the party. First, there are leaders who adhere to this ideology. It is their political creed. Second, the fear of losing in the next elections, or worse yet, being defeated in a primary against a Trump-backed challenger. The number of House members who had supported the two objections based on fictitious allegations of election fraud or their interpretations of the Constitution is testimony to both factors. In one instance, 121 House members supported it; in another, the number was higher-138. The politics of expediency triumphed over the interests of democratic norms and institutions. Since Wednesday, some Republicans have criticised Trump, but there was no acknowledgement of their

from the White House, but is unlikely to leave the political stage. His dark shadow will loom large over mainstream politics. Perhaps he will remain in person and continue to disrupt normalcy until he becomes a candidate in 2024. In between, the 2022 midterm will become the testing ground of his influence. However, the legacy of Trump will be violence, and aiding and abetting domestic terrorism.

This will be the biggest challenge of governance in the United States; as such, this will be a challenge for the Biden administration. How to address this deep schism will also be a challenge for the media and civil society. Unfortunately, some of the media's roles in the past four years have been deeply disturbing.

Trump's "America First" left the United States alone. US policies have alienated the country from the global community. Whether the US is a reliable ally has become a matter of concern for its allies.

at the Illinois State University, a nonresident Senior Fellow of the Atlantic Council and the President of the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS).

The age bar complication in secondary admissions

What could be the proper solution?

MOHAMMAD DIDARE ALAM MUHSIN

¬ VENTUALLY, the matter seems to have been settled with the The country's education system, already hit hard by the coronavirus crisis, has recently been plagued by complications regarding the date of birth of students applying for admission at the secondary level. Considering the risk of infection, the authorities decided to do away with admission tests for government primary and secondary school students, and instead make selections through lottery after receiving applications online. The deadline to apply for admission to secondary schools was December 15 to 27. As parents went to apply for their children, along with the often encountered slowness of the Internet and server issues, they had to contend with another problem—in many cases, applications for sixth grade admissions could not be processed because the date of birth specified in their birth certificates did not comply with the minimum age limit (at least 11 years) set by the authorities. As a result, many failed to submit applications within the stipulated deadline. There has been a lot of noise in the country about this.

Ultimately, the High Court stayed the order of the concerned authorities after a parent filed a writ petition, ordering that students below the age of 11 can also apply for admission in the sixth grade in government high schools. At the same time, considering the internet and server problems, it directed the concerned authorities to extend the deadline for submitting online applications by seven working days.

At any stage in this country—be it school, college or university—the admission process is like going into battle. In the case of children and adolescents, parents become the main participants in this war and go to great lengths to enrol their children into prestigious schools. The huge crowds,

the noise and the decorations during the admission season are really worth seeing. Many parents even hire one or more tutors or enrol their wards into a coaching centre to prepare them for admission tests. On the other hand, the school authorities not only have to organise this huge workload of student admissions, but also often have to accept the pressures of the requests of various influential quarters for the admission of students beyond the

Apparently, one of the reasons for the parents' desperate attempts to enrol their children into a handful of reputed schools is the huge difference in quality between

the help of one or more private tutors. If these students were not concentrated in a few schools but were scattered more widely in different educational institutes, perhaps the picture at the end of the year would take on a slightly different form. However, parents are unlikely to be interested in listening to this. They will run after reputed schools. Moreover, companionship also has a special importance. The boys and girls with whom your children are growing up, socialising and competing with, certainly have an important role to play in the formation of their overall mindset and the development of their innate talents.

Although everyone is already familiar with the other problems of online applications, the birth date complication was a new addition here. It's not like these restrictions of the date of birth and age limit were not there before, but perhaps, this is the first time that these things are actually being monitored seriously.

these schools and others. However, many will question what exactly is meant by quality here. Of course, at the end of the year, when the results of various centrally conducted examinations come out, there are big celebrations for the success of students from these schools. However, the question remains, is this because of the high quality of teachers, teaching materials and teaching methods? Or is it because the most studious and brightest children go to these schools because of the reputation they enjoy? Maybe both factors have their roles here.

The reason behind these questions is also that a large number of students studying in these schools tend to seek

Over the past few years, the authorities have been organising admissions based on the results of Junior School Certificate (JSC)/Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) and Secondary School Certificate (SSC)/Dakhil examinations, instead of organising admission tests for ninth and 11th graders through an online application process. As a result, the tendency of the parents to engage in these unnecessary races has come down a lot. There were, however, some problems in launching the online system at first; for example, the inexperience of the applicants in this system, the inability of the server to take enough load, errors in published results, some miscreants using

the roll numbers and other information of students to apply in advance, etc. However, the problems encountered were nothing unexpected while introducing a new system, and were gradually disappearing. It would be pertinent to mention here that although the system of admission tests for ninth and 11th grades has been abolished, schools across the country have been admitting students through lottery in the first grade and through written tests in the second to eighth grades. This year, for the first time, it has been decided that students in all grades, from first to ninth, will be selected for admission through lottery due to the pandemic.

Although everyone is already familiar with the other problems of online applications, the birth date complication was a new addition here. It's not like these restrictions of the date of birth and age limit were not there before, but perhaps, this is the first time that these things are actually being monitored seriously. Setting a minimum age for a student studying in a grade can be important for many reasons. There are specific age limits for entry and retirement in government services in the country. There are different age groups for participating in various domestic and international events and competitions. Specific age limits are also considered for obtaining various scholarships abroad, participating in employment and gaining immigration in some countries. However, what is being overlooked here is that if a child becomes fit to study in the first grade at a relatively young age, then there is a likelihood of them taking an affidavit and accepting a fake date of birth in order to increase their age. How acceptable is this in terms of ethics? Are we making them accustomed to unethical behaviours from a young age? The ultimate solution for this seems to be in taking strict measures to ensure that all births are registered at birth.

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QATAR DIPLOMATIC CRISIS

A warm embrace or just a photo op?



Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman warmly embracing Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar on January 5 at the Saudi Al Ula airport made for

a picture-perfect scene of brotherhood. The Qatari Emir was in Saudi Arabia to attend the 41st summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—the first time since 2017, when four member states of the GCC: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, imposed a blockade on Qatar after accusing it of supporting terrorism, among other allegations. The four countries placed 13 demands which they said Qatar must comply with for the air, land and sea blockade to be lifted.

Oatar not only denied the unsubstantiated allegations, but stood its ground. The country strengthened its ties with Iran and Turkey in the last three and a half years and has emerged from this crisis—the worst in the history of the GCC in the last couple of decades—stronger and more resilient.

According to Middle East and North Africa (MENA) analysts, this has put Qatar in an advantageous position. With strong ties with Iran and Turkey, Qatar is now in a position to heal some of the gaping wounds festering in the MENA region: Libya, Syria and Yemen. In all the three countries, major MENA players such as the Saudis, the Emiratis, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar, are divided in their support for rival factions.

While discussing the issue with TRT World, Dr Sanam Vakil, Deputy Director and Senior Research Fellow at Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa Programme, suggested that to resolve the ongoing disputes in the Middle East, "regional investment and regional diplomacy" would be required and that by not having Qatar as a competitor, the GCC would have more to gain in the current situation.

However, the optimism for a more unified GCC should be measured. First of all, on the face of it all, the reconciliation seems imposed on the Saudis, UAE and Egypt by the Trump administration as a last ditch attempt to leave a Camp David style legacy at the end of Trump's tenure. The incumbent US president's son-in-law has taken a keen interest in the affairs of the Middle East in the last four years and has tried, and failed, on multiple occasions to make a mark of his own.

From a preposterous USD 50 billion plan for "a vision to empower the Palestinian people to build a prosperous and vibrant Palestinian society" disclosed at the Manama Workshop in 2019 that went nowhere, to coercing countries to "normalise" ties with Israel, Kushner has tried various means to push forward the Trump administration's agenda for a "Israel First" and Israel friendly Middle East policy, with the backing of the Saudi-UAE axis. Having failed at fully achieving this objecting—the Saudis are yet to normalise ties with Israelthe Trump administration needed to make one last face-saving attempt. With greater control over the Saudis

If anything, mistrust and skepticism are likely to prevail—at least in the short to medium terms. And on all sides.

and the Emiratis, major players in the Qatar diplomatic crisis, resolving the GCC dispute was perhaps the most feasible.

In mid-November 2020, US National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien asserted that for the US, it was a "priority" to resolve the Qatar blockade issue, adding "I would like to see that get done before—if we end up leaving office—I'd like to see that get

soon simply because I don't think there has been any introspection"—the UAE had to ultimately comply with the US plan.

And Egypt sending its Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, and not its head of state, to join the GCC summit, is a sign in itself that it is perhaps not fully in agreement with the lifting of the blockade on Qatar. The other participants at the summit were Saudi



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman welcomes Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in Al-Ula. Saudi Arabia. on January 5.

done in the next 70 days. And I think there's a possibility for it."

And in less than 70 days, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt-staunch critics of Qatar-agreed to not only shake hands with the country but embrace it, at least superficially. Although initially the UAE seemed to question the possibility of lifting the Qatar blockade—the country's ambassador to the US, Yousef al-Otaiba, told Israel's Channel 12 after O'Brien's comment, "I don't think it gets resolved anytime

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman; UAE Prime Minister and Emir of Dubai Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum; Emir of Oatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad; Emir of Kuwait Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; Crown Prince of Bahrain Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa; Oman's Deputy Prime Minister Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said; and, GCC Secretary-General Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani.

If anything, Egypt is wary of Qatar's softer approach with regard to the

Muslim Brotherhood and its support for Al Jazeera, whose coverage of El Sisi's misadventures has so irked Egypt that it has imprisoned the international news channel's senior iournalist, Mahmoud Hussein, for more than 1,400 days under inhumane circumstances and without charges or

And the rifts created between the peoples of these nations, stoked by the arbitrary blockade in 2017 on Qatar, is unlikely to heal anytime soon. The people of Qatar have had to face dire challenges in the wake of the blockade. "It is infringing on the right to free expression, separating families, interrupting medical care—in one case forcing a child to miss a scheduled brain surgery, interrupting education, and stranding migrant workers without food or water," said Human Rights Watch in 2017, expressing concern over the situation in Qatar after the blockade was imposed.

If anything, mistrust and skepticism are likely to prevail—at least in the short to medium terms. And on all sides. After all, the Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt had previously, in February 2014, severed diplomatic ties with Qatar over the country's stance on the toppling of the Morsi government in 2013. And there is no guarantee that given the chance, the countries in the future won't resort to coercive tactics to subdue Qatar's growing influence in the region. Although this time, it would only be more difficult. And under the Biden administration, the relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia is likely to be more transactional in nature.

But given the intricate geopolitical mosaic of the puzzle that is MENA, and the vested interests of the US in the region, things are as transient in nature as it can get.

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is: @TayebTasnee

COVID-19 AND SDG 11

Making cities liveable



pestilence

caused the

deaths of

more than

half of the

population

of Milan in

1846, it was

evident that

SYED YUSUF SAADAT

a clean and well-designed urban

environment would be essential

for human welfare. Thus, driven by

his insatiable curiosity and infinite

genius, Leonardo da Vinci decided

to design his ideal city. Like most

of his visionary ideas, Leonardo's city was centuries ahead of its time.

He planned to separate pedestrians from vehicles by building his city

on multiple levels. The upper levels

of Leonardo's city would have passageways exclusively reserved for pedestrians, while the lower levels would be utilised for the movement of vehicles. In Leonardo's city, a perpendicular grid of roads would be complemented with an extensive network of artificial canals, whose water flow would be regulated with hydraulic pumps, locks, basins and floodgates. Leonardo designed his city in such a manner that the width of roads was equal to the average height of the buildings adjacent to them, so that adequate sunlight and air could reach all spaces and damage from earthquakes could be minimised. Leonardo's city would not suffer from water-logging, since he incorporated slopes and drains to facilitate the flow of rainwater. Proper sanitation and cleanliness would be ensured in this city through an underground sewerage system.

and uncontrollably. This means that one billion people living in slums and four billion people living in cities worldwide are at high risk of infection from the deadly coronavirus. Since Bangladesh has one of the highest proportions of the urban population living in slums in South Asia, it must remain especially vigilant to ensure that the coronavirus does not strike in the

slum areas and spread like wildfire. During the pandemic, as many people were forced to remain indoors is indicative of the existence of for prolonged periods of time due to lockdowns, the importance of having green open spaces in cities resurfaced. Scientists recommend spending at least 120 minutes per week in nature to maintain good health and enhance wellbeing. Unfortunately, Dhaka has only 8.5 percent tree-covered land and only 0.0002 metres squared of green park

year, the urban slum population increased by 403,000 during the period 1991 and 2014. The increase in the urban slum

population is just the tip of the iceberg. The much bigger problem is the increase of the overall urban population in Bangladesh. The share of the population living in urban areas in Bangladesh increased from 22.43 percent of the total population in 1997 to 35.85 percent in 2017. Such persistent rural-urban migration push-pull factors that are motivating people to move from the villages to the cities. The rural-urban wage differential, as well as the wage differential across different sectors of the economy, could be likely factors pulling workers to urban areas. Climate change has also pushed many people away from rural areas to the urban areas of Bangladesh.

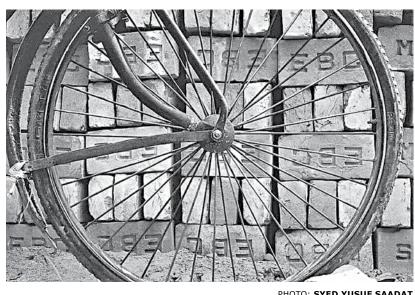


PHOTO: SYED YUSUF SAADAT

per capita, whereas ideally a city should have 20 percent tree-covered SDG target 11.1 land and nine metres squared of calls upon countries green park per capita. Therefore, Covid-19 has reiterated the need for to ensure access to Bangladesh to implement SDG target 11.7, which calls upon countries to adequate, safe and "provide universal access to safe, affordable housing inclusive and accessible green and public spaces". for all and upgrade Bangladesh's performance

slums by 2030. on indicators under SDG 11 has been mixed. SDG target 11.1 calls upon countries to ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing for all and upgrade slums by Although Leonardo da Vinci's 2030. In Bangladesh, the proportion of the urban population living in slums has fallen significantly from 87.3 percent in 1991 to 55.1 percent in 2014. This represents good progress as the proportion of the urban population living in slums decreased by 1.04 percent annually, on average, during the period of 1991 to 2014. Nevertheless, the total number of people living in urban slums increased from 19.99 million higher population density makes it in 1991 to 29.27 million in 2014. easy for the virus to spread quickly This implies that on average, every

Ironically, increased urbanisation can itself become a cause behind further climate change, since urban inhabitants have a much larger material footprint compared to rural inhabitants.

Bangladesh faces a host of challenges pertinent to the implementation of SDG 11. Unrestrained urbanisation poses a risk for developing countries such as Bangladesh, which have low technical expertise, limited financial capacity and lacklustre infrastructural facilities to address the needs of the urban poor. Overpopulated cities such as Dhaka suffer from an array of problems, which include, but are not limited to, reduced access to goods and services, insufficient number of decent jobs, lack of affordable housing, water-logging, fire hazards, air and water pollution and traffic congestion.

In order to overcome the aforementioned challenges, a number of policy measures may be adopted. Dilapidated housing in rundown areas should be renovated in order to improve their aesthetics and safety. Precautions should be taken to reduce the risk of fire accidents, by ensuring that all buildings have fire-fighting equipment and comply with international fire safety standards. In order to gradually improve urban air quality, metropolitan cities should be given targets, such a fixed percentage of days with heavy air pollution that will be allowed per year, and these targets should be progressively made

more stringent every year. Urban green spaces in established cities like Dhaka and Chattogram should be protected from encroachment and burgeoning cities across the country should be designed with at least onethird of urban built-up areas reserved for green spaces. An integrated approach to urban and territorial planning that engages diverse multilevel stakeholders is necessary to design cities that are clean, compact,

energy efficient, environment friendly, socially cohesive, readily accessible, climate responsive and disaster resilient. These measures need to be implemented on a priority basis, so that Bangladesh's cities can bounce back from Covid-19 stronger and be guided towards the achievement of SDG 11 by 2030.

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স্মারক নং-এপিবি(৪)/প্রশাঃ-২০২১/ ২৩৫

বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ অধিনায়কের কার্যালয় ৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন নিশিন্দারা বগুড়া।

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

<u>-ঃ উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি (OTM) ঃ-</u>



এত্যারা The Public Procurement Act-2006 & The Public Procurement Regulation-2008 এক তদ্বীয় সংশোধনী মোতাবেক চলতি ২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বৎসরে বগুড়ান্থ ৪ এপিবিএন এর নিম্নবর্ণিত লট অনুসারে পূর্ত মেরামত/সংস্কার কাজ বান্তবায়নের জন্য প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশী ঠিকাদার/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হইতে সীল মোহরযুক্ত খামে প্রতিযোগীতামূলক দরপত্র আহবান করা যাইতেছে:

160	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	:	স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়/জননিরাপত্তা বিভাগ।			
०२।			: ৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন ,বগুড়া।			
001			: অধিনায়ক (পুলিশ সুপার), ৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন,বগুড়া।			
08	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারীর জেলা/সংস্থা	:	বগুড়া এপিবিএন।			
001	দরপত্রের সূত্র নম্বর ও তারিখ	:	স্মারক নং-এপিবি(৪)/প্রশাঃ-২০২১/২৩৫ তারিখ- ০৬/০১/২০২১ খ্রি.।			
०७।	দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি	:	: উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)। : পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স কর্তৃক বরাদ্দকৃত অর্থ।			
091	অর্থের উৎস	;				
0b	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	:	০৯/০১/২০২১ খ্রি.।			
০৯।	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	২৪/০১/২০২১ খ্রি. ১৩.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত (ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত)।			
104	দরপত্র জমা দেওয়ার সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	২৫/০১/২০২১ খ্রি. বেলা-১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।			
77	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	:	২৫/০১/২০২১ খ্রি. বেলা-১২.৩০ ঘটিকা।			
१ २ ।	দরপত্র মূল্যায়নের তারিখ ও সময়	:	২৬/০১/২০২১ খ্রি. তারিখ লট নং-১ = ১০:০০ ঘটিকায়, লট নং-২ = ১১:০০ ঘটিকায় ও লট নং-৩ = ১২:০০ ঘটিকায়।			
१०।	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী অফিস ও ঠিকানা		অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়, ৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন,বগুড়া।			
۱ 8ډ	দরপত্র ডকুমেন্ট/সিডিউল বিক্রয়কারী অফিস	٠.	(ক) ডিআইজি, এপিবিএন, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, ঢাকা। (খ) অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়, ৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন,বগুড়া।			
136	। দরপত্র খোলার স্থান		অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়, ৪ আর্মড পলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন,বগুড়া।			
১৬।	দরপত্র দাতার যোগতো ও দরপত্রের সহিত		হালনাগাদ বৈধ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, টিআইএন নম্বর সম্বিলিত হালনাগাদ আয়কর সার্টিফিকেট, ভ্যাট রেজিষ্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট, ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি সার্টিফিকেট, সংশ্রিষ্ট কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা সন্দপত্র, অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী দরপত্র দলিলে উল্লেখ করা হইবে।			
۱۹۲	১৭। দরপত্র আহবান কর্তৃপক্ষের নাম		জনাব মোঃ জয়নুল আবেদীন, অধিনায়ক (পুলিশ সুপার), ৪ এপিবিএন, বগুড়া			
3b 1			জনাব মোঃ জয়নুল আবেদীন, অধিনায়ক (পুলিশ সুপার)			
	কাজের বিবরণ :					
	লট নং কাজের না	ম	সিডিউলের মূল্য দরপত্র জামানতের কাজ সমাপ্তির (অফেরৎযোগ্য) পরিমান(ফেরৎযোগ্য) সময়			

৪ এপিবিএন, বগুড়ার ৩ তলা বিশিষ্ট টিআরসি ভবন মেরামত। 84,000/-8৫ मिन 2000/- ৪ এপিবিএন, বগুড়ার অভ্যন্তরীণ পানির লাইন মেরামত/সংষ্কার কাজ। ৪৫ দিন 960/-₹6,000/-৪ এপিবিএন, বগুড়ার ৪ ইউনিট বিশিষ্ট এএসপি কোয়ার্টার মেরামত। \$000/-৪৫ দিন (0,000/-ক। ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বত্তাধিকারীর স্বাক্ষরযুক্ত প্যাড়ে আবেদন পূর্বক অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত দরপত্র সিডিউল সংগ্রহ করা যাইবে।

দরদাতার দর প্রাক্কলিত ব্যয় ১০% এর অধিক কম বা অধিক বেশি দর উদ্ধৃত করা হইলে উক্ত দরপত্র বাতিল বলিয়া গণ্য হইবে।

প্রতিনিধির দ্বারা সিডিউল ক্রয়ের ক্ষেত্রে ক্ষমতা অর্পন পূর্বক দরপত্র সিডিউল সংগ্রহ/ক্রয় করা যাইবে।

দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীত দরপত্র গ্রহণ/বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষন করেন।

বিপি-৭৫০৫১১৯৭১৯ অধিনায়ক (পুলিশ সুপার) ৪ এপিবিএন, নিশিন্দারা, বগুড়া। **≊०৫১-৬**৭৯১০ ,৳ ०৫১-৬০২৫০ ই-মেইল-co4ap@Police.gov.bd

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ideal city was never actually built due to its prohibitively high costs, such cities could be instrumental in the global response to Covid-19 and in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, which affirms the need to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". Worldwide, more than 90 percent of Covid-19 cases have been detected in urban areas where the relatively



Beautiful tomorrow?

AHMAR MAHBOOB

In the desolation of today, I hang on to the promises of tomorrow: When life will be in harmony And struggles gone.

I believe that things will change And I will fly again over the rainbows Looking down at forests and rivers Spotting wildlife, as they enjoy their day.

Waiting for tomorrow, I watch Videos about nature and read books About wildlife; I imagine the future And think of stuff to take along.

And, then, I remember, yesterday and today: Where we pump more oil and burn more coal Cut more forests and mine more gold. And then, I wonder, how tomorrow will be.

How will tomorrow be, if today: We kill each other and nature too; We build more weapons and borders too? Will tomorrow be beautiful, if today we neglect?

Ahmar Mahboob is a Linguist. Currently, he is Associate Professor at the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney.



ARTIST: RUBAB JAFRI

MUSINGS

The Twenty-Twenty-One

TOHON

Today, on the first day of 2021, I open the 71st chapter of my memoir written - not sure when - probably before time. I want to read what lies ahead. There are only a few more chapters left before I happily reach the final episode.

I have been reading it now for seventy years. I do remember most of the episodes; some in detail. I obviously do not know what I have forgotten. They lie in a dormant state. I would recollect it if something triggered it or someone – my only living sibling or a childhood friend who was part of the episode reminded me of the event.

The memoir I am reading is one of the many - I do not remember how many. I read them long time ago and retain vague memories. One of the most vivid recollections is the rocky hills in a hot, dry, arid environment. Like a long lost mother, it evokes my deepest sentiments.

As I enter my 71st year, I am excited about the two new volumes that I now access. I can read only one page at a time each day. It is like how petals unfold, one by one, in their own time, to reveal the hidden flower.

Just as the morning sun reveals a



new day, each page unveils a new episode. But then the sun never sets, nor does it rise. It is always there glowing beyond the human eyes. For the sun, there is no such thing as night, day, year, or even millennium. And, there is neither past, present nor future. All that happens is that life unfolds under its ever-glowing rays.

How I wish I could be a part of the sun and never to think about tomorrow!

Tohon is a short story writer for The Daily Star Literary Page. 'Life's Invisible Battles' is his recently published memoir.



REVIEWED BY FAKRUL ALAM

Numair Atif Choudhury, Babu Bangladesh. Harper Collins: Noida, Uttar Pradesh India, 2019.

Numair Atif Choudhury's Babu Bangladesh is a tour de force of a novel. Exuberant, extravagant, learned, zany, ingenious, whimsical, irreverent and provocative, this is a work of amazing merit. Though only 402 pages, it resembles somewhat bigger novels like Tristram Shandy and Moby-Dick, works of irrepressible imaginations that resort to what appears at times to be the fantastic but are books grounded in situations and people we can identify with. Salman Rushdie Midnight's Children will come to mind in this context as well.

Numair's "Babu" is the "Bangladeshi everyman" (How many of us Bangladeshis males are called thus even if we had other nicknames?). He resorts repeatedly to the magical realist mode since "there is little separating the fantastic from the quotidian in Bangladesh." Then too "Babu-truth" is "elusive." Obviously, Numair can be whimsical and his tone wacky. But there is method in the narrator's claim. about "the Tecumseh" (read "Tamasha!") that is Babu, for wouldn't someone glancing at parts of Bangladesh's history from August 15, 1975 onwards find things at times to be quite bizarre?

The opening episodes of Babu Bangladesh tell us it is about Babu Abdul Majumder. Born in 1971, he apparently became famous from 2008 onwards only to disappear in 2021, heading, we are told, for "unknown skies" then. The narrator is a huge fan bent on reviving the reputation of this "spirited environmentalist." The novel, purportedly, is the result of 9 years of sifting through "rubble to retrieve what is Babu Bangladesh"; it's based supposedly on extensive research into history and gleanings of "Babu's secret writings." The narrator claims to have "chanced upon Babu's private diaries in 2025," almost "three years" into his "research on the book," a gift from a fishmonger admirer of Babu. And when did the narrator finish writing his book? Tellingly, the opening pages, a preface in all but name, signs off thus: "16 Decem-

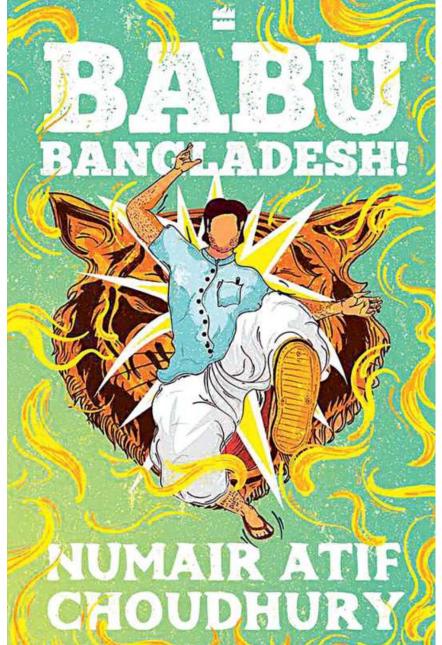
The first section of Babu Bangladesh tracks Babu's coming of age. Called "Building," it is framed by Louis Kahn's stunning parliamentary complex. In Numair's telling, Kahn's ambitious structure embodies the expectations of a liberated populace wanting to set the country on the route to greatness after December 16, 1971. But the next few parts of the book track his disillusioning descent into a world of "cloak-and-scimitar" politics, "nepotism," "bureaucratic greed," "embezzlement of funds" and, ultimately, environmental degradation.

Babu grew up though happily in his parental bungalow in Tangail, not far away from a forest that would soon be denuded. In no time at all, we are in a land of "warring...private armies... religious minorities...driven from their lands...largescale looting and fortunes stolen." It is a "dog-eat-dog" world for

the young boy, a world of assassinations, coups, counter-coups, and of dreams turning sour. Democracy, socialism and secularism evaporate as nationalism prove to be the one rallying cry to survive from the desecration of the other 3 of the "4 pillars" of the 1972 constitution. A few of the young turn to drugs; a handful like Babu take refuge in fantasies evoked by Kahn's masterpiece. The only salve for those nursing the wounds and traumas of post-independence Bangladesh seems to be through seeking divine clues for the future in Kahn's geometric marvel. In 1994 Babu becomes a student of

Dhaka University when it is "a bouquet of agitations." Here and elsewhere Numair (or his narrator, if one wants to excuse him) generalizes and exaggerates in depicting the extent of the malaise afflicting the university, symptomized for him only in its "session jams," dysfunctional student politics and inept administration. Indeed, he seems to have dyspeptic notions about the politics of the country at this stage, now that Islamist parties too had joined in the fray. Desperately and somewhat perversely, Babu joins the Jatiyo Samajtantric Dal (JSD) in 1994, seemingly because it was still dedicated to the 4 founding "pillars" of the constitution and was not marred by big party politics. But Babu is soon disillusioned by the party—it too is part of a world of "broken promises and deceptions." At one point we are told that terrorists are plotting to destroy Kahn's showpiece of democracy itself. The narrative resorts again and again thus to the fantastic and grotesque. The traumatized narrator at times strays into a moral wilderness that makes him wonder why he has been working at a "shameful book and washing national laundry in public" (119). Babu, however, is fortunate to have met an elderly "dowager" called Boro Ma at this point; she tells him unequivocally: "do not ever give up hope" (118). Still, at the end of the first part, he flees the capital to be away from the capitol edifice that had once inspired him so. The second section of Numair Choud-

hury's book, titled "Tree," is inspired by the banyan tree outside the Arts Building of Dhaka University. It was, of course, the focalizing symbol of the student movement for Bangladesh till March 26, 1971—so much so that the Pakistani army felt that it had to destroy it during its murderous "Operation Searchlight" assault on the campus. In a novel conceived in the magic realist mode, Babu's parents had first met and then "cheered the hosting of the first Bangladesh flag in front of the perennial on 2 March. The narrator describes myths that had grown around the tree and makes up a few of his own, in the process registering his "Ogygian fascination with trees." Like Tristram Shandy and Moby Dick, the book is given to learned digressions; we thus have one on "Dendranthropology." It then offers readers a five day-by-day



militaristic account of what happened after March 26, spicing history with tall tale-flavored passages. This part ends with the union of the parents underneath the tree; that, we are told, would lead to the birth of Babu Bangladesh nine months

The tone of Babu Bangladesh, however, darkens in its third section, titled "Snake." Here Babu enters politics after having left Dhaka in 1999, fearing Islamic extremist attacks. But at the outset he is cautioned against the perils of the route he has chosen; as a friend tells him-"There are too many Babus already; every division has a Babu politician." He stands for election from a constituency in Madhupur, part of Tangail. The location allows Numair to bring into focus his environmental concerns, for what was a

lush-green forest sustaining the indige-

nous population as well as animal and plant life in an area that "teemed with a deciduous biodiversity" is now threatened by official or unofficial encroachments and illicit exploitation of nature's resources. In his new incarnation, Babu at first adopts fiery rhetoric as a populist standing up for those who were destroying the environment and marginalizing the first peoples of the land. He says he has plans "for a revamped national park and global tourism" that soon attract activists like "George Clooney, Gayatri Chakravarti Spivack, the Dalai Lama" and even Arundhati Roy! Unfortunately, he runs foul of the armed wings of the administration as well as government officials who have their own ideas about using the forest.

But then Babu himself changes, taking over parts of the land illegally and

reneging on his promises to the settlers, though he has nightmares about a snake asphyxiating him. He survives such traumatic moments only to put on the garbs of a conservationists, thereby winning applause and attention. But the section ends with the narrator torn between blaming Babu and defending him; could it be that he was more a "tool" of others than a "wielder"? Then again, he muses, "in the arsenic green of Bangladesh, who knows what shape truth will take?"

Section 5 of Babu Bangladesh takes us to the Bay of Bengal. We are there because Babu is now thriving as an independent member of parliament who has also been made Adviser of Environment and Forest by a Caretaker Government! The trajectory of this "Babu" is obviously as unpredictably predictable as before. Or as the narrator points out in the opening pages of this last section, "In its elements, this is a story that is as indecisive, capricious and shilly-shally as water." Babu now brings order out of chaos, becomes a celebrity among the "young jet set of Dhaka," enters into a relationship with an attractive woman, and works an "overnight" miracle in an island as he did in Madhupur. But "corruption and bloodletting" devastate the island as it did the forest once; it disappears unaccountably.

So does Babu, the narrator tells us at the beginning of Section 5, titled "Bird," sometime in November 2021, managing somehow to elude his "narrative frame. The three epigraphs of this section are telling, but for reasons of space here I can only quote the last one from Lalon, "O mind, you are a bird encaged! Of bamboo/is your cage made, but it too will one day crash." Somehow he has managed to transcend the "profane and mundane wrinkles of worldly attachments!" The Sufi tradition is invoked, an alternative to the fundamentalist shadow stalking the

Almost at the end, the narrator wonders "... Was Babu, still in his forties, truly ready to leave this world?" Uncannily, Numair Atif Choudhury himself left this world, aged forty-six, reportedly accidentally, having drowned in a lake in Japan while taking a walk along its banks. The inside back cover tells us that Numair died before completing the final draft. I felt when I finished Babu Bangladesh that he would have perhaps stretched the last two parts of the five-part novel a bit more if he had another go at it. Certainly, I would have enjoyed being with him for a longer time for his lively prose and imaginative exploration of our country's past, present and future. With Babu Bangladesh Numair aimed, clearly, to write a national comic epic of sorts in prose, albeit in English. It made me feel when I finished reading it—what a loss his death has been for Bangladeshi writing in the

Fakrul Alam is UGC Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka.

Third Round Manchester United vs Watford Live from 2:00 am (Sunday) **TEN 2 FA CUP** Stoke City vs Leicester City

Live from 9:00 pm Arsenal vs Newcastle United Live from 11:30 pm

FACEBOOK

LA LIGA Atletico Madrid vs Athletic Bilbao

Live from 9:15 pm Granada vs Barcelona Live from 11:30 pm Osasuna vs Real Madrid Live from 2:00 am (Sunday)

AUSTRALIA



Slump? What Slump, says Smith

Former Australia skipper Steve Smith dismissed talk of a form slump but credited a more positive attitude after his century against India in Sydney Friday.

The 31-year-old reached three figures in a Test for the first time since 2019, smacking 131 for his 27th ton to help steer Australia to a first innings 338.

He bounced back after failing to reach double figures in the opening two Tests, which sparked a flurry of concern about his form among pundits and the media.

But Smith said he was never worried, pointing out that he hit pulsating back-toback centuries in the limited-overs series against India late last year.

"I read a lot of things and plenty of people said I was out of form so it was nice to come back into form, if that's what you want to call it," he said. "I mean, it was only about three or four weeks ago that I

scored two hundreds at the SCG. So yeah, it kind of just makes me laugh sometimes when people say that kind of thing. I missed out in the first two Tests obviously and came back today and scored some runs and helped I guess put us in a decent position.

Smith struggled against the spin of Ravi Ashwin in Adelaide and Melbourne and admitted he made some adjustments to his game, which helped him build his near-flawless score.

"I decided to be a bit more positive. I think early on I hit him (Ashwin) over his head, sort of just put a bit of pressure on

"So, yeah, it was a concerted effort to do that and I was happy with the way I played

Smith, who averages more than 60, faced 226 balls and hit 16 boundaries in his patient knock, surviving only an ambitious lbw review on 41.

'Sir' Jadeja's golden arm lights up SCG

Ravindra Jadeja emerged as India's man with the golden arm on Friday, claiming four Australia wickets and then producing a moment of sheer brilliance to prove why he is considered one of the best fielders in contemporary cricket.

The all-rounder was the pick of the Indian bowlers, claiming 4-62 with his crafty left-arm spin to help restrict Australia to 338 in the third test at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

The highlight of Jadeja's performance, however, was his rocket throw which ended Steve Smith's stellar knock of 131.

The gun fielder sprinted from deep square leg chasing an inside edge, ran past the ball to pick it up with his throwing arm, and broke the stumps with a diving Smith short of his ground.

"Seemingly impossible that only Jadeja the fielder could have made possible," former test batsman Sanjay Manjrekar

throw but the sheer speed of the throw was the key to that run out. Absolutely brilliant!

The video of "Sir Jadeja", as the allrounder is fondly known on social media, went viral and the 32-year-old, known for his athleticism, rated it as probably the best run-out he had effected in his career.

"I will rewind-and-play this run-out in my mind," Jadeja said after outshining India's specialist spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who went wicketless on the second day at the SCG. "This is one of my best, a direct hit from outside the 30-yard circle ... this run-out is the kind of moment that stays in your mind.'

Jadeja dismissed Marnus Labuschagne, whose 91 was second only to Smith's century, and Matthew Wade with quicker deliveries and sent back tailenders Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon with yorkerlength balls

maintain robust age-level pipeline

Plans afoot to



Mazhar Uddin



There is a rich tradition of age-level cricket in Bangladesh with many stars rising out of the system, such as Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, all of whom went on to represent the Tigers at the world stage with distinction.

With the young Tigers setting a new benchmark by winning the ICC Under-19 World Cup in 2020, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is now giving paramount importance to the age-level circuit to create a strong pipeline of players for the national side.

As part of a long-term plan the BCB's game development committee had almost formed an under-21 side made up of those cricketers, but progress was halted due to the pandemic since March last year.

Although the regular talent hunt programmes of the age-level groups have been suspended since the Covid-19 outbreak in the country, the game development committee kept things rolling by arranging a virtual talent hunt programme where youngsters could send their bowling, batting, and fielding videos to the board from which the selectors could shortlist the candidates.

Currently, the under-15 national camp is going on at BKSP where all players and the coaching staff are kept inside a bio-secure bubble.

Normally, the selectors pick players from national age-level competitions that take place each year across the country, but things are different this time. Four agelevel selectors -- Hasibul Hossain, Ehsanul Haque, Sajjad Ahmed, and Hannan Sarkar -- are busy moving from one division to another scouting age-level talent.

Ehsanul, who looks after the under-17 group, is currently in Khulna alongside Sajjadul where they are observing the shortlisted cricketers in a match-scenario training camp.

"You know things are different this time around obviously, for the pandemic. As we couldn't arrange the national competitions due to health safety reasons, we are trying to continue our process in a limited way. But it is a challenge as we had to ensure the safety of the cricketers,

which is our biggest priority at the moment. "As you know we did arrange a virtual talent hunt where the youngsters sent their videos to us and from there, we tried to shortlist a few of them. Obviously, it's tough to select players through those videos and not in person but the BCB's game development committee is trying its best to keep things going," Ehsanul told The

Daily Star yesterday. With the under-15 and -17 groups already having started their proceedings, the selectors are also looking forward to starting the under-19 camp from this month as part of the preparation for the ICC Under-19 World Cup next year.

"Although many of our plans were suspended due to the pandemic, we do have back-up plans for the under-19 team. We are working to prepare the next under-19 batch but at the moment health safety is our main concern. We are hoping things will change in the near future so that we can resume our full-fledged training camps of all age-level groups in the coming days," Ehsanul added.



End of the line in sight for Abahani?



Playing for one club for 18 years is without a doubt a sign of a player's great loyalty, which is repaid by the club year after year by offering contracts despite the kind of

service they will get. It may sound strange in the professional football era, but it has been happening at traditional giants Abahani, who have retained the services of 40-year-old midfielder Pranotosh Kumar Das, perhaps

the last active player of his generation. It is not just Das. The country's most successful club also have 36-year-old Wali Faisal, 35-year-old Nasiruddin Chowdhury, 34-year-old Mamun Mia, 32-year-old Mamunul Islam and 32-year-old Atiqur Rahman Meshu. One trophy has already slipped from their grasp after a loss to new force Bashundhara Kings in the semifinal of the Federation Cup on Thursday.

Since Bashundhara Kings' emergence, six-time professional league champions with an edge as they can benefit from better



Abahani have failed to lift a trophy after winning the 2018 Federation Cup and are no doubt going to face big challenges in the league and Independence Cup this season.

In Thursday's semifinal, Abahani took the lead against the run of play but failed to keep the lead after Bashundara made two quality substitutions, who provided the final passes on two occasions. Meanwhile, Abahani had to bring on midfielder Mamunul Islam to replace injured centerback Masih Saighani. Mamunul was later replaced by winger Jewel Rana.

Retaining players does provide teams

understanding and combination among the players, but Abahani have been doing it for years, refusing to bring any new players to the squad unless someone else departs.

Consequently, Abahani's bench is now place full of unknown faces and little quality to actually replace players in the first team. It was evident on Thursday night that a strong bench had pushed Bashundhara Kings to the final while a weaker bench pushed Abahani to suffer a defeat.

Of their 26 local players, the Abahani management has astonishingly signed five goalkeepers and some others who allegedly do not have the quality to represent a club of their stature. It has also been learnt that at least three young players have been signed upon requests from two former footballers and a club official's son.

Having seen the poor present condition. two former Abahani footballers expressed their frustration. "If the threat of losing your place in the squad is there, then players try to give their best but I haven't seen that seriousness among the Abahani

players although they played better against Kings compared to their previous match," said Firoz Mahmud Titu, who played as a defender for Abahani from 1999 to 2001.

"If you ask me about the standard of the local and foreign players as well as professional aspects, I would place Bashundhara ahead of Abahani," said former national captain Zahid Hasan Emily, who represented Abahani in the first two professional football leagues, adding that Abahani should sign at least 10 players to strengthen the bench next season.

Bashundhara have been in practice for three months with the participation of their foreign players while Abahani only had a seven-week preparation due to 'unfit foreign players' joining training after December 10, a month after training. There were whispers that the Abahani management did not want to bring the foreigners earlier in a bid to save on expenses, raising questions about whether Abahani, like traditional rivals Mohammedan SC, is walking toward

Halep ready for 'challenging' **QUARANTINE**

REUTERS, Mumbai

Simona Halep finds the prospect of 14 days of quarantine ahead of the Australian Open daunting but the world number two believes the experience of playing at biosecure tournaments last year will help her get through it.

The 29-year-old Wimbledon champion had an eventful 2020 season in which she ran up a 17-match winning streak, skipped the U.S. Open over health fears but then contracted the coronavirus.

The start to her 2021 campaign will involve the long journey to Australia in midbefore two January weeks in quarantine ahead of the start of the year's first Grand Slam on Feb. 8.

"I know that it will be hard mentally, but I

feel like my experiences in bubbles in 2020 will help me know a little more what to expect," Halep told Reuters, adding she was grateful for the five-hour window to train every day during quarantine.

"I am also less stressed because I know that they have COVID so well under control in Australia and that once we are out of quarantine, we will be free!

"This year in lockdown has meant that we are all a lot more used to spending time inside than we used to be.'

Halep's last competitive match was at the French Open in early October and she will hope to get some matches under her belt in a WTA 500 event at Melbourne Park to warm up for the hardcourt Grand Slam.

With the Asian swing, including the season-ending WTA Finals, cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, it was a long pre-season but Halep said she had enjoyed being at home and let her body and mind recover from a stressful year.

"I worked a lot on my fitness," Halep said in an email interview. "I have to take

care of my body now more than ever so lots of strengthening exercises and speed work, and from the beginning of December we really stepped up the work on court.

"Lots of drills and repetition and now finally I am playing sets against other Romanian girls, getting ready for the first matches in

Australia.' Halep had skipped the hardcourt swing in the United States due to concerns over the pandemic and her worst fears were realised when she contracted the virus in

"I didn't get too sick with it thankfully but, of course, as a professional athlete, was worried about my lungs so we did lots of tests and everything was great," the 2018 French Open winner said.

Shepherd misses BD tour

REUTERS

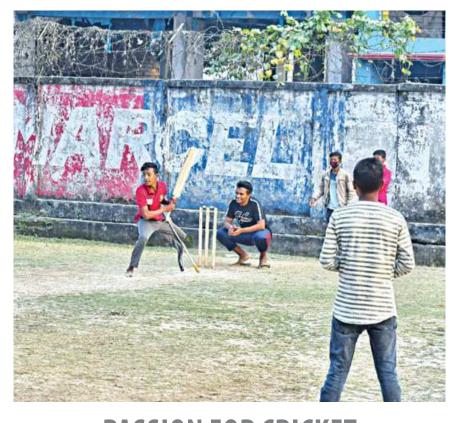
Fast-bowling all-rounder Romario Shepherd has tested positive for Covid-19 and has been replaced with Keon Harding in the West Indies one-day squad for their Bangladesh tour later this month, Cricket West Indies (CWI) has said.

"Shepherd will remain in Guyana where he is undergoing a period of isolation that unfortunately will extend beyond the team's travel period," the CWI said in a statement.

West Indies are sending a depleted contingent after 10 players, including test captain Jason Holder and limited-overs skipper Kieron Pollard, pulled out of the tour over COVID-19 concerns

Fast bowler Harding, who is yet to make his West Indies debut, was among the reserve players during West Indies' tour of England last year.

The CWI said all other members of the touring party have returned negative results in their final pretravel COVID-19 tests and would reach Bangladesh in two batches by Sunday.



PASSION FOR CRICKET

With his left leg supported by a crutch, Tanvir Hasan, a 14-year-old teen, plays a shot that would certainly mesmerise any stranger unknown to his abilities. Even with one leg, Tanvir stands out for his batting ability among his friends with whom he regularly plays cricket just outside the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogura. Tanvir's disadvantage could not stop him from excelling

in the sport he loves

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

SA call up two uncapped seamers for Pak tour

REUTERS, Cape Town

South Africa have included uncapped seamers Daryn Dupavillon and Ottniel Baartman in an extended 21-man test squad for their first return to Pakistan for 14 years later this month.

South Africa will play tests in Karachi and Rawalpindi, starting on Jan. 26 and also welcome back fast bowler Kagiso Rabada and all-rounder Dwaine Pretorius, as well as spinners Tabraiz Shamsi and George Linde.

"Considering that the conditions that will be faced are largely unknown to the South African team, we wanted to strengthen the attack with the skill sets that Tabraiz Shamsi and George Linde have to offer, while giving players like Daryn Dupavillon and Ottniel Baartman an opportunity after making strong cases in recent seasons," convener of selectors Victor Mpitsang said in a media release from Cricket South Africa on Friday.



শাবাশ বাংলাদেশ!



Aktaruzzaman Flyover Chittagong

Principal Cement **Brand**



Fake NID for Tk 1.5 lakh

Nexus between EC men and brokers busted; 556 cases filed against such card holders

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

A syndicate of brokers and some dishonest staffers of the Election Commission had been forging national ID cards for years due to a lack of strict monitoring and loopholes in the system, found a police investigation.

The fake NID cards, each of which sold at Tk 1.2 lakh to Tk 1.5 lakh, were used in fraudulence related to bank loans and land, said people with the knowledge of this illegal business.

While issuing of a dual NID is a punishable offence, the syndicate keeps the name and photo same and changes the rest of the information.

This card is sold to a person who already has an authentic NID against that name and photo, and is used mostly in bank loan scams. In another kind of forgery, the photo is changed and such a card is used mostly for selling someone else's land.

The NID wing of EC has identified around 1,057 people who have received the cards for a second time for ill motives, said a high official of the wing, adding they already blocked the cards with the EC's legal wing filing around 556 cases against these card holders.

"We have sacked some 42 employees of

the NID wing for their involvement with the nexus," the official told this newspaper on December 23 last year, on condition of

There are around 10 crore registered NID card holders in the country and around another 2.7 lakh fresh applications submitted since 2019 are under process, according to the NID wing.

THE SYNDICATE The Detective Branch of police on September 5 last year arrested five people, including two EC employees, from the capital's Mirpur for their alleged involvement in providing forged NIDs.

The DB also recovered around 12 forged NID cards from their possession. In interrogation, the arrestees disclosed names of four others, including two more EC employees who worked in Lalmonirhat.

A high official of DB, requesting anonymity, said these syndicate members would make a deal of up to Tk 1.5 lakh for

supplying a fake NID card. For completing the process in the NID wing, an EC staffer would get Tk 30,000 to Tk 40,000 for each card, the official told the Daily Star on December 22.

Sometimes, the offer comes from

The surface of this canal, surrounded by makeshift shops, in Deb Dholaikhal is completely obscured by garbage, polythene and weeds. Not only is the canal's current state an environmental hazard, its stagnant water has also become a breeding ground for mosquitoes, which is a health risk and nuisance for people living nearby. The photo was taken from Kajlarpar area in the capital's Jatrabari yesterday.

Let Bangladeshi workers return to Malaysia

Dhaka urges Kuala Lumpur

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has requested Kuala Lumpur to allow the Bangladeshi migrants, who got stranded after coming here on leave due to the pandemic, to return to their workplaces in Malaysia.

It also sought to widen cooperation on trade and investment with the Southeast

The calls were made when newly appointed Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Hazanah Md Hasim called on State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam at the foreign ministry on Thursday.

Malaysia is home to around a million Bangladeshis. The annual trade volume between the two countries is about \$2.4 billion with Bangladesh exporting products to Malaysia worth \$260 billion.

Shahriar congratulated the new Malaysian envoy on her appointment and said the two countries have huge opportunities to widen trade and investment. The potential areas of cooperation include sectors like sciencetechnology, healthcare, education, trade, tourism, energy etc.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Election will be absolutely free: Bangabandhu

January 9, 1973

Shamsuddoza Sajen

BANGABANDHU VISITS NATORE

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today reiterates that elections set for March 7 would be absolutely free and fair. Pointing out that Bangladesh is a democratic country, he says there would be no interference in the elections. Addressing a public meeting at Natore, the prime minister says he would like to warn those who want to create disorder and foil elections. They would not gain anything by showing arms. The people of Bangladesh are capable of

snatching those arms, he adds. Bangabandhu regrets that son greedy elements are indulged in corruption even with regard to relief materials. He gives a fervent call for mass resistance against corruption and crimes.

PETRO-CHEMICAL COMPLEX IN THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The government is learnt to have been negotiating with the World Bank and other international financing agencies to finance the proposed petro-chemical complex at Ashuganj. The project is likely to be taken up in the first Five-Year Plan and the total cost of the project will be about Tk 250 crores. Before liberation, a scheme of Tk 100 crore was prepared by the World Bank for the project. The cost of the project has increased following the devaluation of the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Mirza again claims his life under threat

Our Correspondent, Noakhali

The younger brother of Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader has once again claimed that his life was under threat.

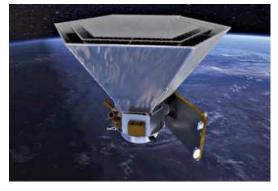
Addressing a street rally as part of mayoral polls campaign in Noakhali's Companiganj upazila yesterday, Abdul Quader Mirza alleged that his election posters were torn down by conspirators from Maiidee of Noakhali and

Mirza, who is the incumbent mayor of Basurhat municipality in Noakhali, is contesting the municipality polls, slated for January 16, for the mayoral post on the AL ticket.

He stirred up a debate in the political arena with some remarks recently. At a rally on Wednesday, Mirza said he was receiving death threats

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Nasa's new telescope to unlock mysteries of Big Bang



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa is bringing its latest space telescope one step closer to launch, the agency announced Tuesday.

The Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of Reionization and Ices Explorer (SPHEREx), has three main goals: its first aim is to look for evidence of the Big Bang and map the resulting pattern of galaxies that came from the expansion, which could give physicists more information about the formation of our universe.

Its second aim is to study faint glows left by all the galaxies in the universe in order to understand how the said galaxies were formed.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Mumbai Attacks

Pakistan jails militant leader

AFP, Lahore

A Pakistani court yesterday sentenced a militant leader accused of plotting the 2008 Mumbai attacks to five years in jail for terror financing.

Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, a senior figure in the banned militant organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba was arrested in the eastern city of Lahore on Saturday where he was running a medical dispensary.

The police counterterrorism department in the Pakistani province of Punjab accused Lakhvi of using the dispensary to collect funds for militant activities.

The court order, seen by AFP, sentenced Lakhvi to "rigorous imprisonment for five years" on three separate counts involving terror funding.
"All the sentences shall

run concurrently," it said.

LeT and Lakhvi are accused by India and the United States of plotting the four-day Mumbai assault in SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

RMG worker stabbed to death in N'ganj

Our Correspondent,

A readymade garment worker was stabbed to death allegedly by his brother-in-law at Nayabazar in Narayanganj Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The victim Sumon Miah, 26, of Kishoreganj, used to live with his sister and her husband at a rented house in Nayabazar, said police.

Sumon's sister Hosne Ara, also a witness of the incident, said Sumon criticised her husband Habibullah, 32, for taking drugs and not providing SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 9 Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-00 5-30 JAMAAT 6-05 1-15 4-15 5-35 7-30 SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



People campaigning for the Chattogram City Corporation elections, slated for January 27, while ignoring safety guidelines amid the coronavirus pandemic. Not only are they crowding together, many are not wearing masks or wearing them improperly. This photo was taken from the port city's Jail Road yesterday.

RAJIB RAIHAN

COVID VACCINES

Poorest nations can expect doses within weeks

Says WHO; Pfizer vaccine 'neutralises key mutation' in new strains

AGENCIES

The world's poorest countries can expect to start receiving their first Covid-19 vaccine doses between the end of January and mid-February, the World Health Organization

Vaccination is already under way in some of the world's wealthiest nations, including the United States, Britain, European Union countries and Canada.

Covax, the globally-pooled vaccine procurement and distribution effort, has struck agreements to secure two billion doses -- and the first of those will start rolling out within weeks, said the WHO's head of vaccines, Kate

Covax aims to secure vaccines for 20 percent of the population in each participating country by the end of the year, with funding covered for the 92 lower- and lowermiddle income economies involved in the scheme.

It is co-led by the WHO, the Gavi vaccine alliance and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations

Asked how quickly lower-income African nations would get vaccines, O'Brien told a WHO live social media event: "The facility has access to over two billion doses of vaccine.

"We will start to deliver those vaccines probably by the end of January, and, if not, certainly by early February and mid-February.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5