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"Bangladesh doesn't patronise militancy and we never said we eradicated militancy. We say that we have been able to contain militancy."  
HOME MINISTER ASADUZZAMAN KHAN



"Today, in a bipartisan way, this House demonstrated that no one is above the law - not even the president of the United States..."  
US HOUSE SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI



"There is never a justification for violence. No excuses, no exceptions: America is a nation of laws."  
TRUMP URGES AMERICANS TO AVOID VIOLENCE IN HIS FIRST COMMENTS AFTER BEING IMPEACHED

# Beware of bird strike!

Aircraft safety compromised at ill-equipped Shahjalal airport



RASHIDUL HASAN

Around mid-February in 2019, a Bangladesh Biman pilot felt something hit his aircraft while taking off from Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Assuming it was a bird, the pilot immediately contacted the airport tower asking them to inspect the runway and check if anything was there.

Upon confirmation that a bird, which might have hit the plane, was lying dead on the runway, the pilot decided to make an emergency landing for the safety of the several hundred passengers on board.

"The bird strike could have caused major damage to the aircraft had it hit the engine. Thank God, it was nothing major," the pilot of the KSA-bound flight told The Daily Star recently.

Bird strikes are a common phenomenon at airports around the world.

To tackle such incidents - often leading to flight cancellation, damage to the aircraft engine or, in worst case scenarios, loss of life due to crash

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CNG-run auto-rickshaws are parked while a bus stops to pick and drop off passengers at an intersection in Postagola flyover in the capital. The intersection is marked by yellow boxes meaning one can't even stop there, let alone park. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

# 6 airlines ask for permit to operate in Bangladesh

RASHIDUL HASAN

Six foreign airlines have expressed interest in operating flights to Dhaka, thanks to favourable regulatory policy, vibrant market, and high profitability.

Garuda Indonesia, Korean Air, Iran Air, Iraqi Airways have already applied to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) while two airlines from India have shown interest, said Group Captain Chy M Zia Ul Kabir, member (flight standard and regulations of the authority.

Besides, Pakistan said its national flag carrier PIA is willing to resume direct flights to Bangladesh after almost six years.

Earlier, British Airways, one of the world's leading airlines, also officially informed CAAB that it wanted to resume operations to Dhaka after a recess of 11 years.

Garuda Indonesia and

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# First shipment of vaccine to arrive on Jan 25-26

Govt may allow pvt companies to import, distribute vaccines

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first consignment of Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid vaccine, produced by Serum Institute of India, will arrive in the country on January 25 or 26, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said yesterday.

He also said the government is likely to allow private companies to import and distribute Covid vaccines.

The minister was talking to journalists at his Secretariat office after a meeting with the cabinet secretary-led committee on vaccination campaign.

"We have been informed by Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd that the first consignment of vaccine will arrive in the country on January 25 or 26. We have made arrangements to transport those..."

"We can keep more than seven lakh

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

SWINDLE BY PK HALDER

# Tk 1,000cr of those who helped frozen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities have frozen over Tk 1,000 crore in different bank accounts of 62 people, who allegedly abetted former NRB Global Bank MD PK Halder to launder money abroad from four non-bank financial institutions.

The move was taken upon a plea from the Anti-Corruption Commission. "It's a big issue now. He [Halder] had links with different people. We've interrogated many of them and so far have found names of 62. About Tk 1,057.80 crore has been frozen," ACC Secretary Md Anwar Hossain Howlader said while talking to reporters at his office yesterday.

In another development, close aides of Halder and proprietors of MTB Marine and Nature Enterprize Nawsher Ul Islam, his wife Momtaz Begum, Basudev Banarjee, and Papi Banarjee were quizzed at the ACC yesterday by its Deputy Director Gulshan Anwar Prohdan. The four had skipped a previous ACC quizzing.

ACC officials alleged that Halder along with the four used fake documents to get loans of about Tk 3,520 crore from three NBFIs - International Leasing and Financial Services (ILFSL), FAS Finance and Investment and People's Leasing and Financial Services - between 2015 and 2019.

An ACC official involved in the investigation claimed that the four during the interrogation yesterday admitted having links in laundering money. "They got financial benefits in return," the official said.

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# MUNICIPALITY POLLS Violence claims two lives

STAR REPORT

At least two people died and three others got injured since Wednesday in clashes ahead of the municipality polls in Jhenidah and Barguna.

In Shaikupa, Jhenidah, two Awami League men were killed allegedly by rival groups on Wednesday night and early yesterday.

Liakat Hossain Baltu, 45, brother of councillor hopeful Shawkat Ali, and another councillor aspirant Alangir Khan Babu, who were rivals, got killed in a space of four hours, locals said.

Baltu and his brother along with some of their supporters were returning home after a campaign rally around 6:30pm, when some 20 to 25 people attacked them with sharp weapons and left them critically injured.

Both of them were taken to Shaikupa Upazila Health Complex. But doctors referred Baltu to a hospital in Kushtia. He died on the way around 9:30pm, said his nephew Mashiuzzaman.

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# Lengthy rape trials frustrate victims

A study on 25 rape cases finds delay, anomalies in trial process

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All the accused in 25 rape cases filed from 2012 to 2016 were granted bail between 24 hours and 15 days of arrest, although the offence is not bailable under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000.

Most of the accused have tried to influence the procedures in different ways, according to the Manusher Jonno Foundation.

The findings, based on case follow-ups done by its partner NGOs, were presented by MJF at a virtual press conference yesterday.

MJF's partner NGOs followed up the current status of the 25 rape cases in their working areas to identify the reasons behind the lengthy trial procedures.

Seven NGOs conducted the follow-up research in Dhaka, Gazipur, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Dinajpur, Kishoreganj, Netrakona, Sherpur, Jamalpur and Joypurhat.

Currently, 20 of the 25 accused are out on bail, three are in jail, while two are roaming free under the protection of influential locals.

The exception in section 19 (4) of the act, which entitles any person accused of the offence to get bail upon the court's satisfaction to ensure that justice is not hampered, is being misused in current practise, MJF said.

In addition, investigation and charge sheet submissions were delayed as an overwhelming majority of these cases are still under trial and at the

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# CRACKED BRIDGE People get stuck on Dhaka-Aricha highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

One side of Salehpur bridge on Dhaka-Aricha highway has been closed to traffic after officials detected cracks on a girder Wednesday afternoon.

The bottleneck caused about 1.5km tailbacks between Turag bridge and Aminbazar, subjecting thousands of people to hours of congestion.

Mohammed Shamim Al Mamun, executive engineer (Dhaka division) at Roads and Highways Department, said the bridge is vulnerable because of the cracks on the girder constructed in the 1970s.

Vehicles were asked to use the two lanes that were built much later, he told The Daily Star.

It might take three weeks to repair the girder and reopen the lanes to traffic, he said.

Dhaka-Aricha Highway is one of the busiest roads in the country. Thousands

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The authorities closed one side of Salehpur bridge on Dhaka-Aricha highway near Aminbazar after cracks, inset, were detected on a girder Wednesday afternoon. It created huge tailbacks on one of the busiest highways in the country throughout yesterday, forcing many to get down from vehicles and walk towards their destination. The photo was taken in Aminbazar, on the outskirts of the capital, in the afternoon.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

# 'No one' above the law

Says Pelosi after Trump impeached; security ramped up around Capitol ahead of Biden's inauguration

AFF, Washington

Donald Trump's impeachment Wednesday confirmed that "no one is above the law," US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said after the defiant Republican president was impeached for the second time in 13 months.

"Today in a bipartisan way the House demonstrated that no one is above the law, not even the president of the United States," the top Democrat in Congress said at a ceremony at which she signed the article of impeachment.

Trump, 74, was impeached for "incitement of insurrection" after he exhorted his supporters to march on the US Capitol and "fight," leading to a mob storming the seat of American democracy.

The Senate will not hold a trial before January 20, when Democrat Joe Biden assumes the presidency, meaning the real estate tycoon will escape the ignominy of being forced to leave early.

He is set, however, to face a Senate trial later, and if convicted he might be barred in a follow-up vote from seeking the presidency again in 2024.

"Given the rules, procedures, and Senate precedents that govern presidential impeachment trials, there is simply no chance that a fair or serious trial could conclude before President-elect (Joe) Biden is sworn in next week," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said in a statement.

But "even if the Senate process were to begin this week and move promptly, no final verdict would be reached until after President Trump had left office," added McConnell.

He noted that the three previous impeachment trials

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**BANGLADESH UPDATE**

**813**  
New cases in 24hrs

**5,25,723**  
Total cases

**7,849**  
Deaths

**4,70,405**  
Recoveries

**GLOBAL UPDATE**

**1,991,289**  
Deaths

**92,977,768**  
Total cases

## Work for people's development

PM Hasina urges all

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all to work from their respective positions alongside the government for the socio-economic development of the people to build the country as Golden Bengal.

"Not only the government but also everyone else has to carry out some responsibilities from their respective positions for socio-economic development, find out those who are poor or homeless or in trouble in their own localities," she said.

The PM was addressing a programme marking the launch of a programme on sending allowances and stipend money directly to different vulnerable groups under the social safety net using mobile financial services.

The programme was held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. The premier joined the event virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

From now on, the allowances for elderly people, widows, women abandoned by their husbands and differently abled people as well as the stipend money for differently abled students would reach the mobile accounts (Nagad and bKash accounts) of the beneficiaries.

Hasina said if the vulnerable people are identified, the government will surely provide them with accommodation and other support.

"If we work together, we will definitely be able to make the country Golden Bengal as dreamt by the Father of the Nation."

She said the government has been working with a plan to make Bangladesh a hunger and poverty-free country.

The PM said her government wants to celebrate the golden jubilee of

the country's independence and the Mujib Borsho, the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, through ensuring housing for all homeless people as well as bringing cent percent people under electricity coverage.

Talking about the social safety net, Hasina said her government has long been working to send the allowances directly to the beneficiaries, removing all middlemen in the disbursement process.

She thanked the social welfare ministry, and other agencies concerned, including the ICT Division, the finance ministry and banks for the introduction of the government-to-person (G-2-P) disbursement system of the social safety allowances.

"The allowances will be sent through Nagad and bKash services. All [the beneficiaries] will be benefited from the system."

The PM said the beneficiaries should not depend on the social safety allowances only, rather the capable persons should also work for their livelihoods.

The allowances are given so that any individual doesn't think himself "worthless", she said.

Hasina said her government formed in 1996 had taken an initiative to bring elderly people, widows, husband-abandoned women and freedom fighters under the coverage of allowances.

Later, the PM exchanged views with some beneficiaries and local stakeholders at the offices of deputy commissioners of Chandpur, Pirojpur, Lalmonirhat and Netrakona through video conferences.

Social Welfare Minister Nuruzzaman Ahmed also spoke at the virtual function, moderated by PM's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus.



Trawlers, used for catching fish in the sea, is being made in Rasulpur area of Barisal City. Each of these boats could be as high as 50 feet and it takes months to build one. The photo was taken a couple of days ago.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Beware of bird strike!

FROM PAGE 1

landing -- airport authorities across the globe use modern and conventional technologies to drive the birds away from key aviation installations.

The HSA also has such equipment but they are barely functional.

The two automated bird deterrents installed on the runway have remained out of service for more than seven years. One of them was to drive the birds away by using laser beams while the other sends sound signals to deter the birds, airport sources said.

Besides, four out of six guns meant to scare the birds away from the busiest international airport of the country have also been out of order for the past six years.

Pilots and aviation experts termed the situation unacceptable and blamed the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) for its sheer negligence.

"The CAAB is earning over a thousand crore taka every year, but it's a shame that they could not afford a few guns or modern deterrents to ensure safety of aircrafts from bird strikes," a Bangladesh Biman pilot told this correspondent.

"The price of CAAB slacking off has been heavy," he fumed.

Wishing anonymity, the pilot said an aircraft of Biman narrowly escaped a major accident in 2019, adding that he was forced to land a few minutes after take-off after he felt a bird hit one of the two engines.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, aviation expert Kazi Wahidul said, "Bird strike is a serious issue at the Dhaka airport. We have tried to raise it several times before the Civil Aviation Authority."

"Guns of primitive ages will not work to deter birds. CAAB should immediately take urgent measures to install modern equipment to address the bird strike issue."

M Mokabbir Hossain, Biman's CEO and managing director, said at least 20 of our aircrafts suffered bird strikes at the HSA in 2019.

Other airlines have also suffered similar accidents, sources say, but the HSA authorities could not give an exact number.

According to pilots, costly repairs are required if birds strike the engine, the fuselage below the wings or the windshield.

The annual cost that commercial planes bear worldwide due to bird strikes is estimated around \$1.2 billion, according to information

available on aviation websites.

**HSIA PRONE TO BIRD STRIKE**

Sources of different airlines said the HSA has several water bodies and wetlands in and around it, which is inviting to birds. Besides, the risk of bird strikes increases in winter when migratory birds flock the area, they said.

HSIA sources said there is a landfill of the Dhaka North City Corporation at the north end of the airport and birds are usually seen in the sky surrounding it in search of food. Planes usually fly over that exact area during final approach.

Statistics of the International Civil Aviation Organisation show that 90 percent of bird strikes happen around airports.

The majority of bird strikes are caused by unknown species while perching birds account for 22 percent, shore birds for 11 percent, raptors -- such as hawks, eagles and vultures -- for nine percent, pigeons, doves and swifts another nine percent, and ducks, geese and swans account for just two percent, according to the website of a company which works on airport bird control.

In the first meeting of the Asia Pacific wildlife hazard management working group held in Thailand in 2019, Bangladesh presented its experience on the establishment of a National Civil Aviation Wildlife Control Committee.

It was said in the presentation that bird strikes on and around airports in the country were a common phenomenon and its continued rise had put airport operators to look for effective mitigation measures.

According to different online reports, incidents of bird strikes at different airports in South Asia, including in India, has increased in recent years.

**WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY**

"We have six guns to deter birds," Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul-Ahsan, director of the HSA, said recently. "But four of them have been out of service for long and have been rendered irreparable. Our bird shooters deter birds with the two other guns."

Two shooters move from one corner to another of the airport when they see birds in the sky, he added.

Touhid said bird strike is a global problem, adding that the process of buying new guns was underway. "We have applied to the home ministry for a licence in June [last year]."

He also admitted that the two

automated deterrents have been out of order "for a long time".

"We have started the process to purchase the modern Bird Monitoring and Control System to automatically detect and deter birds at the airport," said Touhid.

Asked whether the absence of any automated device and shortage of guns pose serious risks to aircraft operating at the HSA, Touhid said, "Birds do not fly around the runway in flocks. When one or two birds fly individually, bird shooters rush to deter them."

"The shooters also work in coordination with the airport control tower. Sometimes birds are killed and sometimes they are deflected with shots in the air."

Sources with knowledge of how it works said the sound of gunshot often does not work at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport as birds of the area have become used to it.

Mokabbir Hossain of Biman said they have been informing CAAB about the matter.

"When you follow one specific method to drive away birds, it does not work after some days as birds usually adapt to it. Therefore, there should be multiple methods to get effective results," he said.

Aviation experts said CAAB should also take measures to encourage birds to seek alternative nesting and feeding grounds by applying a number of methods, which include removing food sources such as seed-bearing plants, food sources for the insects that birds eat, covering ponds with netting to prevent birds from landing and clearing bushes and trees that offer attractive nesting sites.

Air Commodore Md Khalid Hossain, member (operations & planning) at the CAAB, told this correspondent recently that they were trying to find a modern and better approach to resolve the problem.

"A committee is working to finalise tender specifications for procuring a Bird Monitoring and Control System. We will go for bidding very soon after getting the report from the committee," he said.

Asked why the CAAB was not repairing the guns and other existing equipment to deter birds, he said they were facing "various difficulties" including trouble with the agencies that supply the equipment.

"To be very honest, the existing system was not very effective," he added.

## RAB'S DERADICALISATION PROGRAMME

# 9 militants surrender to return to normal life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nine militants, who had previously severed ties with their families and the society, have decided to return to normal lives, thanks to counselling they received under Rab supervision for between two and six months.

They surrendered to Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed yesterday.

As part of a new initiative, Rab deradicalised them and reintegrated them into the society.

The nine people include engineer Shawon Muntaha Ibne Shawkat, 34, a young man from Sylhet, and his wife Nusrat Ali Juhri, 29, a doctor.

They surrendered at a programme at the Azad Memorial Hall at Rab Headquarters in the capital.

The seven others are Abida Jannat Asma alias Tarad alias Ramisa, 18, and Abdur Rahman Sohel, 28, of Cumilla, Mohammad Hossain alias Hasan Gazi, 23, and Mohammad Saifullah, 37, of Chandpur, Abdullah Al Mamun, 26, and Saidur Rahman, 22, of Chuadanga, and Saiful Islam, 31, of Jhenaidah.

They were active members of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Neo JMB and Ansarullah Bangla Team.

Abida Jannat Asma said, "I passed the SSC exams in 2018 and got married. After that I got involved in militancy with my husband. I was alone and took the wrong path."

She went abroad with her husband to study and returned without informing her family. She

then became a member of a militant group, she said.

An initiative is being taken for her to complete her studies.

Asma's mother Shahida Sultana said, "My daughter has come back to me today. We have loved Asma since she was born. We found out that Asma, who ran away and got married, became a militant... Being a mother of a militant is very difficult. I would request all parents to take care of their children."

The Rab initiative titled Deradicalisation and Rehabilitation Programme aims to make misguided young people shun the paths of violence and extremism.

Rab officials said different countries have similar programmes, adding that deradicalisation is possible until the extremists cross a certain line. Otherwise, legal action is inevitable.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "Bangladesh doesn't patronise militancy and we never said that we have eradicated militancy, but we say that we have been able to contain militancy."

"Many people in different countries have asked me how we tackle militancy. In reply, we said the people of the country do not support militancy. That's why we have been able to control militancy."

Bangladesh is now becoming a role model in controlling militancy and chances have been given for the militants and extremists to return to normal life.

"Besides, we have also taken steps for their rehabilitation."

## Violence claims

FROM PAGE 1

Around four hours later, their rival Babu's body was found in a river.

Babu's family members said he left his house around 10:00pm and a few minutes later, he called a family member and said he was planning to go into hiding.

He then asked his family members not to open the doors to anyone.

Around 1:30am yesterday, one of his relatives found his body in the Kumar river in Debtala area.

Family members alleged that Baltu's supporters killed Babu.

However, some local AL men claimed that Babu might have died of cardiac arrest because he panicked after hearing about Baltu's death.

Jahangir Alam, officer-in-charge at Shaikupa Police Station, said no case had been filed as of 6:00pm yesterday, said the OC.

The elections to Shaikupa municipality will be held on January 16.

In Barguna municipality, at least three people were injured when supporters of a mayor aspirant attacked the followers of the AL nominee early yesterday.

Police and locals said district Jubo League President Kamrul Ahsan Maharaj was running for mayor with the AL ticket and his opponent was expelled general secretary of Barguna Sadar AL Shahadat Hossain.

Around 12:10am yesterday, Shahadat's supporters attacked Maharaj in the Stadium area, leaving three people injured.

Police arrested three people after a case was filed, said Shahidul Islam, OC of Barguna Police Station.

Shahadat refuted the allegation, saying, "Three of my supporters were arrested on false charges."

Elections to Barguna municipality will be held on January 30.

[Our correspondents in Jhenaidah and Patuakhali contributed to the report]

## First shipment of vaccine to arrive on Jan 25-26

FROM PAGE 1

shots of vaccine in each district-level cold-chain storage. Besides, over two lakhs doses can be preserved in each upazila-level storage," the minister mentioned.

According to officials of the Directorate General of Health Services, there are Walk-In Cooler (WIC) or Ice Lined Refrigerator (ILR) vaccine storage facilities in all 64 districts. At least 483 upazilas across the country have ILRs under the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) network.

Each WIC store can accommodate up to 4.25 lakh vials of vaccine while 7,100 vials can be kept in an ILR.

Zahid said the government has already trained around 42,000 healthcare workers and volunteers across the country to start Covid vaccination from the first week of February. They will work in more than 7,000 teams.

Registration via a mobile phone

application for getting vaccinated will start on January 26, according to DGHS officials.

About the application, the minister said, "The ICT ministry is creating the application and we are helping them."

The vaccine recipients will be informed about the date, time and place for vaccination via SMS on their cell phones.

About those to be vaccinated first, he said, "Frontline workers such as doctors, nurses, technologists, journalists, and members of the army and police will get priority."

"Today [yesterday], we have also decided to vaccinate people aged 50 and above step by step [on a priority basis]."

Besides, the foreign ministry is working for vaccination of the Bangladeshi immigrants abroad, he said.

The government has managed to secure three crore doses of vaccine from

Serum and another 6.8 crore shots from global initiative called COVAX.

"We will be able to vaccinate five crore people with the doses we are bringing from ... [Serum and] COVAX," said Zahid.

He also mentioned that the government will get some eight lakh doses of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines under the COVAX facility.

About vaccine import by private companies, the minister said the government will fix the price of vaccines and also determine where those will be supplied.

"The private sector will be able to supply vaccines ... a guideline is being formulated in this regard. We will determine which hospitals and diagnostic centres will be able to use those for vaccinating people."

A vaccination monitoring cell has been opened at the DGHS. There will be another monitoring cell at the ministry, Zahid added.

## 6 airlines ask for permit to operate in Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

Korean Air are flag carriers of Indonesia South Korea.

Zia Ul Kabir yesterday told The Daily Star that CAAB will meet officials from Iraq and Iran.

"We have sought necessary documents from those airlines and we will verify them later. Besides, officials of CAAB will also visit those countries for audit purposes. Frequency of flights will be fixed before giving final permission," he also said.

"Seeking permission to operate flights is definitely good news for the country," Zia Ul Kabir also said.

"We have a huge market of air passengers."

Iraq and Iran have good reasons to operate flights from Dhaka because of the large number of Bangladeshis living there, he said, adding that Indonesia has become a lucrative destination for holiday makers.

South Korea's interest might be linked to cargo operations.

CAAB officials said foreign airlines

must have taken note of the country's economy as well as the improved security at the airport.

"When other countries are seeing a decline in traffic, Bangladesh is seeing new airlines come. It is good news for the country's aviation industry," aviation expert Kazi Wahidul Alam told The Daily Star.

The International Air Transport Association projected that passenger growth would be 2.0 per cent globally by 2036, but it would be 3.5 per cent for Bangladesh.

## 'No one'

FROM PAGE 1

-- of Andrew Johnson in 1868, Bill Clinton in 1999 and Trump last year -- lasted 83 days, 37 days, and 21 days respectively.

McConnell, the most powerful Republican in Congress, has said he would not reconvene the chamber, currently in recess, before its scheduled resumption January 19, one day before the inauguration.

But the chamber's top Democrat, Chuck Schumer, stressed that McConnell could begin a trial "immediately" if he chose to reconvene for an emergency session. If not, the process could launch after Biden's inauguration.

"But make no mistake, there will be an impeachment trial in the United States Senate," Schumer said in a statement.

"There will be a vote on convicting the president for high crimes and misdemeanors, and if the president is convicted, there will be a vote on barring him from running again."

Schumer -- who is on track to become the majority leader once two new Democratic senators are sworn in and Biden takes office -- said Trump will face trial "for his role in inciting the violent insurrection at the US Capitol on January 6th and attempting to overturn a free and fair election."

Trump "has deservedly become the first president in American history to bear the stain of impeachment twice over," Schumer said.

**AVOID VIOLENCE**

Holed up in the White House, Trump issued a videotaped address in which he made no mention of impeachment.

Instead, the comments focused on an appeal for Americans to be "united," avoid violence and "overcome the passions of the moment."

"There is never a justification for violence. No excuses, no exceptions: America is a nation of laws. Those who engaged in the attacks last week will be brought to justice," he said.

Biden, who inherits the pandemic and an ailing economy amid many other woes, welcomed Wednesday's decision but urged the Senate to address his priorities such as approving cabinet nominations while also dealing with Trump's trial.

"I hope that the Senate leadership will find a way to deal with their Constitutional responsibilities on impeachment while also working on the other urgent business of this nation," Biden said in a statement.

Despite Trump's denunciation of violence following the mayhem inflicted by his followers when they invaded Congress, fears of unrest are high.

Armed National Guards deployed across the capital, and downtown Washington streets were blocked to traffic.

In the Capitol building, guards in military fatigues and carrying assault rifles assembled, some of them grabbing naps early Wednesday under the ornate statues and historical paintings.

Pelosi also announced fines of up to \$10,000 for lawmakers who refuse to go through newly installed metal detectors after several Republican lawmakers pushed past police even after setting them off.

## Tk 1,000cr

FROM PAGE 1

The four could not be reached for comments.

The ACC has so far arrested two people -- Abontika Boral and Shankha Bepari -- for abetting Halder in amassing illegal wealth.

On January 8 last year, the graft watchdog filed a case against Halder over amassing about Tk 275 crore beyond his known sources of income.

Halder allegedly laundered over Tk 10,000 crore from four non-bank financial institutions (NBFI) abroad.

In connection with the graft case, the ACC seized Halder's two flats and six acres of land following a court order in this regard last month.

According to the case statement, Halder invested about Tk 123.54 crore in Lipro International. He purchased 589 decimals of land for Tk 1 crore in Mymensingh.

During the enquiry, the ACC found that he invested about Tk 67.35 crore in eight companies.

Besides, documents show that Halder has moveable properties worth Tk 32.25 crore. The total amount of his moveable property stands at Tk 99.61 crore, which he amassed directly and indirectly using others' names, reads the FIR.

The graft watchdog found that Halder, now staying abroad, has a legal income of about Tk 12.48 crore against his total wealth, including moveable and immovable properties, of Tk 287.39 crore.

"He has amassed Tk 274.91 crore beyond his known sources of income," it said.

Halder had joined NRB Global Bank as its managing director in 2015. Several enquiries over embezzlement of crores of taka from NBFI by Halder are now pending with the ACC.

## People get stuck

FROM PAGE 1

of vehicles use the highway every day.

Ashikur Rahman, a private employee who commutes between the capital and Savar every day, said his travel time has doubled since Wednesday.

Golam Mostofa, officer-in-charge of Savar Highway Police Station, told The Daily Star that police teams were trying to clear the road as fast as possible.

## Why fingerprints, iris scans not mandatory: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the authorities concerned to explain in four weeks why they should not be directed to mandatorily record fingerprints and iris scans of all citizens including children during their birth registration.

The registrar general of birth and death registration under the LGRD ministry, its secretary, public safety secretary of home ministry and inspector general of police have been made respondents to the rule.

The HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam came up with the rule following a writ petition filed by Arifur Rahman Murad Bhuiayan, founder and executive director of rights organisation Sarda Society.

He submitted the petition to the HC in March last year saying that recording of fingerprints and iris scans of citizens needs to be made mandatory to identify bodies of unidentified people and locate missing people and offenders.

Arifur Rahman Murad Bhuiayan himself placed arguments on his petition while Deputy Attorney General Tushar Kanti Roy represented the state.



Old Dhaka came to life yesterday, bringing a welcome change to the atmosphere after continued doom and gloom during the pandemic. Festivities were underway as kites soared in the skies and people gathered on the rooftops to celebrate Shakrain.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Colours of Shakrain

Old Dhaka sky lit up with kites, fireworks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The neighbourhoods of old Dhaka took on a festive look yesterday evening, as people celebrated Poush Sangkranti, also known as Shakrain. The last of the Bengali month Poush was celebrated with daylong kite flying, partying and food.

The winter twilight sky was adorned with spectacular laser light shows, fireworks and lanterns.

Shakrain is a traditional festival for the people of old Dhaka. The streets of Sutrapur, Kaltabazar, Shakhariabazar, Lalbag, Faridabad, Tatibazar, Laxmibazar, Narinda and Gendaria remained abuzz throughout the day. Enthusiastic children started flying kites from the morning.

People gathered on their rooftops with kites in a myriad of colours, shapes and designs. Some brought loudspeakers to play music, and made sure to use those speakers to challenge people on neighbouring rooftops to a kite-fight.

Crowds were gathered in front of shops selling kites. Plastic strings seemed to be more popular among kite flyers.

"Earlier, we used powdered glass to sharpen strings.... But the process is labourious and time consuming. That's why people prefer plastic strings over cotton," said Hafizur Rahman, a motor parts businessman at Dholaikhal.

Ahasanullah, a private university student, said they have been celebrating Shakrain since their childhood.

Their relatives from different parts of the city visit their house on this day to celebrate the festival along with them. "An open invitation is given to all of our relatives and friends. My mother prepares sweets for guests on the day," he said.

Due to the pandemic, they limited the number of guests this year.

SEE PAGE 4

## CCC ELECTION

# Councillor candidates flout polls rules

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Cg

Many Awami League (AL) supported councillor candidates for Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) polls are violating the electoral code of conduct.

Mentioning that they are "nominated by the ruling party" on posters and banners, they are continuing their campaigns in the port city.

According to the Election Commission (EC), the councillor election is non-partisan with no official nomination of candidates by parties. No candidate can mention that any political party nominated or support them on campaign materials. They cannot even mention it verbally during campaigning.

During a visit to West Bakalia and Chawkbazar yesterday, this correspondent noticed that at least three candidates mentioned that AL nominated them on posters.

In West Bakalia (Ward-17), Shahid-ul-Alam, AL-backed candidate in Ward-17, and Shahin



Posters of councillor candidates Md Shahidul Alam and Shahin Akter Rosy mention that they were nominated by Awami League, although no party can nominate candidates for the election.

Akter Rosy, AL-backed candidate for reserved seat for women in Ward-17, 18 and 19, mentioned nomination.

In Chawkbazar (Ward-16), Rumki Sengupta, AL-backed candidate for reserved seat for women in Ward-16, 20 and 32, mentioned nomination.

Asked, Mohammad Hasanuzzaman, regional election officer of Chattogram and returning

officer of CCC polls, said they also noticed this practice in some areas, which clearly violates the electoral code of conduct.

"We have issued show-cause notice to candidates who violated code of conduct and asked them to remove the posters and banners immediately," he said. "We will take tough action, if they do not remove

those swiftly," he added.

Contacted, candidate Rumki said she mentioned AL nomination as "everybody was doing it." "I am not lying, as the party did nominate me."

Asked whether parties can nominate candidates for non-partisan councillor posts, Rumki said AL is not nominating but supporting her. Asked if she got any notice from the returning officer, Rumki replied in the negative.

Shahid-ul-Alam, however, said he got a notice on Monday and was preparing to remove his posters and replace them. "Actually, I did not know about the law," he said. "I always honour the law."

Shahid said AL is supporting him, but many candidates in their campaign were claiming to voters that they were also AL-supported. "To remove confusion among voters, I mentioned it in my posters. But now that I know it is a violation, I am removing the posters," he said.

The Daily Star could not contact Rosy for comments.

## LABOUR SENDING, RECEIVING COUNTRIES

# Partnership vital to ensure migrants' wellbeing: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Better partnership at different levels between the labour-receiving and -sending countries should be developed to benefit migrant workers in post-Covid situation, said speakers at a regional consultation yesterday.

Addressing a session, they said Bangladesh needs to raise the issue of partnership in the upcoming Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Summit as it gives an opportunity to discuss various migration issues among stakeholders.

Refugee and Migratory Movements

Research Unit (RMMRU), Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants (BCSM), and Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) jointly organised the online consultation on the themes of the 13th GFMD titled "The Future of Human Mobility: Innovative Partnerships for Sustainable Development and the Post Covid-19 Reality".

The GFMD is a voluntary, inter-governmental, non-binding and informal consultative process open to all state members and observers of the United Nations.

The 13th GFMD Summit will be held in

SEE PAGE 4

## 22 selected for Acumen Fellowship

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-two changemakers were selected for the second cohort of Acumen Fellows in Bangladesh, said a statement yesterday.

To build a locally rooted, globally connected community of moral leaders, these changemakers were selected for Acumen Fellowship Program in Bangladesh in various sectors.

The sectors include Innovations in Agriculture, Fostering Inclusion through Education and Capacity Building, Improving Access to Services, Empowerment through Skills Training and Livelihood Creation, Environment Conservation, Establishing Gender Equity, Influencing Change through Communication and Storytelling, and Strengthening Existing Institutions.

The fellows for 2021 are iFarmer CEO Fahad Ifaz; Bhalo Social Enterprise CEO and Founder Subrata Kumar Kundu; Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center Operations Manager Adnin Mourin; PFDA-Vocational Training Center Trust Chairperson Sajida Rahman Danny; Identity Inclusion CEO and Lead Consultant Shamsin Ahmed; Inclusive Bangladesh Project Coordinator Mohammad Rezwanaur Rahman; Kaizen Research Specialists Ltd Managing Director Debojit Saha; Teach for Bangladesh Programme Director Maliha Fawzia; LightCastle Partners Co-founder and Director Zahedul Amin; WebAble Bangladesh Limited Founder Ovick Alam; Counter Foto Principal Saiful

SEE PAGE 4

## Bangladeshi-American gets key WH post

AGENCIES

United States President-elect Joe Biden has named Bangladeshi-American Zayn Siddique for a key position in the office of White House deputy chief of staff.

According to a series of new announcements made by the Biden Transition Team on Wednesday, Siddique has been named senior advisor to the White House deputy chief of staff. He becomes the first Bangladeshi-American to be appointed to a senior position in the incoming Biden administration.

Originally from Bangladesh but raised in New York, Siddique is a graduate of Princeton University and Yale Law School.

SEE PAGE 4

## RESPECT FOR DECEASED PP MANNAN

# Proceedings on hold at lower courts of Dhaka for a day

COURT CORRESPONDENT

All the trial proceedings of the lower courts in Dhaka were suspended yesterday due to the death of Dhaka District and Sessions Judge's Court Public Prosecutor Khandaker Abdul Mannan.

"The lower courts in Dhaka did not hold the trial proceedings for showing respect towards Public Prosecutor Khandaker Abdul Mannan," Hossain Ali Khan Hassan, general secretary of Dhaka Bar Association (DBA).

He said Advocate Khandaker Abdul Mannan was infected with Covid-19 a few days ago and recovered from it. But he became ill again and was admitted to Square Hospital in Dhaka.

The former president and general secretary of DBA died there on January 13, aged 70, Hassan added.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in the capital at 11am yesterday, the lawyer said.

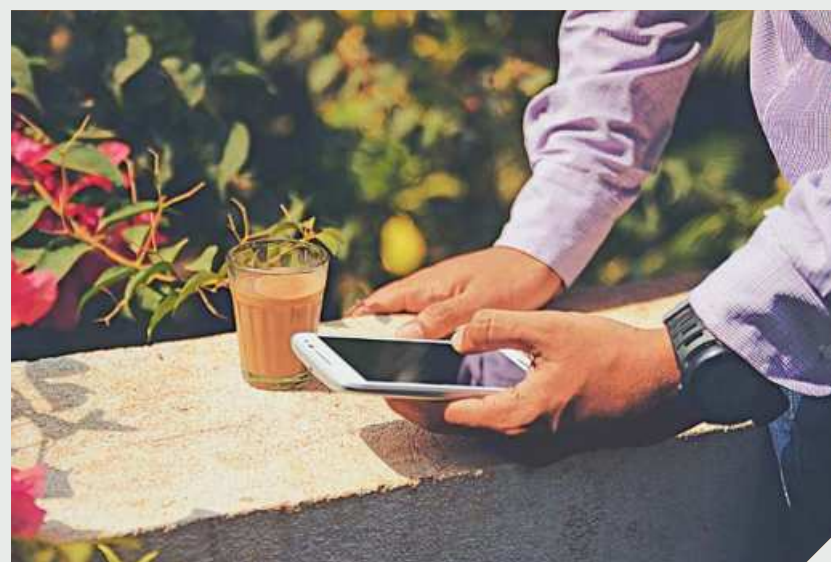
While attending the event, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said, "We are deeply saddened by his death. Khandaker Abdul Mannan had all the virtues a lawyer needs to have... He was respected by all for his qualities."



Rokia Afzal Rahman, chairperson of Mediaworld Ltd; and Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star -- cut a cake at the Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday, marking Staff Day. The annual celebration was held virtually this year, with over 200 staff joining via Zoom. The Daily Star Board of Directors paid tribute to late Transcom Group Chairman Latifur Rahman, while the newspaper also recognised its 'Pandemic Heroes' of 2020, and held a raffle draw.

SEE PAGE 4

## MINI BYTES



# 5 Android apps YOU CAN'T BE WITHOUT

EHANUR RAZA RONNY

### 2 PODCAST APPS TO KEEP YOUR MIND BUSY

Podcast Addict: I feel busy all the time mostly worrying about do I or don't I have corona. Podcasts are brilliant at keeping the mind occupied with useful, interesting information. Podcast Addict is a superb app containing almost every type of subject you can think of. UI is simple though not very good looking. It is intuitive though with plenty of download options. Price: Free or \$3.99 for added features.

Pocket Casts: Pocket Casts looks excellent because it focuses a lot on podcast art as well. Like Podcast addict, it also features a deep library. Did you know that your brain considers listening to a source of information same as reading? Free on Google Play, \$10 / year for premium features.

### A STABLE BROWSER WITH AN EDGE OVER THE COMPETITION

Microsoft has been bumbling along with their browser for a long, long time. It was so bad that it was the main dish for browser memes (that's a thing). Then Edge happened and offered a simple solution to people who open hundreds of tabs that we tell ourselves we will read later. To switch those tabs, we need to reach up to the top right. Well, Edge got the edge over its peers by making it just that much easier for us to switch tabs, multi task and confuse our brains. Although recently, Firefox has done that too.

Aside from that, it has a stable browser with good tracking prevention and an option to have the page read out aloud



### BEST WEATHER APP EVER

Here's something to feed your morbid desires for excess, at least for weather. Want to know where in Bangladesh is the lowest temp today? Or where it becomes hot enough to boil eggs during summer? Usually Dhaka.

1Weather is an absolute joy of a weather app. A beautiful, simple multi page design shows weather forecasts up to 12 weeks along with weather fun facts Tons of info shown as layers include visibility, humidity, wind speed/direction, barometric pressure, UV index and oh, right, temperature. And it has a radar. It's free but has ads. \$1.99 takes care of those ads. Available on iOS also.

### LET TECH REMEMBER YOUR PASSWORDS SAFELY

If you're on a phone, you need to safely store your passwords for all those sites and apps. Jotting them down on a piece of paper folded into the wallet simply won't do. 1Password is a password manager that will make up strong, randomized passwords for different apps you use, and safely plug them when you need to use the app or site. All you need to do is remember one password for the main app. It's good and good things aren't usually free. Subscriptions from \$2.99 / month

## Star celebrates Staff Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's leading English newspaper, The Daily Star, yesterday celebrated its Staff Day with the slogan "Glorious 50 Years of Independence; Courageous 30 Years of Journalism".

The two-and-half-hour long programme was hosted virtually from The Daily Star Centre in the capital to mark its 30th founding anniversary.

The programme began with a tribute to the memory of late Latifur Rahman, one of the founding directors of the Mediaworld Limited, the owning company of The Daily Star.

Latifur Rahman, a legendary businessman and longtime chairman and chief executive officer of the Transcom Group, breathed his last on July 1 last year.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## Rickshaw-van driver found killed in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Unidentified criminals killed a battery-run rickshaw-van driver and allegedly took away his vehicle and phone in Ashulia of Savar yesterday.

The deceased -- Mofazzal Hossen (40), hailed from Anagar in Damurhat upazila of Naogaon.

Osman Goni, one of his cousins, said Mofazzal went out of his house in Ashulia with his vehicle around 4am and did not return.

"Criminals killed my cousin to snatch his vehicle and belongings; those remain missing," he said.

Locals noticed his bloodstained body lying next to a UP member's house at Kaichabari in Ashulia in the morning.

On information from them, police recovered the body around 9am and sent it to Shaheed Shurawardy Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Jashim Uddin, a sub-inspector of Ashulia Police Station, who visited the spot and prepared a primary inquest report, told The Daily Star that injury marks were found on the victim's head and nose.

Criminals might have killed him before snatching his vehicle and phone, said the SI. Filing of a case was underway, he added.

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Purbachal, Uttara & Bashundhara Plot Sale or buy pls call us.  
Property Bazar:  
**01711526560**

## Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 3

He has been working as chief of staff for Domestic and Economic Team of the Biden-Harris Transition Team. He was also a member of Vice President-elect Harris's prep team for the 2020 vice-presidential debate.

Previously, Siddique was deputy policy director for Beto O'Rourke's presidential campaign and a senior policy adviser to his senate campaign.

He also served as a law clerk to Justice Elena Kagan of the US Supreme Court, Judge David Tatel of the US Court of Appeals for DC Circuit, and Judge Dean Pregerson of the US District Court for Central District of California.

In between his clerkships, Siddique practised law as an associate at Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP.

Biden has said that he will have one of the most diverse administrations in American history.

"I'm going to keep my commitment that the administration, both in the White House and outside in the Cabinet, is going to look like the country," he said recently.

"To tackle the challenges facing our country and restore faith in government, we must build an administration with experienced, principled, and dedicated appointees. These individuals are part of a White House staff that is ready to make a difference in the lives of working families," Biden said.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris said these dedicated public servants reflected the very best of the nation.

"They have the knowledge and expertise to help us meet the unprecedented challenges facing the American people. And President-elect Biden and I look forward to working with them to contain this pandemic, provide more relief for families and businesses, and rebuild our country in a way that lifts up all Americans," she said.

## RCC demolishes 150 illegal structures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi City Corporation yesterday demolished some 150 illegal structures on footpaths of different city streets.

Some 37 persons were fined Tk 1,03,000 for building those, said RCC public relations officer Mostafiz Mishu.

The city corporation's executive magistrate Samar Kumar Paul led the drive while police and the corporation employees assisted him.

The drive was conducted at City Bhaban to Laxmipur, Laxmipur to Medical Gate, C&B intersection, and Zero Point to New Market streets.

During the drive, the mobile court of the executive magistrate also shut down three shops that grabbed the space of a passengers' shed at Laxmipur intersection.

## Partnership

FROM PAGE 3

she further said. Anisul Islam Mahmud, chairman of the parliamentary committee on Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Ministry, said Bangladesh needs to raise and discuss the issue of legal protection of its migrant workers during the upcoming GFMD.

Addressing the thematic topic "Discussing Approaches to Address Irregular Migration-What Works?", RMMRU Founding Chair Prof Tasneem Siddiqui said irregular migration prevails since it "helps" certain quarter of different destination and sending countries.

MFA Regional Coordinator William Gois said sending and receiving countries were never been challenged like what the pandemic made them facing. He said host countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia faced bigger challenges during the pandemic.

Addressing the consultation, Foreign Minister Masud Bin Momen said Bangladesh has been a frontrunner for safe, regular and orderly migration and that the country always welcomed the processes that lead to welfare of migrants.

"As we consider migration as an integral component of our development framework, we also pioneered the process of global compact for migration," he added.

BCSM Chair and RMMRU Executive Director Prof CR Abrar moderated the consultation.

Besides, partnership with civil societies in the destination countries is also important,

## 22 selected

FROM PAGE 3

Huq; Travelettes of Bangladesh Founder Dr Sakia Haque; SheDecides Regional Movement Builder, Asia Syeda Samara Mortada; Meye Network Founder, Project Designer and Coordinator Trishia Nashtaran; Kotha Director and Founder Umama Zillur; Creative Conservation Alliance CEO Shahriar Rahman; Romoni Services Limited CEO and Founder Armin Zaman; Sylhet Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Shamalata Roy; Women in Digital Managing Director and Founder Achia Khaleda; Drinkwell Senior Operations Coordinator Saddam Hossain Rony; ME SOLShare Principal of Product & Business Eshrat Waris; and Wreutu Founder Umme Sharmin Kabir.

The Acumen Fellowship cultivates leadership capabilities of individuals willing to step up, take risks, and invest in the collective future to build a world based on dignity.

The cohort was chosen after a two-day virtual selection conference, which assessed 58 finalists, shortlisted from 247 initial applications, by 45 local and international panellists from the Acumen community.

The intensive year-long programme builds skills, attributes, and values of moral leadership through a mix of in-person and online seminars. It is also offered in India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Spain, United Kingdom, Colombia and East and West Africa.

## Star

FROM PAGE 3

Rokia Afzal Rahman, the chairperson of Mediaworld Limited, and directors -- Shahnaz Rahman, Shamsur Rahman, and Simeen Rahman -- spoke on the occasion, praising the newspaper's journalists for their dedication and hard work during the Covid-19 pandemic and assured of all-out support.

Mahfuz Anam, the editor and publisher of The Daily Star, shared anecdotes of his 30-year-long journey with the newspaper and vowed to continue journalism without fear or favour in the coming days.

Congratulating the newspaper's staff for their hard work during the pandemic, he urged them for harder work in order to make 2021 a meaningful, significant and great year for The Daily Star.

Elita Karim, the editor of Arts and Entertainment and Star Youth, hosted the programme where Executive Editor Syed Ashfaqul Haque gave directional speech while several other staffers shared their pleasant memories.

Seventeen journalists and officials of the newspaper received "Pandemic Hero Award-2020" for their outstanding performances during the pandemic time last year.

They are: Tuhin Shubhra Adhikary (Reporting), Gazi Md Etrat Shahrar and Shahtab Siddique Anik (News Desk), Anisur Rahman (Photography), Chinmaya Devorsi (Graphics), Dwoha Chowdhury and Mohammed Mostafa Yousuf (District Reporter), Farhat Chowdhury (Business Development-Sales), Shahir Hasan Khan (Business Development-Digital), Mohammad Shamim Chowdhury (Production), Jahurul Islam (Finance and Accounts), Towhedul Islam and Imam Hossain Chowdhury (IT), ABM Shamsud Doza (Business Dev-special), Naurin Jahan and Mohammad Anowar Hossain (Business Dev) and Ranjan Kumer Ghosh (Circulation).

A special recognition was given to Shyamal Biswas, former assistant officer (store) of this newspaper, who died from Covid-19 last year, for his contributions.

All staff members from Dhaka and the rest of the country joined the virtual event, and several of them spoke on the occasion.

## Colours of

FROM PAGE 3

According to the solar calendar, on the last day of the Bengali month - 'Poush', the sun moves towards its southward (Dakshinayana) journey at the Tropic of Capricorn and starts moving towards the Tropic of Cancer.

The day is known as 'Poush Sangkranti', also 'Makar Sangkranti' all over the world. The day is celebrated by the Hindu community in India, Nepal and Bangladesh in many cultural forms, with a variety of names like Maghe sangkranti (Nepal), Saakrat (Delhi and Haryana), Uttarayan (Gujarat), Maghi (Punjab) and many more.

Different kinds of rice cakes, desserts and confections are made for the occasion.

"We have taken Tk 1,000 from every flat owner to arrange the programme including kite flying, singing and dancing, fireworks and dinner," said Mohammad Ripon, caretaker of a house in Shorafotganj.

Mohammad Sohel, a resident of Gendaria said all of their family members took part in the festival and it is a longstanding family tradition.

He said they will fly kites in the morning. In the evening they will hold cultural programmes and fireworks.

"It is a tradition in old Dhaka and we love to stay involved in the festival," said Sohel.

Meanwhile, with the slogan -- "Let's Fly Kites and Foster Tradition," the festival was celebrated in all 75 wards of DSCC.

DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh inaugurated the Shakrain festival from the rooftop of ward-43 councillor Arif Hossain Chhoton's Patla Khan Lane residence.

"This festival brings some relief to people in the middle of a pandemic. We will surely overcome the coronavirus and move forward in the future," said Mayor Taposh.

DSCC provided all 100 councillors under its jurisdiction with 100 kites each. The councillors distributed the kites to people in their area.

## Petition seeks HC directive to recognise rape of men as offence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday, seeking its order on the government to amend the relevant law treating the violation of males as rape.

Dr Soumen Bhowmick, a social worker, Supreme Court lawyer Tasmia Nuhaiya Ahmed and Dr Masum Billah, director of human rights organisation Empowerment through Law of the Common People, submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC.

In the petition, they requested the HC to order the government to amend Section 375 of the Penal Code incorporating the word "person" in place "woman".

They also urged the HC to ask the law ministry to form a committee consisting lawyers and civil society members to submit a report on the progress of amending Section 375 to the court every month.

Citing the petition, Tapas Kanti Baul, lawyer for the petitioners, told The Daily Star that under Section 375, only a woman sexually assaulted by a man is treated as rape.

Female victims can seek justice for the offence under this provision of the penal code.

But, there is no provision in the section for treating the violation of males as an offence and therefore, male victims have no scope for getting justice and remedy under the provision, he said.

Lawyer Tapas said incidents of violations of men are happening in the country, but they are not getting remedy due to shortcoming of the law.

**Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)**  
PKSF Bhaban, E-4/B, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207  
Phone: 8181658-61, 8181169, 8181664-69; Website: <http://www.pksf-bd.org>

### Vacancy Announcement

PKSF has been implementing "The World Bank" funded project titled "Sustainable Enterprise Project (SEP)" since August 2018. The objective of this project is to increase adoption of the environmentally sustainable practices by targeting microenterprises following business cluster development approach. PKSF hereby invites applications for the following positions under SEP:

S.N	Name of the Posts	No. of the Posts	Consolidated Monthly Salary
1	Senior Program Officer (Branding, E-commerce and Innovation Specialist)	01	BDT 1,65,000/-
2	Program Officer (Enterprise Development- Textile and Fashion)	01	BDT 1,20,000/-

The employees will be recruited initially for one year with an opportunity for performance-based annual renewal during the project period. Interested candidates who fulfill the requirements should apply online by **31 January 2021**. For detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) and instructions to apply, please visit PKSF website: [www.pksf-bd.org](http://www.pksf-bd.org).

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. PKSF is an equal opportunity employer. Any kind of persuasion will be treated as disqualification of the candidate. PKSF reserves the right to cancel this recruitment process without assigning any reason whatsoever.

**Golam Touhid**  
Deputy Managing Director

**Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)**  
PKSF Bhaban, E-4/B, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207  
Phone: 8181658-61, 8181169, 8181664-69; Website: <http://www.pksf-bd.org>

### Vacancy Announcement

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) is an apex development organization established by the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and accredited to the Green Climate Fund (GCF). GCF is the dedicated fund for the climate change under United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). PKSF has been implementing the "Extended Community Climate Change Project-Flood (ECCCP-Flood)" under the financial support of GCF since May 2020. PKSF hereby invites applications for the following positions under ECCCP-Flood project:

S.N.	Name of the Posts	No. of Posts	Consolidated Monthly Salary
1	Programme Officer (Environment and Climate Change)	01	BDT 90,000/-
2	Programme Officer (Monitoring and Evaluation)	01	BDT 90,000/-

The employees will be recruited initially for one year with an opportunity for performance-based annual renewal during the project period. Interested candidates who fulfill the requirements should apply online by **06 February 2021**. For detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) and instructions to apply, please visit PKSF website: [www.pksf-bd.org](http://www.pksf-bd.org).

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. PKSF is an equal opportunity employer. Any kind of persuasion will be treated as disqualification of the candidate. PKSF reserves the right to cancel this recruitment process without assigning any reason whatsoever.

**Golam Touhid**  
Deputy Managing Director

**Chattogram Fish Harbour**  
Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation  
Ref. No. 33.03.1561.008.07.001.19.79 Date: 13/01/2021

### e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works.

Ser	Tender ID	Name of work	Tender publication date	Last selling date	Closing date	Opening date	Tender method
1.	535997	Construction of 06 (six) Nos. docking and back pulling pile (Dry portion Four Nos. and West portion Two Nos.)	12.01.2021	27.01.2021	27.01.2021	27.01.2021	OTM

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 e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to 12.00 hours on 27.01.2021.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)) (01716169062).

GD-90 **General Manager**

### INVITATION FOR TENDER

**Pubali Bank Limited**, the largest online commercial Bank in Bangladesh, is hereby inviting sealed Tenders from the eligible Tenderers who can participate in the following Tender as defined in the tender documents of the under mentioned work as per Terms and Conditions stated below:

- Supplying, Installing, Commissioning and Maintenance of 2,000 (Two Thousand) user licenses of Kaspersky End Point Security (Antivirus Software) for Pubali Bank Limited.**

Please visit <https://www.pubalibangla.com/tender.asp> for more details. Interested Parties may purchase Tender documents by **26 January 2021** duly fulfilling all other requirements.

(Md. Helal Uddin)  
GM & Division Head

**পূবালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড**  
**PUBALI BANK LIMITED**  
ICT OPERATION DIVISION  
Head office, 26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Dhaka South City Corporation  
Office of the Project Director  
Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP)  
Level 10, West Block, Room-919  
Nagar Bhaban, Fulbaria, Dhaka-1000

### e-Tender Notice

e-Tender are invited in e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Project Director, DCNUP, Dhaka South City Corporation for the procurement of:

Sl	Tender ID, Ref No.	Description of items	Last selling date and time	Tender closing date & time
1	533219, 46.207.014.09.10.2020/253, Dt: 03.01.2021	Works, Improvement and construction works of Shuvas Bosh Avenue, Mazed Sharder Road and Dholarikhal Road (Package No. DCNUP/W-10)	15-Feb-2021 14:00	16-Feb-2021 15:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and offline/hard copy(s) will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

**Mohammad Sirajul Islam**  
Project Director, PIU  
Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP)  
Dhaka South City Corporation  
Nagar Bhaban (Level-10), Room 919, West Block  
Fulbaria, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh  
Tel. 9555909, Fax: 9555373

DSCC/PRD/78/20-21  
GD-95

**Bhola Govt. College**  
Bhola Sadar, Bhola  
[www.bhologovtcollege.edu.bd](http://www.bhologovtcollege.edu.bd)

Memo No. CEDP/BGCDP/2020/70 Date: 13/01/2021

### e-Tender Notice 01/2020-2021

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following package:

Sl	Tender ID No.	Name of supply	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	537105	Procurement of Air Conditioner for Bhola Govt. College	04-February-2021 01.00pm	04-February-2021 02.00pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP 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 up to 03 February, 2021.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))

**Professor Md. Golam Zakaria**  
Principal  
Bhola Govt. College, Bhola  
Phone: 0491-61822  
E-mail: [bhologovtcollege@yahoo.com](mailto:bhologovtcollege@yahoo.com)

GD-98

IMPACT OF COVID-19

Number of filing cases in village courts on decline

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The rate of filing cases with the village courts in all 60 unions of the district has declined due to coronavirus outbreak, which has created obstacles to ensure justice for common people in rural areas.

As per the law, a village court would be constituted consisting of five members headed by respective Union Parishad (UP) chairman to settle down disputes like family conflict, stealing and realising compensation. It can realise compensation up to Tk 25,000.

Each court is empowered to locally dispose criminal and civil cases within 90 days which may exceed up to 120 days in special situation.

It also can solve dispute over assets having valuation up to Tk 75,000. Farmer Kartik Chandra Roy, 50, of Kisamat

Bhutian village in Sadar upazila, said he got justice from the village court a year ago as his powerful neighbour damaged banana orchard out of enmity.

The court consisting of five members, led by the UP chairman, fined the neighbour Tk 25,000, said Roy.

According to deputy director's (DD) office of local government (LG) department in district collectorate, it is learnt that the number of filing cases with all the village courts in Nilphamari was less from January to March last year. It was stood at 575.

Following the outbreak of coronavirus in Bangladesh, there was general leave from March 26 to May 30 and since then the number of filing cases started declining.

In April-June period, number of cases has come down to 491 and in July-September, it

was stood only at 406.

This shows that averagely around seven cases are filed with each village court in the last three months from July, which was 10 to 12 in number in usual time.

Due to coronavirus situation, total 603 cases in the courts have remained pending till September, which were only 544 in March.

Abdul Wahab, former president of Nilphamari Lawyers' Association, said "Lower and upper courts are burdened with manifold cases and to ease pressure, there is no alternative to make the village courts more functional.

DD of LG department in Nilphamari Abdul Motaleb Sarker said the adverse impacts of pandemic have fallen on everywhere, including village courts.

They were monitoring the situation to restore normal activities soon, he added.

BRIDGE ON KALIGANGA RIVER IN PIROJPUR

Two years' deadline over, LGED wants 2 years more

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

The deadline to complete construction of the bridge on the Kaliganga river in Pirojpur ended in November last year, but without any visible structure at the site, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) claims that 15 percent of the work has been done.

The work order for Pirojpur's longest bridge to be built under LGED was awarded to Navana Construction Ltd, with an estimated cost of over Tk 115 crore.

The bridge will have a width of ten metres and there will be 1,200 metres of approach road on both ends -- at Kalakhali village in Pirojpur Sadar upazila and Chandkathi village in Nesarabad upazila.

When the construction work of the 600 metre-long bridge started in April of 2018, people on both sides, especially residents of six unions in Nesarabad upazila, were delighted as their long wait for direct road communications with the district headquarters would end soon.

But to the frustration of the locals, more than two years after the work started, they still cannot see any sign of development or any structure on either side of the Kaliganga river, said Julfikar Ali Khan, a member of Kalakhali Union Parishad in Pirojpur Sadar.

The bridge would bring huge relief to people in six unions of Nesarabad as they would be able to save precious time during medical emergencies or while transporting critical patients to hospitals in Pirojpur town, said Tarikul Islam, a member of Guarekha



Except for a few equipment and some construction materials in Kalakhali village in Pirojpur Sadar upazila, on the bank of the Kaliganga river, no significant sign of development or activity was found as part of the ongoing work to build the bridge between Pirojpur Sadar and Nesarabad upazilas. The photo was taken in last week of December last year. PHOTO: STAR

Union Parishad in Nesarabad upazila. Locals said the work on the bridge had been going on at a snail's pace from the beginning and there had been no work at the site for the past several months.

However, when contacted, LGED Executive Engineer in Pirojpur, Sushanta Ranjan Roy, said the construction work only slowed down due to the Covid-19 situation.

A request to extend the deadline by a couple more years has been sent to the higher authorities and they hope to finish the work within the extended period, he added.

Lengthy rape trials frustrate victims

FROM PAGE 1

hearing stage, while charge sheets have been filed in 22 cases six months after the case was filed, according to the findings.

Section 18 of the law, however, mandates that investigation has to be completed within 15 working days after the arrest of the accused. If the accused is not arrested, investigation has to be completed within 90 working days of the FIR being lodged or the tribunal order.

In 20 of the 22 charge sheets, dates of hearings have been fixed some 8-23 times and the hearings were postponed due to non-appearance of most of the witnesses.

According to the findings, in most cases, victims' parents were unwilling to go to court out of their frustration about the legal battle, while poor parents are reluctant to continue legal battles due to financial constraints. The public prosecutors, meanwhile, do not take any initiative to produce the victim and the witness in court on the date of the case.

MJF's partner organisations also found that nine cases filed during 2014-15 and 12 cases filed during 2016-17 are yet to get verdicts, although the law mandates completion of cases within 180 days of the date of receipt of documents for trial.

And, once the hearing has begun, it will have to be conducted every working day, but that is not being followed properly.

No progress has been noticed in two cases, no charge sheet has been filed in three cases, and documents of four cases were unavailable, MJF said.

It was also found that children and female victims are being blamed and mistreated in the judicial process by police and the defendant's attorneys.

Besides, even though adjudicating the crime of rape is uncompromising under the law, courts often compromise under circumstantial pressure.

Two differently abled women gave births to two children, but the fathers of these two children have not been identified yet and although the state is supposed to bear the responsibility of children born as a result of rape, that guideline too is not being implemented, MJF found.

According to MJF, even though the two-finger tests have been banned by the High Court, the process is still followed in remote areas. In addition, although rape cases are closely related to the age of the victim, medical reports do not accurately state the age and most district hospitals in the country do not have a

system to determine the age of the victim.

In many cases, DNA testing is not done, while the accused sometimes influences the results of the test, according to MJF.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam, who moderated the conference, said, "Unless the justice system is fully strengthened and people's attitude towards women and girls are transformed positively, the menace of rape will continue and the subsequent trial process will continue to remain unhelpful to rape victims."

Senior lawyer Elina Khan said, "There is no 24-hour forensic lab in the country, which we need urgently."

Placing several recommendations, MJF demanded reforming rape laws, enacting witness protection laws, completing investigations and trials on time, and instituting strong monitoring of whether or not legal provisions are being properly observed and taking swift action against those responsible.

It also suggested amending relevant laws so that persons with language, hearing and intellectual disabilities can testify in rape cases.

Programme coordinators Nazrana Hira and Ruma Sultana presented the documents at the event.

Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh. Office of the Superintending Engineer. E/M Circle, Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229. Ref. No. 30.31.0000.411.02.149.20-77. Date: 12-01-2021. e-Tender Notice. e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd).

Fire guts 500 houses at Rohingya camp. OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar. At least 500 houses were gutted in a fire that broke out at Noyapara Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf upazila early yesterday.

BARAPUKURIA COAL SCAM. 22 officials granted bail. OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur. A court here yesterday granted bail to 22 officials, including six retired managing directors (MDs), of Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Limited (BCMCL) in Parbatipur upazila in a case over the disappearance of 1.45 lakh tonnes of coal from the mine.

College Education Development Project (CEDP) IDG Sub-Project. Ananda Mohan College, Mymensingh. Email: anandamohan1908cedp@gmail.com. Memo No. AMC/CEDP-IDG-058. Date: 14-01-2021. e-Tender Notice 01/2020-2021. e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following package:

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার. কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, খুলনা। ই-মেইল: khulnavathq@gmail.com. নথি নং- এস/০২/১৯/ক্রমিক (অনিয়মিত) মঞ্জুরী/২০১৯/অংশ-১/২০২০. তারিখ: ১৩/০১/২০২১. "দপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি". কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, খুলনা এর অফিস ভবন পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্ন করণের লক্ষে সরবরাহকারী/ সেবারদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট থেকে পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন, ২০০৬ এর পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট রুলস, ২০০৬ এবং Standard Request For Quotation (SREQ) for Procurement of Goods অনুযায়ী নিম্নের লটার হেড প্যাডে সীলমোহরকৃত আবেদন বামে নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্তাবলী অনুযায়ী প্রকৃত সরবরাহকারী/ সেবারদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের মালিকের নিকট হতে এতদ্বারা নিম্নলিখিতভাবে কোটেশন আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

TRUMP'S SECOND IMPEACHMENT

WHAT'S NEXT?

The US House of Representatives impeached President Donald Trump on Wednesday for a second time -- just days before he is scheduled to leave office -- raising questions about what happens next. Here are some of the possible scenarios:

SENATE TRIAL

Now that Trump has been impeached, it is up to Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to submit the article of impeachment to the Senate at a time of her choosing. The Senate would then hold a trial. Trump has only a week left in the White House and Biden is to be sworn in as the 46th president of the United States on January 20. The Senate is currently in recess and is not scheduled to return until January 19. Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has ruled out any prior sessions. Even if the Senate did move "promptly," there is no way it could conduct a trial before Biden is inaugurated and Trump leaves office, McConnell said in a statement. McConnell noted that the three previous presidential impeachment trials had lasted 83 days, 37 days, and 21 days. A two-thirds majority of the senators present is needed to convict the president, meaning that if all of them are in the chamber at least 17 Republicans would have to join Democrats in voting for conviction, which is highly unlikely.

POST-PRESIDENCY TRIAL?

While three US presidents have been impeached, none has ever been tried by the Senate after leaving office. All three previous presidential impeachments -- those of Trump and presidents Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton -- occurred while the leaders were still in the White House. Like Trump, both Johnson -- in



1868 -- and Clinton -- in 1998-99 -- were impeached by the House but acquitted by the Senate. Some constitutional scholars argue that an ex-president cannot be tried by the Senate. But the House has impeached and the Senate has tried former senators and judges after they were no longer in office or on the bench.

CAN SENATE BAR HIM FROM RE-RUN?

Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said the Senate will not only vote on convicting Trump for "high crimes and misdemeanors" but will also hold a vote that could bar him from running again for federal office. Trump has expressed interest in potentially running for president again in 2024 and some legal experts say a simple majority vote of the Senate could bar him from another White House run. Others don't. That may trigger a high-stake legal battle that will end up in Supreme Court where Trump's nominated judges can play a major role.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Relatives of one of the 62 victims aboard Sriwijaya Air flight SJ182 which crashed shortly after take-off on January 9, mourn during a funeral in Jakarta, yesterday. Divers yesterday restarted their hunt for its second black box in hope to find out why the plane crashed. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Maria Ressa charged again with cyber libel

Embattled Philippine journalist Maria Ressa faces a third cyber libel charge, her lawyer said yesterday, this time for a story over students allegedly paying a professor for passing grades. Ressa and her news site Rappler face at least a dozen criminal charges and investigations after publishing stories critical of President Rodrigo Duterte's policies, including his bloody drug war. "It's my 10th arrest warrant in less than two years. That's definitely a pattern of harassment," Ressa, who Time magazine named Person of the Year in 2018, told AFP Thursday.

Snapchat permanently bans Trump from site

Image-centric social network Snapchat on Wednesday said it has permanently banned US President Donald Trump from the platform, as voices are raised against keeping him off the internet stage. Trump's access to social media has been largely cut off since a violent mob of his supporters stormed the Capitol in Washington DC in a deadly attack on January 6. Operators fear that Trump could use his Snapchat account to foment more unrest in the run-up to President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration. After the attack on the Capitol by Trump supporters, social media including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube began to bar him from using their platforms. Google and Apple pulled Parler apps from their shops for digital content shops stating that the right-leaning social network was allowing users to promote violence.

South Korea's SC upholds ex-president's 20-yr jail term



South Korea's top court yesterday upheld a 20-year prison sentence for former President Park Geun-hye on graft charges that led to her downfall, bringing an end to the legal process and for the first time raising the possibility of a pardon. Park became South Korea's first democratically elected leader to be thrown out of office when, in 2017, the Constitutional Court upheld a parliament vote to impeach her over a scandal that also landed the heads of two conglomerates in jail. The daughter of a military dictator, Park took office in 2013 as South Korea's first woman president. She was brought down after being found guilty of colluding with a confidante to receive tens of billions of won from major conglomerates to help her family and fund non-profit foundations she owned.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

10 states receiving 95pc vaccines

Says WHO; China logs first death in 8 months as new curbs imposed worldwide

AGENCIES

The World Health Organization's European branch yesterday said 95 percent of vaccine doses so far administered worldwide were limited to 10 countries and called for a more equitable distribution.

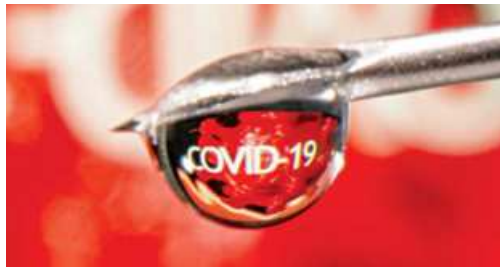
In terms of total doses the top countries are the US, China, the UK, Israel, United Arab Emirates, Italy, Russia, Germany, Spain and Canada.

"Collectively, we simply cannot afford to leave any country, any community behind," WHO's regional director for Europe, Hans Kluge, said at an online press conference.

According to website Our World in Data, over 32 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines have been administered so far.

In the WHO's European Region, which comprises of 53 countries and includes Russia and several countries in Central Asia, 31 countries have launched vaccination programmes.

But despite the start of vaccination campaigns the speed of transmission observed in some countries due to new more contagious variants, especially the so-called English and South African ones, was worrying, according to Kluge.



"This is a concerning situation," he said.

Meanwhile, global health experts gather yesterday to tackle new strains of the coronavirus blamed for a fresh surge in infections after China recorded its first Covid-19 death in eight months.

The WHO emergency committee session comes with their colleagues seeking the origins of the virus on a long-delayed mission to the pandemic ground zero in Wuhan.

The 10-man-strong mission leader Peter Ben Embarek said they would enter a two-week hotel quarantine before the probe begins in earnest.

Almost two million of the more than 91 million people who have caught the disease

have died, but the figures are widely believed to be an underestimate.

Much of the planet is facing a second or third wave of infections, with populations chafing under painful and economically damaging restrictions.

Lebanon went into full lockdown yesterday with residents barred even from grocery shopping.

France is hoping to avoid another national lockdown with the government due to announce tighter controls such as an extended night curfew across the country.

But there was better news for those who have already had Covid-19, with a British study suggesting recovery can confer immunity for at least five months.

The research will be welcomed by UK healthcare workers struggling to cope with surging caseloads and a new, more infectious strain of the virus.

That strain, and another identified in South Africa, was going under the WHO microscope in Geneva yesterday after being logged in dozens of countries.

Covid infection largely protects health workers

AFP, Paris

Healthcare workers who have recovered from Covid-19 are largely protected against falling ill again for at least five months, a British study has found, but researchers warned some people could still carry and transmit the virus.

Researchers from Public Health England's SIREN study detected 44 potential reinfections out of 6,614 participants, who had already tested positive for antibodies in a five-month period between June and November 2020.

In their first published report -- which has not yet been peer reviewed -- the authors said this represents an 83 percent rate of protection from reinfection.

But they warned that although antibodies may confer some protection from becoming ill with Covid-19, early evidence from the next stage of the study suggests that some of these individuals carry high levels of virus and could continue to transmit it to others.

Presidency not for a woman!

REUTERS, Manila

Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte yesterday declared that the presidency was no job for a woman because of their emotional differences to men, and dismissed speculation that his daughter would succeed him next year.

"My daughter is not running. I have told Inday not to run because I pity (her) knowing she will have to go through what I am going through," Duterte said at the launch of a highway project, referring to his daughter Sara by her nickname.

"This is not for women. You know, the emotional set-up of a woman and a man is totally different. You will become a fool here. So... that is the sad story."

The Philippines has had two women presidents, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo from 2001 to 2010 and Corazon Aquino from 1986 to 1992.

Duterte, 75, is notorious for comments often deemed offensive, sexist and misogynistic, but his office typically calls his remarks harmless jokes. He remains hugely popular among female voters in the Philippines.

Daughter Sara Duterte-Carpio, 42, who succeeded him as mayor of Davao City, came top in a recent opinion poll that asked the public to choose a preferred candidate from a list of possible contenders for the 2022 elections.

Two other women, Vice President Leni Robredo and Senator Grace Poe, were hypothetical contenders.

Presidents in the Philippines are allowed only one, six-year term in office. Arroyo's was longer as she took over from an impeached former president.

Responding to Duterte's remarks, Cristina Palabay of human rights group Karapatan said women are as capable as men in any job. "What matters most especially when we talk of the presidency and public office is if the interests of the poor majority are upheld," she said.



'Fugitive' US pigeon caught in Australia

AFP, Melbourne

An American pigeon believed to have strayed 14,480 kilometres from home had Australian authorities in a flap yesterday after it turned up in a Melbourne backyard having evaded strict quarantine rules.

Kevin Chelli-Bird discovered the emaciated pigeon tagged with an ankle band outside his home on Boxing Day, local media reported.

Dubbed "Joe" after US President-elect Joe Biden, the bird went missing during a US race in October, Chelli-Bird told the Herald Sun newspaper, and has been tracked to an owner in Alabama.

The pigeon's epic journey sent local media into a flutter but as the news reached authorities, the bird became a fugitive for skipping Australia's strict entry procedures.

"As it was not legally prepared for import or imported, the health status of this bird and any others it has been in contact with at its origin and prior to arrival in Australia is unknown," a Department of Agriculture spokeswoman said in a statement.

"It poses a direct biosecurity risk to Australian bird life and our poultry industry."

It will have to be humanely destroyed if it came from the United States without passing through quarantine, according to the department.

Recent press coverage is unlikely to save Joe; officials previously threatened to euthanise dogs belonging to movie star Johnny Depp and then-wife Amber Heard, after they failed to declare the pets on immigration papers. The pair managed to save their Yorkshire terriers with a quick flight out of the country. However, as Joe's owner is still to speak up, the feathered fugitive may have to wing it.



Hondurans take part in a new caravan of migrants, set to head to the United States, in San Pedro Sula, Honduras on Wednesday night. PHOTO: REUTERS

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# Tonima Tasnim Ananna's visionary aspirations

How the Bangladeshi astrophysicist made it to SN 10: Scientists to Watch

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

The underrepresentation of women and girls in leadership positions and higher education in fields of science remains a systematic problem. However, over the last few decades, the scenario has changed significantly. Now, more than ever, women around the world are shattering centuries of misbeliefs and making noteworthy contributions in science.

One such young woman is Bangladeshi astrophysicist Tonima Tasnim Ananna, who recently topped the 2020 edition of *Science News* (SN) magazine's SN 10: Scientists to Watch, for her outstanding work and research on black holes. The American bi-weekly magazine is devoted to articles about new scientific and technical developments, typically gleaned from recent scientific and technical journals.

The scientists for this list were nominated by Nobel laureates, elected members of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences or previous SN 10 scientists. SN then chose ten people by reviewing their research content and impact in their respective fields.

Tonima's interest in astronomy grew from an early age when her mother told her stories about the Pathfinder spacecraft landing on Mars when she was just five years old. Since then, Tonima dreamt of becoming a scientist. "I wanted to be a 'scientist' without really knowing what the job entails. I could not visualise being anything else," she shares.



Tonima Tasnim Ananna

PHOTO: COLLECTED

She attended Bryn Mawr College for her undergraduate education in Pennsylvania, USA. Bryn Mawr, being an all-women college, shaped up Tonima's perspective as a feminist and helped her to truly mature as a person.

Currently working as a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Dartmouth College, Tonima was an intern at NASA and CERN. She travelled to the European particle physics laboratory near Geneva, and spent a year at the University of Cambridge.

Tonima has successfully captured the most complete picture yet of black holes across the universe, with the help of artificial intelligence. For her PhD from Yale University in 2019, her goal was to create a model of how black holes grow

and change across cosmic history.

The first project for her PhD thesis was to understand whether the objects detected through X-ray telescopes were black holes or star-forming galaxies, then distinguishing and calculating the distances between light coming from the galaxy and the area surrounding the black holes to their sources. Her second project was to gather data from telescopes to understand how the supermassive black holes grew, the environment in which they reside, and the impact they have on their host galaxies.

When asked about her goals as a scientist, Tonima shared that it is to further our understanding of the universe. "I want to make contributions that make

other people's work easier, and I want profound 'eureka' moments in my career," she says.

In her career, Tonima is deeply inspired by noted American physicist Richard Feynman and also by her PhD advisor Professor Meg Urry of Yale University. "In life, I look up to Begum Rokeya for her abrasive vision," shares the young scientist. "I am inspired by my parents for their fighting spirit and my life partner for being a true feminist."

Although women's education in Bangladesh is prioritised in most parts of the country today, household and familial responsibilities are still barriers for women who want to go out and work. "Time and again, I have seen female relatives give up on careers that they have worked very hard for to pay attention to their families, while no one ever expects or demands this type of sacrifice from men," says Tonima.

She asserted that unless we make a major shift in household dynamics, there won't be more Bangladeshi women aiming to build careers in science. According to her, the lack of research bases is also a major reason for Bangladesh's low contribution to science. Tonima believes that we need to be more supportive of our younger generation when they want to pursue unconventional career paths. Her outstanding work will inspire aspiring scientists across the globe for years to come.

The author is a freelancer and a night owl who loves binge-watching, reading and writing. Write to her at [rasheektmondira@gmail.com](mailto:rasheektmondira@gmail.com)



Members and ambassadors of Ek Takay Shikkha.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF EK TAKAY SHIKKHA

## Fulfilling dreams with 1 taka

SADIA TAHSIN

Ek Takay Shikkha, a social organisation, has been in operation since 2017 with a mission to ensure that one's financial condition does not restrict them from acquiring an education. It started in July 2017, when a group of Chittagong University students were hanging out, and some underprivileged children by the street asked them for money. The students realised that there were children around them who could not afford an education due to the financial limitations of their families. In order to change things, they took matters into their own hands, and started teaching those underprivileged children from the very next day. Eventually, they bought school supplies for the children and enrolled them at proper schools.

The founding members of Ek Takay Shikkha include Md Rizuan, Abdullah Md Saeed Safi, Md Hamidur Rashid Sohel, Md Istiak Azam, Nishat Soultana Chy, Bibi Asma, Md Zobaer Hossen, Bibi Mariam Snigdha, Tarannum Jamal, Shihab Jahin, Md Riaz Hossain, Md Akram Hossen, Mst Jannatun Naima, Syed Md Al Irfan, Morshedul Islam Rifat, MD Shamsudoha Shourov, Md Nayeem Uddin Bhuiyan, Md Safayet Ullah, Md Omar Kaisar, Nowrin Sultana, Humaira Tasrin Tania and Md Nurul Amin Khokon.

Md Rizuan, the Founder and President of Ek Takay Shikkha, came up with the idea that even if each person donates one taka daily, with a large enough group of contributors, they could ensure the education of several underprivileged children.

With the motto "Give one taka daily, change Bangladesh gradually", Ek Takay Shikkha has now grown into an organisation with around 2,000

registered members and more than 200 active members and ambassadors. The organisation's team has helped around 4,000 children so far.

Ek Takay Shikkha's team currently operates in Feni, Cox's Bazar, Patuakhali, and Barishal, but they hope to spread their initiatives across all 64 districts of Bangladesh. They started with renting a room in Chattogram, where volunteers ran academic classes and



With the motto, "Give one taka daily, change Bangladesh gradually", Ek Takay Shikkha has facilitated the education of around 4,000 underprivileged children.

co-curricular activities for the children. "One taka may seem insignificant, but it makes a difference for a student in accomplishing their dreams," says Md Mobassherul Azim, an active member of the organisation.

However, in the initial days, these children were unwilling to commit, and often dropped out, since they could not ensure their daily bread and water. Subsequently, the organisation

reached out to those who were struggling financially and were unable to pay the fees for their examinations, and helped them to continue their classes. Moreover, they provided financial support as well as mentoring for students who were planning to apply to universities.

Several of these students are now studying in Dhaka University, Chittagong University, and other institutions across the country. Tarannum Jamal, Joint

Secretary of Ek Takay Shikkha says, "The blessings that we receive from the students and their families, we don't need anything more than that to be happy."

'Project Agaami', an initiative by Ek Takay Shikkha, aims to inspire students to pursue higher studies in the future. For that, the organisation's team has arranged seminars about the importance of higher studies, in many rural areas. "The inquisitive mindset of the students

motivates us to keep going", shared Asma Kaspi, Assistant General Secretary of Ek Takay Shikkha.

Moreover, they provided school supplies to many institutions in rural regions around Bangladesh. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, their volunteers tried their best to support those in need, providing 2,500 hand sanitisers for free to several social organisations, and also supplying food for those who are not financially solvent. They also contributed to a project that provided PPEs to healthcare professionals and doctors during the pandemic.

Ek Takay Shikkha received the Best Idea Award in the SDG Genius competition and was recognised as Chittagong's Best Social Organisation. Nishat Soultana, General Secretary says, "Winning the Joy Bangla Youth Award 2020 was a huge motivating force. Now, the main idea of our organisation has spread all across the country."

Ek Takay Shikkha now has a working website, where donors can not only see how much money they have invested into the project, but can also see for which purpose their donations are being used.

Interested donors can register on the website. Through their initiatives, Ek Takay Shikkha's team hopes to contribute to the 4th Sustainable Development Goal to provide quality education for all. "We have received praise as well as criticism during our journey, but my belief is that we will continue our endeavors because of how they spread unconditional happiness," concludes Abdullah Md Saeed Safi, Senior Vice President of the organisation.

The author is majoring in Marketing at North South University, with the aim of becoming a marketing mastermind someday and furthering her career in academia. Reach her at [iloverachelgreenclub@gmail.com](mailto:iloverachelgreenclub@gmail.com).



[www.youthop.com](http://www.youthop.com)

### YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

BookPecker Fellowship Programme 2021 | PeaceX Literacy Project

Project BookPecker aims at providing education to the most marginalised. They welcome individuals who wish to join a global network of emerging impact leaders and those who believe in education being the instrument that can aid in bridging the gaps and divides in all milieus, be it social or economic. With an opportunity to interact and learn from teachers, academicians, leaders and humanity from diverse backgrounds, the BookPecker Development Fellowship aids not just the thousands of lives you touch, but also your very own self.

DEADLINE: January 25, 2021 | Fellowships



### CISCO Global Problem Solver challenge 2021

Cisco Global Problem Solver Challenge aims to recognize new business ideas that leverage technology for social impact from early-stage entrepreneurs around the world. Our goal is to advance early-stage projects that are beyond the concept or idea formation stage, but which have not yet generated over \$1M USD in funding and/or revenue. Applicants may be nonprofit or for-profit business entities, or they may not yet have formed a legal business entity.

DEADLINE: January 30, 2021 | Awards

### Call for Submission: TED Global Idea Search 2021

TED Global Idea Search is now open for fall 2021. TED is hosting two global idea searches in 2021 with a mission: to hear big, bold ideas from every corner of the world. TED is looking for ideas that are new, unique, and can offer an insight or a new way of thinking to a very large audience. A TED Talk usually has a topic and an idea. A topic is a high level — the general direction you want to take the talk. Topic example: We need to fix the opioid crisis.

DEADLINE: January 21, 2021 | Conferences

## Partisan meddling in corruption cases must stop

Govt should take note of the HC's observation

We appreciate the High Court's criticism of the government's attempt to get a corruption case withdrawn in Sylhet, terming it a "naked interference" into the affairs of the Anti-Corruption Commission. The strength of any democracy depends on its four pillars keeping each other in check to maintain a fine balance. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, we have seen the overreach of the executive branch of the government often go unchecked. Therefore, we applaud the HC's decision to call out the government for going beyond its mandate to interfere into the matters of an independent body such as the ACC, particularly on this occasion as it concerns corruption within the government itself.

The corruption case in question was filed against the chairman of Borodal Uttar union in Tahirpur upazila and two others on April 5, 2007, in connection with embezzling 17 bundles of corrugated iron sheets meant for government relief to the poor. The shameful act of pilfering from the poor and the needy has become a common phenomenon, particularly because government officials and others who are behind such corrupt practices are often allowed to get away with them.

On February 11, 2011, the home ministry recommended that the case be withdrawn. Moreover, the government has recommended the withdrawal of over 7,000 criminal cases filed before the Awami League assumed power. The fact that the government has suggested the withdrawal of so many thousands of cases is a glaring example of how the ACC is being hamstrung from fulfilling its duty of investigating corruption and prosecuting the corrupt due to lobbying and outside interference.

Under such circumstances, it would be an absurd proposition to expect the ACC to successfully battle corruption. The government must allow the ACC to function independently and without constantly looking over its shoulder for government approval or dreading disapproval when it comes to investigating cases.

## Indomitable spirit of a man who lost both his arms

There is so much to learn from his life

We feel truly encouraged to know about a man in Faridpur who, despite losing both his arms in an accident, has been working with an unbeatable spirit to change his fate. According to a report in *The Daily Star* on Thursday, Kamrul Sheikh was electrocuted in 2018 while working as an electrician. As both his arms were badly damaged in the accident, they had to be amputated. When he came back home after taking treatment at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital for around a month and a half, he found it hard to earn a living and provide for his family. But instead of losing hope, he kept trying to find a suitable work.

Coming from a poverty-stricken family, Kamrul did not study after the primary level and began working to support his family from an early age. There is nothing that he didn't do to survive—he worked as a carpenter, as a day labourer, as a rickshaw puller and finally as an electrician. After coming back from the hospital, he first bought four rickshaws with the money he got as compensation for the accident and rented them out. Then, being inspired by another man who was facing the same challenge as he was, Kamrul sold his rickshaws and opened a grocery shop with the money, which finally changed his fate. This spirited man has even learned to swim, cycle, operate computers and mobile phones using just his legs.

At a time when many people, especially our younger generation, are losing hope due to rising unemployment and poverty in the country, this man from a disadvantaged background has shown us how people can change their lives if they have the willpower. And Kamrul is not the only one; there are many brave and spirited women and men like Kamrul around us who have been working hard for a better future despite the situation around them being extremely adverse. We salute these people's struggle and determination to not give up whatever the challenge.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

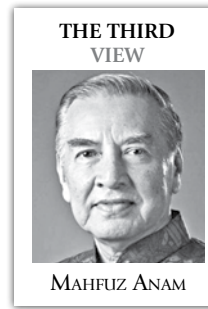
letters@thedailystar.net

### Will the rape culture ever end?

While the coronavirus pandemic has managed to put a hold on many things, it somehow could not stop the scourge of sexual harassment from spreading. In fact, during the lockdown, many women and girls became more vulnerable than usual and fell victim to sexual and domestic violence.

The recent rape and murder of an O-level student in Dhaka's Kalabagan area has shocked the nation once again. How can someone have the audacity to commit such a horrendous crime despite knowing that the punishment can be death? Is it impunity, or is it insanity? Why have we not been able to tackle the rape culture which has destroyed numerous lives so far? We must find out where we are lagging and take action accordingly. And this needs to be done urgently, given how frequently such incidents are occurring.

Sabera Alam, by email



THE THIRD VIEW

MAHFUZ ANAM

He wanted to be an exceptional journalist, and he was. It was as if he *willed* himself to be what he wanted to be. That was Mizan, the amazing self-made person who mesmerised us with his

professional and human qualities. Never relenting with his tough questions, never forgetting to smile as he did so.

He was born in 1967, the year I joined Dhaka University. His early education was in Jhalokathi and yet he was better educated than many others who had better initial educational opportunities, proving that self-motivation can easily overcome whatever educational discrepancies you may have faced early in life. He did his BA from BM College, Barishal, studying accountancy and yet he distinguished himself as a journalist, again proving that one can gain expertise in any discipline regardless of the subjects studied at the BA or MA level. His life is an example of excelling through sheer willpower. If you want to do something earnestly enough, you can do it. That's what Mizan believed in, that's what he proved and what his life's work stands for.

He was only 53 and already he had become, unquestionably, the best amongst us. So young and yet so wise, so committed, so insightful and passionate, so curious, so untiring in his work, and so determined to get to the bottom of what needed to be told. We journalists are a bit of a jack of all trades, and definitely not a master of any. But Mizan was different. He was the master of what he would write on. While we would hover above the surface, he would delve deep—while ours would be an exercise in coming to a quick conclusion, his would be a laborious and untiring search for all the aspects of a story and addressing all its main and nuanced angles.

Many stumble into journalism, some get pulled into it, some saunter in because there is nothing better to do. Others choose it out of a delusion of being good writers. But some—and there are very few—stride into it with vigour, energy and a clear purpose, to use this magnificent profession for the betterment of a wider

group. Mizan was of this rare breed.

Matiur Rahman, the editor of Prothom Alo, wrote in his tribute last Wednesday that Mizan wanted "back" his first ten years of journalism which he had spent before joining his favourite newspaper, Prothom Alo, implying that those were not well-spent. This only speaks of Mizan's desire to spend every minute of his profession in ways that were purposeful and of service to humanity. He loved his profession, knew its power, was aware of what it could do to uphold the rights of the oppressed, and he wanted to do just that—serve a wider social cause.

If we look back on the worldview of Mizan, it becomes clear that as a journalist, taking up the cause of justice was almost natural for him. He understood the fundamental importance of a well-functioning and fair judicial system. He was aware of the all-encompassing and intricate web of laws which bind a society together and the tremendous good that a just legal system can do for the people. So the constitution, the legal framework, the judicial system, the various ways it functions became his natural field of work. Once having chosen it, he devoted his full energy to learning about it. He devoted his energy to developing his expertise in it. He started reporting and writing columns on the judiciary which began to attract the attention of lawyers, judges and all the practitioners of the legal system. Very soon, he emerged as an authentic voice pointing out the anomalies of various laws and the disservice that any miscarriage of justice was doing to us as a nation.

His write-ups on the constitution and how the various amendments impacted on its original spirit and purpose are among his most important legacy for us to build on. His book on the constitution and the caretaker government controversy is an important contribution in this field. Rule of law was his article of faith, and any aberration in it was a sacrilege he would always be ready to fight against.

Many of us go abroad but when he travelled, he was always looking for materials to write on. His focus was always on journalism and never on tourism. He loved history but his interest was less in seeing its physical remnants and much more in delving into it so that he could tell something new for the benefit of his readers.

His desire to know more about our

Liberation War was never-ending. He wanted to study it in depth, not from a historian's perspective but from that of a journalist, to tell the story of how a nation began to mobilise, became united to fight, picked up arms and gained victory over a brutal army. He was in constant search for new materials on our independence struggle so he could study it and report on it.



Mizanur Rahman Khan (1967-2021)

Bangabandhu's assassination was another core area of his focus. He understood the importance of that single event and how the assassination impacted on our history and the future development of Bangladesh. Hence his relentless search to learn more about it. It will not be an exaggeration to say that he was obsessed with it. He would collect documents about this tragic event from all possible places and libraries and would write on them. These articles were so important that a book was published under the title of "Markin Daliley Mujib Hatya" (or Mujib killing in US documents) by Prothoma publishers, a subsidiary of Prothom Alo.

He had this amazing quality of perseverance. He would stay with the subject of his inquiry over a very long time. He knew how to look through a huge pile of documents and extract what he was looking for. Those who have never done so would not fully appreciate the uniqueness of this quality. His earnest desire was to go to Washington, DC and do research in the Library of Congress on the US' role during our Liberation War and on the assassination of Bangabandhu. While in DC, he showed an extraordinary capacity for research, a rare quality among today's journalists, and wrote an amazing series of stories from State Department documents

on our Liberation War that lasted for years. According to the Prothom Alo editor, he wrote over several years and every year he would bring out some new and interesting facts about his favourite subject.

A very important lesson that we journalists can learn from him is the importance of specialising in a particular area and then covering it as thoroughly as possible. He chose the world of the constitution, of the rule of law, of rights and responsibilities, of freedoms and obligations, and became an authoritative voice on all of them.

I was Mizan's fan. I read his columns and marvelled at the research that went behind it. I followed his arguments and realised how intricate and well-founded they were. I appreciated his zeal to make a point and felt overwhelmed at the vigour with which he did so. I remain eternally grateful to him for his personal words of encouragement and support and legal advice during my dark days in 2016 of 84 cases, 16 of which were for sedition and the rest for defamation.

It was the "person" Mizan that always won my heart. Ever gentle, polite to a fault, and humble as one can be and ever smiling, he was a gentleman par excellence. He would seldom relent in an argument because of his solid facts but would never be overbearing in letting you know that your facts were wrong. In meetings his views would always be short, precise, to the point and refreshing. I respected him for his work, loved him for his human qualities and admired him for the height he took journalism to. He was among the very few journalists who really saw the beauty, majesty, intellectual width and moral power of ethical journalism and its capacity to serve society. Mizanur Rahman Khan, our favourite Mizan, did. And now he is gone.

Above everything else, Mizan truly represented that critical free spirit that makes an independent journalist. He adored the principle of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and all his life, he worked for it and stood by it. He knew that without a free press there cannot be democracy, and without democracy a rights-based society cannot be established.

May we all learn to serve the cause of independent journalism as Mizan did.

Mahfuz Anam is Editor and Publisher, *The Daily Star*.

## THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE PROJECT

# Are grades all that matter?

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

SAZZAD SHAHRIAR and SYED SAAD ANDALEEB

THE state of higher education in Bangladesh has been stagnating for a long time, with too much emphasis on grades. This is serving as a source of great displeasure and disappointment for the students who generally feel they have been deprived of holistic and quality education. This situation was corroborated in a recent survey of The Academic Experience Project where a mammoth 73 percent of respondents did not think that higher education makes students competitive for the job market. Similarly, dissatisfaction was also expressed with the quality of the academic programmes and faculties, as well as with the utter lack of co-curricular activities that can enrich students enormously.

The job market, it must be understood, prefers applicants who have a good balance between their grades, combined with co-curricular and service-learning experiences. Lack of club and other social activities denies students the option of partaking in activities beyond the classroom. Many students remain uninformed of the importance of co-curricular activities and spend all of their time studying, worrying or engaging in idle chatter.

In most universities, service-learning opportunities are totally absent. "Service learning is a combination of what we know as formal education and applying that learning in a service-oriented way... (it) requires students to demonstrate their knowledge, thus connecting the cognitive to the emotive and resulting in better learning outcomes. It incorporates personal passions with intellect, empowering students to find their passion and exercise useful ways to engage in real world problems... Students take the ideas they learn about in theory and connect them to real problems in practice, creating viable solutions for long-term transformation in society." (Wikipedia)

Missing also are internship opportunities for the multitude of aspiring students who experience nothing of the world of work while they are studying. As defined (Pomerantz), an internship is a structured experience that relates to a student's major and/or career goal; enhances a student's academic, career, and personal development; is supervised by a professional in the field;

is paid or unpaid, part-time or full-time; is mutually agreed upon by the student, supervisor and/or faculty member; and can also be called a Practicum or Co-Op.

The Academic Experience Project showed that students expressed the need for more club activities, as well as practicum opportunities that can bring out the students' latent and hidden talents that they themselves often do not know existed. Not all students are equally academically gifted; some are gifted in other areas such as debating, performing, creative writing, sports, etc.



Without club activities, students have no way of exploring their hidden talents and are left to contend with studying only.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

Without club activities, they have no way of exploring their hidden talents and are left to contend with one thing only: studying. Unfortunately, the creative part of their brain remains mostly unexplored and underutilised—a sad and significant loss for their time spent in an academic institution. And practicum is a good way to prepare them as employees or entrepreneurs.

Many students also felt that career counselling in their universities is non-existent or undeveloped. In fact, most universities don't have anything remotely related to career counselling. The great body of students, even in reputable institutions, have no idea what they will do after they graduate. Some of them don't even find their majors

interesting at all, with no recourse to change tracks. When asked about this, a student at the University of Dhaka expressed his disappointment: "I am doing an MBA, but I am not quite sure about its prospects or where I would get the best value. If only there was some scope of counselling, I would have taken an informed decision about my career." Due to the underdeveloped state of career counselling, even students who are academically excellent find that they don't live up to the expectations of the job market. This may explain the large

gap between supply and demand of job-related skills in professional fields.

A large percentage of students also felt that counselling for mental health needs immediate attention at their institutions. This has been addressed in detail in an earlier op-ed. On this matter, Alvi, a past student of BUET, expressed his frustration, "As a nation, we don't value mental health as much as we value academic success." Every year, students are committing suicide, inflicting self-harm or going into depression from family pressures, academic stress, peer pressure or relationship issues. They desperately need someone with whom they can have a heart-to-heart conversation to get guidance in tough times.

Overall, there was firm agreement

about not having enough activities on campus beyond sitting in lecture-dominated classes and taking exams which mostly test memory and not learning. While the top universities of the world emphasise additional campus and service-learning activities, most universities in Bangladesh choose to disregard them. Students fall into the rut of believing that attaining a high CGPA is all that matters for the job market, or life in general. After four to five years of studying, they find out how badly they have been guided and how poorly their overall potential has been developed.

It's important for the authorities to pay attention to these serious gaps that exist in educating our youth. Questions that arise are: Do we have the professionals who can effectively play leadership roles in these areas to develop meaningful internship programmes, service-learning opportunities, club activities, career counselling roles, and counselling for mental health? If not, can these professionals be developed quickly enough?

Our academic institutions have never seriously attended to the holistic development of our students. With the large and growing number of universities and students, it is these new roles that must be brought into focus to inspire students in diverse ways and attend to their anxieties and concerns. It also points to entirely new areas in which we need to educate and train competent personnel to support broader student needs. These are also new and exciting areas of educational development that have the scope of creating substantial employment opportunities.

A coordinated and holistic approach to higher education is the need of the day. When the administration activates its imagination, and brings about the changes we suggest, the quality of the educational experience will be considerably enhanced and the preparation of our youth to smoothly step into the world of work will be greatly facilitated. We also believe employers will be pleasantly surprised and delighted to recruit from the newly refurbished pool of graduating students.

Sazzad Shahriar is working on his MBA degree at IBA, University of Dhaka. Syed Saad Andaleeb is Distinguished Visiting Professor at IBA, University of Dhaka, and former Vice-Chancellor, BRAC University. For more information on The Academic Experience Project, contact Dr Andaleeb at bdresearchA2Z@gmail.com.



# How citizen engagement with RTI law is transforming lives

SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

*We were particularly encouraged by the remarkable growth in citizens' understanding of the value of the law in monitoring the work of public authorities and drawing their attention to peoples' concerns. They had begun to grasp the tremendous transformative power of the law.*

**D**URING the construction work of a regional highway in Dinajpur, local inhabitants were increasingly bothered by the dust it generated. One of them, Mosaddekul Islam, fired by his new-found knowledge of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, asked the concerned public authority what measures were taken to ensure that no harm was caused to the local population by its operation. On receipt of his RTI request, the project engineer immediately directed the construction firm to spray the affected areas with water twice a day, which was promptly done.

This and similar other stories were shared last month among activists and fans of the RTI Act from all over the country. They had gathered for a virtual meeting to find out how the law had fared during the pandemic. It appeared that fear and devastation caused by the pandemic had spurred their appreciation of the tremendous importance of transparency and accountability in governance. Our earlier fears about the negative impact of the crisis on the operation of the law were largely belied.

We were elated not because a larger number of citizens were utilising the law or had become more proficient in seeking pertinent information from public authorities, nor because the latter had become more responsive to peoples' information requests. Nor had the Information Commission become more attentive to removing impediments citizens face in applying the law, or more prone to chastise public officials for disobeying its provisions. We were particularly encouraged by the remarkable growth in citizens' understanding of the value of the law in monitoring the work of public authorities and drawing their attention to peoples' concerns. They had begun to grasp the tremendous transformative power of the law. A few examples will illustrate the point.

## RTI application stops embezzlement of public fund

An RTI activist, Mominul, of Taraganj upazila of Rangpur, once discovered that a group of day labourers who were beneficiaries of the government's "40-day Work Programme", meant to help the unemployed during times of employment scarcity, were engaged in earth-filling work under its "Housing Programme" for the homeless. As he knew that there were separate budgets for the two programmes, he suspected that the contractor was perhaps trying to dupe the government by engaging the work programme beneficiaries on the housing programme, thereby embezzling the money allotted for the latter. So, he decided to ask for copies of relevant project documents from the project coordinator's office. Soon after submitting his RTI request, he came to know that the concerned labour force was removed from the earth-filling work under the housing programme and engaged in road construction work elsewhere. As the news spread, peoples' appreciation of the timely RTI intervention by Mominul spread far and wide.

## RTI halts illegal money collection by traffic police

RTI activist Marufa Akhtar of Dinajpur town was vexed by the police practice of seizing auto-rickshaws under one pretext or another and releasing them afterwards against payment of a so-called fine without any money receipt. She decided to submit an RTI request to the local police authority seeking to know if there was any rule about not providing money receipts against fines levied and how the money thus collected was accounted for. She was soon informed that the police super had issued orders to stop the practice and that the defaulting police officials would be properly dealt with in the future. The odious practice has reportedly stopped now.

## RTI resolves long-standing problem for a local community

RTI activist Nowshad Hossain of



ILLUSTRATION: COLLECTED

Dinajpur came to know that the construction work on a road in Chirirbandar upazila had remained stalled for over 18 months. He decided to submit a RTI request to the upazila authorities asking for information relating to the suspension of the work for such a long time and the expected time for its completion. Within ten days of his submission, local residents were pleasantly surprised to find that the construction work had resumed.

## RTI reveals irregularities in purchase of musical instruments

RTI buff Mominul Islam Sarker of Taraganj upazila in Rangpur wanted to find out how many cultural bodies of his area had received government fund designed to promote cultural activities. He submitted an RTI request to the upazila office asking for the list of local clubs which received such funding during the year 2019-2020. On the basis of the response he received, Mominul checked with his local club and discovered that not only was no musical instrument bought with the money, but the fake receipt adduced as evidence of such a purchase was a voucher from the local brick kiln.

The news both amused and angered the local population. Mominul subsequently submitted a complaint to the upazila executive.

## RTI application stops irregularity in agricultural service

The same Mominul Islam Sarker of Taraganj upazila, now well-known in the area for his RTI activism, submitted an RTI request to the upazila agriculture office asking for the list, with photographs, of local cardholders and recipients of government stimulus packages on agriculture. He received the information in due course. Upon checking the list, he discovered that same pictures appeared on cards of different persons and there were other irregularities as well. So, he followed up with another RTI request seeking reasons for the irregularities and asking to know whether remedial measures were taken. In his response, the designated officer admitted that irregularities were indeed found, and remedial measures already taken. It increased Mominul's faith in RTI, as his earlier efforts to engage the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in this regard had failed.

The examples give us hope about the future of RTI in the country. They demonstrate the progress made in inculcating an awareness among the users that the law can be invoked for myriad reasons, impacting society and the nation at large, and not for personal needs alone.

To translate the progress into furthering the overall objectives of the law more proficiently, it may be useful for the captains of RTI to unpeel the various components of the concept. Towards that end, we share below our own perceptions of the subject and hope that others in the civil society will do the same.

To us, the RTI law aims to do the following: 1) promote citizens' role in monitoring the work of the government and other public bodies; 2) help citizens share their concerns on specific governance issues with the relevant public authorities through seeking pertinent information on them; 3) assist public authorities to realise that their work is being watched by the people and they may face consequences for any delinquency; 4) create opportunities for public officials to interact with the people and become more people-friendly and law-abiding; 5) change the age-old, "ruler-ruled" mentality in people's mind and make them realise that public officials are not their masters but allies; 6) contribute to systemic change in the way public authorities do their job; 7) inculcate a sense of "citizenship entitlement" among the people and make them feel that they have a say in governance matters, whatever their place in society; and 8) strengthen democracy by facilitating the development of a "whistle-blower" role for citizens to alert the government about irregularities in governance and promote transparency and accountability in public work.

We leave it to the readers to decide how many of these objectives have been achieved through the above examples.

Shamsul Bari and Ruhi Naz are Chairman and RTI Coordinator respectively of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB). Email: rib@citech-bd.com

# Food and the Planet

JAYDEV JANA

**O**VER the past century, the onset of industrial agriculture and the Green Revolution (more synthetic fertiliser, better pesticides, modern management techniques, better irrigation methods, and more productive cultivars) kept pace with the growing population and made a mockery of popular environmental books such as "The Population Bomb" (1968) by Paul Ehrlich that confidently predicted mass famine and death by the 1980s. While the current production of food is sufficient to meet the demand even for the projected global population of 9.8 billion in 2050, a new UN report reveals a stubborn reality of "immense" challenge: globally, more than 820 million people (or one in nine people) are hungry and malnourished, and the figure is rising.

Among the starving people, "about 7 to 8 million people die every year of hunger or hunger related causes," as estimated by the World Food Programme (WFP). Global hunger today is a consequence of many factors including poverty, natural disasters, lack of economic access (whether people can afford food) and physical access (whether food is reaching them), failed states and war.

India has proudly been projected by its government as self-sufficient in production as well as an exporter of food. But tragically, the availability of food to its people is so inadequate that the country stood 97th among 125 countries in Oxfam's Food Availability Index (2018). The Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020, which ranks India 94th among 107 nations, has once again brought to the fore the government's failure to provide adequate food to a substantial segment of population despite the enactment of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) in 2013. With over 200 million food-insecure people, India is now home to the largest number of hungry people in the world.

In economics, the Engel's law establishes a strong and positive relationship between the level of income and the demand for greater varieties of food, and also indicates an element for projecting food demand growth. According to the law, as incomes increase, the demand for livestock products such as meat, milk and eggs rises, compared with the food of plant origin such as cereals. Livestock products are not only tasty and provide high-value protein but are also important sources of a wide range of essential micronutrients, in particular minerals such as iron and zinc, and vitamins such as vitamin A and vitamin B12. This change of food habits is known as dietary transition. The demand for livestock products, particularly meat, is growing. Over the past 50 years, meat production has more than quadrupled. Growth in meat consumption accelerates as countries pass through middle-income stages.

Worldwide, the growing addition for livestock products is putting too much pressure on land, water and environment

leading to climate change. Half of the world's habitable (ice and desert free) land is used for agriculture. The area covered is around 51 million square km. Around 70 percent of global freshwater withdrawals are for agriculture. Nutrient-rich pollutants of agriculture caused eutrophication in 78 percent of global ocean and fresh water.

When it comes to tackling greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions vis-à-vis climate change, the focus usually tends to be on "clean energy" solutions—the deployment of renewable or nuclear energy, or transition to low-carbon transport. Indeed, energy, whether in the form of electricity, heat, transport or industrial processes, accounts for 76 percent of GHG emissions. But the global food system, which broadly encompasses production and post-harvest processes such as processing as well as distribution, is a key contributor to emissions.

Since 2018, scientists from world

GHGs emitted every year due to human activities. This means, our food system is as polluting as sectors like electricity and heat production (which accounts for 25 percent of GHGs) and industry (21 percent), and are more polluting than transportation (14 percent) and buildings and energy use (16 percent).

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, nations set a target to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. Based on scientific evidence, an IPCC report concludes that in order to limit warming to 2 C, CO2 equivalent CO2e emissions would need to be reduced by 25 percent by 2030 (compared to the 2010 level) and go to zero by 2070. To reach 1.50 C, CO2e emissions would need to go down by 45 percent by 2030 and to zero by 2050. The food system itself is enough to heat up the planet above the 1.5 degree C target under the Paris Agreement sometime between

for livestock (16 percent) as for crops for human consumption (8 percent). Agriculture expansion results in the conversion of forests, grasslands and other carbon "sinks" into cropland or pasture resulting in carbon dioxide emissions. Here, "land use" is the summation of land-use change, savannah burning and organic soil cultivation (ploughing and overturning of soil).

Third, supply chains account for 18 percent of food emissions: this chain consists of transport (6 percent of food emissions), food processing (4 percent), packaging (5 percent) and retailing (3 percent).

Fourth, crop production accounts for 31 percent of food emissions. Twenty-one percent of food emission comes from crops for direct human consumption, and 6 percent from producing animal feed. Moreover, there are direct emissions which result from agricultural production. This includes elements such as the release of nitrous oxide from application of fertilisers and manures, methane emissions from rice production and CO2 from agricultural machinery.

People across the world are becoming concerned about climate change. On an average, 8 in 10 people see climate change as a major threat to their country. So, it is essential to reduce GHG emission of food production. The September 2020 assessment by UNEP says that reducing land-use change and conservation of natural habitats alone could lower emissions by 4.6 gigatonnes of CO2 equivalents (GtCO2e) a year. Reducing food loss and waste, which accounts for 8 percent of anthropogenic emissions, could lower the emission load by 4.5 GtCO2e. Improving production methods and reducing methane from livestock could lower emissions by up to 1.44 GtCO2e. A massive 8 GtCO2e of emission reduction could be achieved by including higher proportion of plant-based foods in the diet than animal-based foods.

The EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health has set global targets for food systems that are environmentally sustainable and human health. Since all of the 14 GtCO2e from food system cannot be eliminated by 2050, as it is intrinsic to the biological processes in plants and animals, the commission has set the planetary boundary for food production emissions, or carbon budget, at a maximum of 5 GtCO2e. The remaining 9 Gt could principally be mitigated by shifting of diets from animal-based diets to plant-based diets (Vegan diets) and by changing production practices and reducing food loss and waste. CO2 emissions from plant-based products are as much as 10-50 times lower than most animal-based products.

In the words of Albert Einstein: "Nothing will benefit the earth and increase the chances for survival of life on Earth as the evolution of a vegetarian diet."

Jaydev Jana is a columnist at The Statesman. Courtesy: Asia News Network (ANN)



PHOTO: REUTERS

over have been working overtime to understand the unexplored links between food systems, health and climate change. The most important insight from their study is that there are massive differences in GHG emissions from different foods. Overall, animal-based foods tend to have a higher footprint than plant-based. CO2 is the most important GHG, but not the only one; agriculture is a larger source of other GHGs. Hence, to capture all GHG emissions from food production, researchers expressed them in kilogramme of CO2 equivalents (CO2e).

In September 2020, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) along with three international organisations, EAT, WWF and Climate Focus, released a report that says that the food production line of the world—which involves everything from growing and harvesting crops to processing, transporting, marketing, consumption and disposal of food and related items—that sustains around 7.8 billion people accounts for about a quarter (21 to 37 percent) of

2051 and 2063. This has been noted in the November 2020 issue of the Science journal. There are four key elements to consider when trying to quantify food GHG emissions.

First, livestock and fisheries account for 31 percent of food emissions: Livestock—animals raised for meat, dairy, eggs and seafood production—contribute to emissions in several ways. For example, ruminant livestock—mainly cattle—produce methane through their digestive processes (in a process known as "enteric fermentation"). Manure management, pasture management, and fuel consumption from fishing vessels also fall into this category. This 31 percent relates to on-farm "production" emission only. It does not include land-use change or supply chain emissions from the production of crops for animal feed (these figures are included separately in the other categories).

Second, land use accounts for 24 percent of food emissions: twice as many emissions result from land use

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Slate-colored
  - 5 Disgusting
  - 10 Try to hit
  - 12 Main artery
  - 13 Person in a fashion ad
  - 15 For each
  - 16 Pig's place
  - 17 Notre Dame's Parseghian
  - 18 Become sharply attentive
  - 20 Went out, as a fire
  - 21 Glossy
  - 22 Son of Seth
  - 23 Hog the mirror
  - 25 Horn sound
  - 28 Whiskers
  - 31 Just
- DOWN**
- 32 "Paper Roses" singer Marie
  - 34 Sleuth Spade
  - 35 Take wing
  - 36 Homer's bartending pal
  - 37 Firefighters, in slang
  - 40 Like Poe tales
  - 41 Spock's father
  - 42 Winter gliders
  - 43 Seed holders
  - 8 Sound system
  - 9 Leafy courses
  - 11 Fragrance counter bottle
  - 14 Mouth of a furnace
  - 19 Energetic
  - 20 Jeans material
  - 24 Cake courses
  - 25 Honchos
  - 26 Tooth layer
  - 27 Writer Leonard George
  - 29 Horror director
  - 30 Was a noisy sleeper
  - 33 Office fixtures
  - 35 Club costs
  - 38 Young one
  - 39 Faucet

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## WEDNESDAY'S ANSWERS

T R A P M A N I C  
 E N O R A T O R  
 A L I T D O N A T E  
 C A S S I U S L E G  
 E Y E H O L E I R A  
 S P I T S T O N E H A I R  
 H A N S B E T T O N E D  
 O R E B L A S T I T  
 W A X R E S P I R E  
 E D I S O N O B O E  
 R E L O A D T I N T  
 S E N D S S A S H

## BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



## BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



## 16 more die

FROM PAGE 12  
morning.  
The mortality rate is 1.49 percent, according to the handout.  
Bangladesh reported its first novel coronavirus cases on March 8 last year and the first death on March 18.

## 2nd year

FROM PAGE 12  
better," Van Kerkhove said.  
She called for maintaining physical distancing, adding: "The further, the better...but make sure that you keep that distance from people outside your immediate household."

## BLAST employee

FROM PAGE 12  
lawyer Abdus Sukkur.  
The case was filed on November 10 last year, accusing the woman of "premeditated propagation of false allegations such as that of gang-rape" against some BGB personnel.  
Nayeb Subedar Mohammad Ali Molla, in-charge of Damdamia check post of BGB Battalion-2 on Cox's Bazar-Teknaf highway, filed the case.  
The BLAST employee is the lone accused in the case. Mohammad Ali, in the case statement, said that the woman's "false allegation" has severely tarnished the image of a force like the BGB.  
On October 13, BLAST in a press statement demanded justice for its female employee alleging that she was a victim of sexual violence at a checkpoint on the Teknaf-Cox's Bazar road. It also demanded that the government ensure her safety.

'Auschwitz' T-shirt-wearing Capitol rioter arrested

AFP, Washington  
A US Capitol rioter seen wearing a "Camp Auschwitz" T-shirt taunting Jews over the Nazi death camp was arrested Wednesday, the FBI said.  
The FBI Norfolk Joint Terrorism Task Force arrested Robert Keith Packer of Newport News, Virginia, they confirmed.  
Packer was charged with violent or disorderly conduct on the Capitol grounds and illegally entering the Capitol building, according to court documents.  
Pictures of Packer wearing the T-shirt sparked anger and dismay throughout the Jewish community. Auschwitz was part of a vast network of death and concentration camps across Europe set up as part of Adolf Hitler's "Final Solution" of genocide targeting millions of European Jews.

## Tripartite meeting on January 19

FROM PAGE 12  
Myanmar now faces a genocide case in the International Court of Justice.  
Bangladesh, meanwhile, has faced serious socio-economic, environmental, security and diplomatic challenges due to the presence of some one million Rohingyas, many of whom fled to Bangladesh since 1980s.  
The foreign minister has said the presence of such a large number of Rohingyas for an indefinite period can create regional instability and thereby hamper peace and development in the region. The start of the Rohingya repatriation is of utmost importance.  
Momen on Wednesday told journalists that Bangladesh handed over to Myanmar a list of 8.4 lakh Rohingyas for verification but it has so far verified only 42,000 people.  
"Myanmar is a friendly country. They are not our enemy. We've nothing against Myanmar. It must create a conducive environment as Bangladesh wants to see the return of Rohingyas to Myanmar in safety and security."

## Ray of Anirban

FROM PAGE 12  
The library also contributed to combating child marriage in the area, he said.  
"Due to the joint efforts of all and activities of the library, child marriage and dropout rate from schools have decreased significantly. Library-centric activities have inspired all," Ramkrishna added.  
FROM ONE ROOM TO A FOUR-STOREY BUILDING  
The library officially started its journey on December 10, 1990, in one room inside a local temple in Mamudkathi.  
It was founded by Joydeb Kumar Bhadra, now an additional DIG of police, and Manik Bhadra of Sonatankati village, Bishwakarma Mandal of Mamudkathi village, and Mrinal Ghosh of Haridhali village.  
Joydeb Bhadra was then a Rajshahi University student, but due to the countrywide movement against dictator HM Ershad at the time, his university remained closed amid the political unrest.  
"As a result, I had to stay at home most of the time. I felt the urge to do something for the children of the area -- so, I planned to set up a library with some friends."  
Local school and college teachers and students soon became involved -- some donated books from their own collections and later, door-to-door campaigns were conducted to collect money to buy new books.

The minister said he is hopeful about the repatriation as Myanmar had taken back its nationals in 1978 and 1992.  
Meanwhile, the Human Rights Watch has said the squalid and oppressive conditions imposed on some 600,000 Rohingyas in Rakhine State amount to crimes against humanity, including apartheid and severe deprivation of liberty.  
They are subjected to government persecution and violence, confined to camps and villages without freedom of movement, and cut off from access to adequate food, healthcare, education and livelihoods, the HRW said in its World Report 2021 released Wednesday.  
The Myanmar government has repeatedly violated basic civil and political rights, and failed to hold the country's security forces accountable for atrocities against ethnic minorities, noted the New York-based global rights watchdog.  
The ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party overwhelmingly won the

November 8 election last year, which was marred by serious problems. Prior to the vote, the government prosecuted its critics, censored opposition party messages, and did not provide equal access to state media, it noted.  
Systemic problems include the continued ethnic Rohingya disenfranchisement, reservation of 25 percent assembly seats for the military, and the lack of an independent and transparent Union Election Commission, mentioned the watchdog.  
Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at the HRW, said, "Aung San Suu Kyi and the ruling National League for Democracy have turned their backs on human rights concerns since taking power, betraying promises to Myanmar's people to revoke repressive laws and break with abusive past practices."  
"By winning a significant parliamentary majority, the NLD has an opportunity to introduce rights-respecting reforms that would protect everyone."

In 2016, the one-room library was shifted from the temple to a newly built four-storey building.  
MORE THAN A LIBRARY  
Now evolved into a charity with donations from former members and more, it is not only a hub for knowledge creation with access to books and computers -- it also provides free healthcare, free language classes and learning opportunities, and conducts public awareness campaigns on a variety of issues.  
Anirban currently has 7,000 books in its collection and operates from 10:00am to 10:00pm daily. Both members and visitors have access to computers and internet in the library.  
It has a 250-seat hall room and a healthcare centre on the ground floor, the main library and computer lab on the second floor, and eight guest rooms on the third floor.  
Bidhan Bhadra of Mamudkathi, now assistant professor of English at Jashore MM College, said the library has played a huge role in his life.  
"The impact of the library movement has also spread to other upazilas," he added.  
Anirban has directly and indirectly touched the lives of villagers in at least 10 upazilas in Khulna and Satkhira districts, said Pravat Debnath, general secretary of the library.  
The library provides stipends to meritorious students to help with their educational expenses and regularly holds book reading, poetry recitation, and music competitions, and sports events. Young people also have access to information such as on employment opportunities and on agriculture-related issues.  
Members of the library also do important social work -- last year, for example, they helped villagers affected by Cyclone Amphan, founder Joydeb told The Daily Star.  
They distributed 15 sewing machines to poor women, paddy seeds to 2,500 affected farmers, and corrugated tin worth Tk 2 lakh to the poor for rebuilding their shelters.  
The library regularly organises free health camps for locals, tree plantation programmes, and public awareness programmes on a myriad of issues.  
The library members have also set up a blood-donation agency, a goat farm to make Anirban volunteers financially self-sufficient, and are taking steps to make a bird sanctuary, added Pravat.  
In 2014, the library got recognition as a 'Ka' category library from Jatiya Grantha Kendra due to its various social and cultural activities.  
It was also allocated a grant of Tk 10 lakh from the cultural affairs ministry in the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

## AL gagged critics, journos using

FROM PAGE 12  
drawing attention to widespread violence against women and girls, and the impunity perpetrators often enjoy in Bangladesh.  
Non-governmental groups reported a marked increase in reports of domestic violence during the Covid-19 lockdown. Instead of heeding activists' calls for real reform, the government hurriedly approved an amendment to allow for the death penalty for rape, it noted.  
The New York-based global rights watchdog said health workers reported insufficient personal protective equipment and alleged corruption in access to critical services. The government responded by silencing healthcare workers, censoring media, arresting those who spoke out, and increasing surveillance to crack down on Covid-19 "rumors".  
It said arrests under the abusive Digital Security Act increased dramatically. Police even arrested a child for "defaming" the prime minister in a Facebook post.  
The authorities released over 23,000 detained people to protect against the spread of Covid-19 in prisons, but did not include those held for criticising the ruling party, the report said.  
It added that the government continued to deny its unlawful practice of enforced disappearances, and ignored concerns raised by the UN Working Group on

Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the UN Committee against Torture, and the UN Human Rights Committee.  
The HRW said security forces were accused of committing extrajudicial killings with near-complete impunity. However, when police killed a retired military officer, Maj Sinha Rashed Khan, the authorities were forced to take action. "Crossfires" -- a euphemism for extrajudicial killings -- dropped precipitously, indicating that the authorities are able to end them whenever they choose.  
The rights watchdog claimed that the authorities "arbitrarily detained" over 300 refugees on Bhashan Char island, and refused to allow safety assessment or protection visits by United Nations experts. The government says it will allow the UN experts to Bhashan Char at any favourable time.  
Following massive order cancellations during the pandemic, more than 1 million garment workers -- mostly women -- were laid off, and many did not receive payment of owed wages, it said.  
The government provided \$600 million in subsidised loans to companies to support payment of these wages, but it is unclear how the wages were paid, particularly to women who may not have financial control or access in their households, the report added.

## World's oldest cave painting

FROM PAGE 12  
out with Indonesian authorities.  
The Leang Tedongnge cave is located in a remote valley enclosed by sheer limestone cliffs, about an hour's walk from the nearest road.  
It is only accessible during the dry season because of flooding during the wet season -- and members of the isolated

Bugis community told the team it had never before been seen by Westerners.  
Measuring 136 by 54 centimetres (53 by 21 inches) the Sulawesi warty pig was painted using dark red ochre pigment and has a short crest of upright hair, as well as a pair of horn-like facial warts characteristic of adult males of the species.

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**e-Tender Notice-01/2020-2021**

An e-Tender has been invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following [work].

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Package No. & description	Location of the works/supply	Tender/ proposal document last selling date & time	Tender/ proposal closing & opening date & time
1.	531446	TMD/NDR/OTM-1 Supplying works of Rubber Seal for 100 one hundred Nos. Gates of Irrigation Flood Control FCDI & Town Protection projects under Thakurgaon Mechanical Division BWDB Thakurgaon during the financial year 2020-21.	Thakurgaon Mechanical Division, BWDB, Thakurgaon	17-Jan-2021 15:00	18-Jan-2021 12:00
2.	531469	TMD/NDR/OTM-02 Supplying works of Steel Wire Ropes for 21 Twenty-one Nos. Gates of Irrigation Flood Control FCDI & Town Protection projects under Thakurgaon Mechanical Division BWDB Thakurgaon during the financial year 2020-21	Thakurgaon Mechanical Division, BWDB, Thakurgaon	17-Jan-2021 15:00	18-Jan-2021 13:00
3.	531484	TMD/NDR/OTM-03 Repair Maintenance & Painting works of 26 twenty-six Nos. Lift Gates of Dhepa-Pumavabha Water Management Irrigation Project under Thakurgaon Mechanical Division BWDB Thakurgaon during the financial year 2020-21.	Thakurgaon Mechanical Division, BWDB, Thakurgaon	17-Jan-2021 15:00	18-Jan-2021 14:00
4.	531493	TMO/NDR/OTM-04 Routine & Periodic Repair Maintenance works along with necessary Materials & Manpower during the Irrigation Period for Tangaon Barrage Irrigation Project Buri-Badh irrigation Project Dhepa River Irrigation Project and 60 Electric Block irrigation project under Thakurgaon Mechanical Division during the financial year 2020-21.	Thakurgaon Mechanical Division, BWDB, Thakurgaon	17-Jan-2021 15:00	18-Jan-2021 15:00

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 banks branches up to banking hours on (dd/mm/yyyy).  
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)) (01762625528-31) (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

আপনার অনুমত

মোঃ কবীরেজ ইমতিয়াজ  
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী (অসসাঃ)  
অফিস নং-৮৭০১২৭০০১  
ঠাকুরগাঁও যান্ত্রিক বিভাগ  
বাগাউরো, ঠাকুরগাঁও

পানি-৪৪৬/২০২০-২০২১  
১০'x৩  
জিডি-১০১

## I will not spare

FROM PAGE 12  
keepsakes," Reana said.  
The girl's father, a businessman, filed a case with Kalabagan Police Station against Ferdin Itefkar Dihan -- an 18-year-old who has recently passed his A-level examinations -- over the rape and murder of his daughter.  
In the case statement, he said Dihan tricked his daughter into going to his flat in Kalabagan's Dolphin Golly on Thursday (January 7) and raped her when Dihan's family members were away.  
While visiting the victim's house, the first thing one will notice is her school identity cards hanging on one corner of the drawing room, which clearly indicate that she was only 17, although it created a debate on her age after she died.  
The Zoom meeting ID and passwords for each subject written on the sticky notes, and the routine for classes for 2021 (with some highlights) are still on the wall in front of her bed. The books and notes are still on the table, which she kept the night before she was raped and murdered by the perpetrators on January 7. A key ring -- a memento given by a friend -- still hangs from the cupboard.  
"She was a very attentive student and was preparing herself for the O-level exams. She had been attending six online lectures a day," the victim's mother said.  
"Last week, she asked me to manage the money for her registration which

started last Sunday and today [Wednesday] is the last day of the registration. Her friends have completed the process, but my daughter is not in this world. How can I accept this?" the mother broke out in tears.  
"I never leave her alone anywhere. Before the pandemic broke out, her father would drop her at school, and after class, I would take her home," she said. "I still cannot believe that this actually happened to us."  
"My daughter would love small things, like a simple mirror on her wall or some money plants which I bought for her. She would water those every day and tried to keep her room clean and tidy," said the mother.  
According to the mother, her daughter did not go there (Dihan's flat) willingly. "She was entrapped, I must say."  
"She was tortured severely and it was clear in the photos that were taken by my friend while she found my daughter's body at Anwar Khan Modern Hospital. She also had a bruise in her thumb," the mother said.  
She said her daughter even called her father at 12:19pm, but he missed that call. She left home around 11:45am.  
"She might have wanted to tell her father about the danger she went through. But now, people are blaming her for the whole thing. But no one is talking about that they don't have the right to rape and kill her," the mother added.  
"I want the speedy trial of the perpetrators," she said.

## Two held over rape

FROM PAGE 12  
and rescued the victim. However, the owner of the house managed to flee.  
The OC said the girl would be sent to a hospital for medical examinations. Her family members went to the police station to file a case in this regard.  
RAPIST GETS 42YRS IN JAIL  
A Joypurhat court yesterday sentenced an absconding accused to jail for 42 years for raping a teenage girl, who later died by suicide to escape social stigma, in Joypurhat Sadar upazila in 2012.  
The convict is Masud

Rana, a resident of Haripur Uttarpara village in the same upazila. The victim also hailed from the same village.  
Judge Md Rustam Ali of Women and Children Respression Prevention Tribunal in Joypurhat delivered the verdict in a crowded courtroom.  
According to the prosecution, Rana raped the 16-year-old girl on June 30 in 2012. The victim died by suicide the following day.  
On July 3, her father filed a case with Joypurhat Sadar Police Station against Masud Rana.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Local Government Engineering Department  
Office of the Upazila Engineer  
Upazila: Boalkhali, District: Chittagong  
[www.lged.gov.bd](http://www.lged.gov.bd)

Memo No. LGED/UE/BOAL/CTG/21/11  
Dated: 13/01/2021

**e-Tender Notice-01/2020-2021 (LTM)**

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted to 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 up to 02/02/2021 at 12:00pm.

Sl. No.	Name of works and Tender Package No.	Tender ID	Last date & time of tender selling documents	Last date & time of submission documents	Tender/ proposal closing date & time of
01	Construction of two-storied Chirman Quarter Foundation work Ground Floor, First Floor Chila Kota and Roof Slab, Sanitary work, Tube well, Electrical work, under Upazila Boalkhali, District: Chattogram, Package No. e-Tender/Revenue/BOAL/2020-2021/V-01	536032	01-Feb-2021 16:00pm	02-Feb-2021 14:00pm	02-Feb-2021 14:00pm
02	Construction of two-storied UNO Quarter Foundation work Ground Floor, First Floor Chila Kota and Roof Slab, Sanitary work, Tube well, Electrical work, under Upazila Boalkhali, District: Chattogram, Package No. e-Tender/Revenue/BOAL/2020-2021/V-02	536075	01-Feb-2021 16:00pm	02-Feb-2021 12:00pm	02-Feb-2021 14:10pm

Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

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Upazila Engineer  
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**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Government Debendra College, Manikganj  
[www.debendracollege.gov.bd](http://www.debendracollege.gov.bd)

Memo No. GDC.2021.CEDP.1157.G-02.83  
Date: 14.01.2021

**e-Tender Notice 02/2020-2021**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following package.

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of supply	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	537119	Procurement of Furniture & Fixtures for Laboratory, Classrooms, General Purpose, IT Corner, Teachers Auditorium and Library (G-02)	04-Feb-2021 13:00	04-Feb-2021 14:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP 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 03-Feb-2021 16:00.  
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

**Professor Md. Nurul Amin**  
Principal  
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The West Indies players were happy to sweat it out at the BCB Academy ground yesterday after spending three days quarantined in hotel following their arrival in Dhaka. Having to make do without net bowlers, the likes of Shannon Gabriel bowled at young batsmen under the watchful eyes of head coach Phil Simmons.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Mahmud aces practice match as seamers shine

SPORTS REPORTER

Young pacer Hasan Mahmud starred with four wickets as seamers utilised the overcast conditions and early movement to bundle out Tamim Iqbal XI for just 161 runs as Mahmudullah XI won the first practice match by five wickets at BKSP yesterday.

Chasing 162 runs in the 40-overs-a-side game, skipper Mahmudullah Riyad guided his side over the finish line with an unbeaten fifty to reach the target with 19 balls to spare.

After Mahmudullah XI chose to bowl first, their pacers -- spearheaded by Mahmud with young left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam and Al-Amin Hossain providing valuable support -- shared eight wickets among themselves. Al-Amin picked up the first wicket of Liton Das for two, but skipper Tamim and Nazmul Hossain Shanto added 40 for the second wicket and seemed to be setting up a big total. It was then Mahmud who changed the game, dismissing both batsmen in their twenties with some brilliant bowling to leave Tamim XI struggling on 69 for three.

Shoriful then joined in and removed Mohammad Mithun (15) and Afif Hossain for 35 as Tamim XI were dismissed for a sub-par total. Mahmud ended up with figures of four for 21 from six overs, which included



Tamim Iqbal fishing outside the off-stump against young Hasan Mahmud, only managing to edge it to Yasir Ali at slips during a practice match among the national team members at BKSP yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

a maiden, while Shoriful and Al-Amin scalped two each.

"There was some movement early on from the bowlers and I think our bowlers bowled well with the new ball. We managed to pick some early wickets which put the pressure on the batters but overall bowlers from both teams did well and I think it was a bowlers' day today," Mahmudullah told the media after the game yesterday.

Defending a rather modest total, left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman gave the early breakthrough for Tamim XI as he trapped Yasir Ali leg before on three. Shakib Al Hasan also departed cheaply for nine in rather unfortunate manner when his shot deflected off the

non-striker and went straight to the fielder, causing him to be run-out.

Left-handed opener Naim Sheikh looked solid at the other end and scored 43 off 52 balls, which included seven fours, before he was caught behind off the bowling of seamer Mohammad Saifuddin.

Mushfiqur Rahim chipped in with 28 but skipper Mahmudullah held the ship together from the other end and remained unbeaten on 51 off 64 balls with four boundaries to register an easy win.

The Tigers will play the second practice match tomorrow before taking on West Indies in the first of the three-match ODI series on January 20.

## Windies get on the field

SPORTS REPORTER

West Indies players completed their first training session yesterday at the BCB Academy Ground following their three-day quarantine period since arriving in Bangladesh on January 10.

"Three-day isolation was very tough. It feels good to come out and get some fresh air and finally get some cricket practice," West Indies' ODI skipper Jason Mohammed told reporters after the practice session.

It was also the first time in over 10 months that an international side stepped onto the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium premises.

All members of the West Indies contingent had already tested negative for Covid-19 after the first of many coronavirus tests last Tuesday. But the visitors will have to practise on their own for a while before being provided with net bowlers once they have cleared three tests in seven days.

The West Indies team is scheduled to play a one-day warm-up match at BKSP on January 18 before the first of three ODIs against the Tigers on January 20.

## Depleted Abahani edge past Police

SPORTS REPORTER



A last-gasp goal from Belfort Kervens helped Abahani edge Bangladesh Police FC 1-0 in their opening match of Bangladesh Premier League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Six-time Premier League champions Abahani had dropped points in their first match of the league season five times in the past 11 editions and the trouble-hit side were rescued from one of their worst performances before Haitian striker Belfort struck a winner in the 85th minute.

Abahani dominated from the start despite struggling with players missing through Covid-19, injuries and suspension, but lacked bite in the attacking third but Police goalkeeper Mohammad Nehal's fumble handed Abahani a goal.

Mario Lemos was forced to make the positional changes as four of his regular starting eleven were missing but those changes led to Abahani struggling to break down the defence.

Forward Nabib Newaj Jibon and Brazil's Francisco Wagsley Rodrigues mustered a few shot on target but largely failed to threaten while Police goalkeeper Nehal made a couple of good saves.

Abahani started penetrating in the second half after winger Rubel Mia, having recovered from Covid-19, came on in place of Mamunul Islam in the latter part of second half. Rubel kept beating opposing defenders with his pace and delivered good crosses from the right flank.

Afghanistan's Masih Saighani was denied in the 80th minute by Nehal, but he made a big mistake as he fumbled his attempt to grip another cross from Rubel. The ball fell to an unmarked Belfort, who tapped home at the second time of asking in the 85th minute after

the first shot was parried by a defender.

Bangladesh Police came close to pulling a goal back two minutes later but luck was not on their side and a powerful left-footer from Kyrgyz midfielder Murolimzhon Akhmedov came off the crossbar before a Lincine Toure header went narrowly wide of the post in stoppage time.

"I don't believe in bad luck, but we had lot of injured players through Covid and suspension and it was a really tough match against an organised team. We had more possession but we were missing the last pass in the attacking third and a little of speed and aggressiveness," said Abahani coach Lemos. "If you don't score early against the teams like Police, Mukitjodha and Rahmatgani, then it is very difficult to handle them. Today we luckily got the goal and secured full three points."

"Police are a new team, who today lost to a strong team but I am satisfied with the performances of the boys, who I believe will play better football in coming days," said Police FC's Sri Lankan coach Packer Ali.



## National athletics starts today at BNS

SPORTS REPORTER



The 44th National Athletics Championships will get underway today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, with the participants asked to submit reports of Covid-19 tests before taking to the track.

Even though Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) could not ensure Covid-19 tests of athletes and officials during the Junior Athletics Championships in November last year, this time the sport's local governing body is determined to ensure of a Covid-free competition for all participants, who

must submit negative reports of tests taken 72 hours prior to their events.

Marking the birth centenary of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the championships will award cash prizes to first, second and third-placed finishers worth Tk 3,000, Tk 2,000 and Tk 1,000 in each of the 33 events. The federation has an estimated budget of Tk 19 lakh, which will be spent from its own coffers as it failed to get any sponsor on board.

The meet will get underway without electronic timer and will be held on the worn out track of the BNS. Close to 450 athletes are expected to take part in the three-day meet.

## Bess fier puts England in command

REUTERS, Galle

England captain Joe Root struck his 50th Test fifty to put them in a strong position on the first day of the opening Test after Dom Bess took five wickets as the tourists bowled out Sri Lanka for a paltry 135.

An unbeaten 110-run partnership between Jonny Bairstow and Root saw England to 127-2



at stumps on Thursday, trailing by eight runs, with the opportunity to go on and build a significant lead after Sri Lanka posted the lowest first-innings score in a Test at Galle.

The pair steadied matters after spinner Lasith Embuldeniya, who opened the bowling, had removed England openers Dom Sibley and Zak Crawley cheaply. Root, in his 98th Test, will resume on Friday on 66.



(Clockwise from top) Paris Saint-Germain's Argentine coach Mauricio Pochettino has had an auspicious start to his stint at the French Capital, winning the Champions Trophy, the French equivalent of the Super Cup, with a 2-1 win over Marseille on Wednesday. The giants in other parts of Europe, though, did not have such a wonderful time. German champions Bayern Munich crashed out of the German Cup following a shock 6-5 defeat on penalties against second-tier side Holstein while Barcelona scraped through to the final of the Spanish Super Cup following a win on penalties over Real Sociedad.

PHOTO: TWITTER

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## Ray of Anirban

How a library changed the lives of people in a remote village of Khulna with its educational, cultural, social activities

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Myth says that the philosopher's stone was a substance that could turn ordinary metal into gold.

While the residents of Mamudkathi may not have literally struck gold, they have found some kind of a philosopher's stone in the form of a library.

The Anirban Library, set up by four local students three decades ago, has changed the lives of many villagers -- transforming the illiterate into literate, those financially deprived to self-sufficient.

Villagers' access to education and employment have increased significantly since the library was set up in 1990 in remote Mamudkathi village of Khulna's Paikgachha upazila.

One former member is Faruk Hossain Mahaldar of Jeley Para in Mamudkathi, who is now working at Bangladesh Railway on graduating from a Khulna college.

"I have been involved in various activities of the library since my childhood. I used to come here and read books whenever I had time.

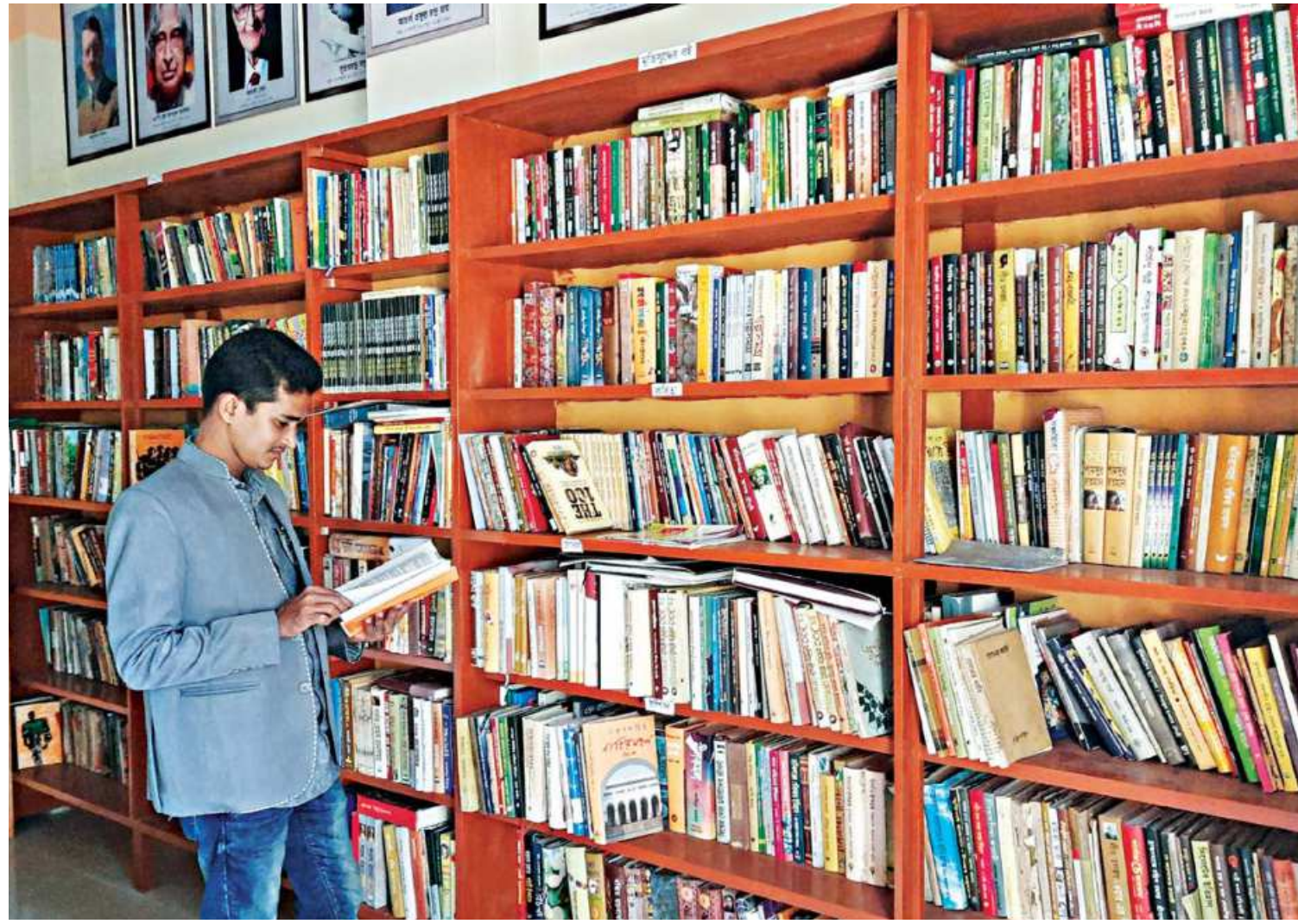
"The activities of the library have opened my eyes. It has changed the lives of our Jeley Para inhabitants," he said.

Faruk is not the only villager to attain higher education.

Former general secretary of the library, Ramkrishna Debnath, cannot hide his happiness when talking about the library's contributions in the area.

He said he was the second man from the village to attend the University of Dhaka and now many others are studying at the same seat of learning as well as at other universities and medical colleges.

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Awal Sheikh, a visitor, browses through a book at Anirban Library. Set up in 1990 in Mamudkathi village of Khulna's Paikgachha, the library has changed the lives of many villagers. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

## 'I will not spare the scoundrel'

Kalabagan rape victim's sister says

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and NILIMA JAHAN

Showing the handmade card she made for her elder sister on her 17th birthday on October 9 last year, eight-year-old Reana Asif (not her real name), the younger sister of an English-medium school student in Dhanmondi who died after rape, said, "I will not spare the scoundrel who killed my sister. I want justice."

The card, kept in a paper bag on her bookshelf, reads, "Apu, you are the best sister in the world and I love you."

Reana would frequently make cards and handmade gift items for her elder sister, with a small and simple note to express her love. Sometimes, the gift was a box of earrings, which their mother would buy for them, or sometimes a funny sketch of her sister.

The elder sister would preserve all the cards and gifts on her bookshelf. "But now, these have become

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

## AL gagged critics, journos using pandemic as an excuse: HRW

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League-led government used the Covid-19 pandemic as a pretext to censor free speech and crack down on critics, Human Rights Watch said in its World Report 2021 Wednesday.

It said the authorities arrested journalists, artists, students, doctors, political opposition members, and activists who spoke out against the government's response to the pandemic, or otherwise criticised the ruling party.

"The ruling Awami League showed in 2020 that it will stop at almost nothing to maintain its grip on authoritarian control, even in the face of a global pandemic," said Brad Adams, Asia director at HRW.

"The ruling Awami League needs to stop worrying about cartoonists and kids criticising the prime minister on Facebook, and start worrying about abuses by its own authorities amid the pandemic."

In the 761-page World Report 2021, its 31st edition, HRW reviews human rights practices in more than 100 countries.

The report said protests broke out after several gang rape cases came to light,

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

## 2nd year of pandemic 'could be worse'

Warns WHO

REUTERS, Geneva

The second year of the Covid-19 pandemic may be tougher than the first given how the new coronavirus is spreading, especially in the northern hemisphere as more infectious variants circulate, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Wednesday.

"We are going into a second year of this, it could even be tougher given the transmission dynamics and some of the issues that we are seeing," Mike Ryan, the WHO's top emergencies official, said during an event on social media.

The worldwide death toll is approaching 2 million people since the pandemic began, with 92 million people infected.

The WHO, in its latest epidemiological update issued overnight, said after two weeks of fewer cases being reported, some five million new cases were reported last week, the likely result of a letdown of defences during the holiday season in which people - and the virus - came together.

"Certainly in the northern hemisphere, particularly in Europe

and North America we have seen that sort of perfect storm of the season - coldness, people going inside, increased social mixing and a combination of factors that have driven increased transmission in many, many countries," Ryan said.

Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead for Covid-19, warned: "After the holidays, in some countries the situation will get a lot worse before it gets better."

Amid growing fears of the more contagious coronavirus variant first detected in Britain but now entrenched worldwide, governments across Europe on Wednesday announced tighter, longer coronavirus restrictions.

That includes home-office requirements and store closures in Switzerland, an extended Italian Covid-19 state of emergency, and German efforts to further reduce contacts between people blamed for failed efforts, so far, to get the coronavirus under control.

"I worry that we will remain in this pattern of peak and trough and peak and trough, and we can do

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Two held over rape in Lalmonirhat

Joypurhat court sentences rapist to 42 yrs in jail

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday detained two men over raping a teenage girl in a house in Teesta village of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila and rescued her from there.

The detainees are: Atiqul Islam Atiq from Teesta village and Nirmal Chandra of China Bazar area in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila.

Police said the 17-year-old girl was in a relationship with Atiqul. She went to Teesta village from China Bazar with Nirmal on Wednesday evening on the promise that Atiqul would marry her.

The girl was gang-raped in the house at night, said police.

Acting on information from locals, police raided the house yesterday noon, detained the alleged rapists

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

## World's oldest cave painting found in Indonesia



AFP, Washington

Archaeologists have discovered the world's oldest known cave painting: a life-sized picture of a wild pig that was made at least 45,500 years ago in Indonesia.

The finding described in the journal Science Advances on Wednesday provides the earliest evidence of human settlement of the region.

Co-author Maxime Aubert of Australia's Griffith University told AFP it was found on the island of Sulawesi in 2017 by doctoral student Basran Burhan, as part of surveys the team was carrying

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

## DEFAMATION CASE BLAST employee gets bail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A female employee of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) yesterday secured bail in a defamation case of Tk 100 crore filed against her by Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

Senior Judicial Magistrate Tamanna Farah in Cox's Bazar passed the order around 11:30am yesterday, said BLAST

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### PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 15

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:36 7:00  
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:40 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## 16 more die from Covid, 813 infected in a day

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh's Covid-19 fatalities soared to 7,849 as the health authorities confirmed 16 more deaths and 813 new cases in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

The national caseload now stands at 5,25,723 with 470,405 recoveries, according to a handout from the Directorate General of Health Services.

As per the latest data, the daily infection rate has dropped to 4.9 percent.

The country recorded 8.29 percent infection on January 10, 7.52 percent on January 4, and 8.18 percent on January 1.

The overall infection rate stood at 15.38 percent, the DGHS said, adding that 89.48 percent of the patients have recovered till date.

So far, 3,418,114 tests have been carried out, including 16,608 in 24 hours till yesterday

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A bluethroat spotted in a mustard field in north Keraniganj of Dhaka recently. This small, migratory bird usually lives in bushes and catches small insects from the ground.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ASKER IBNE FIROZ

## ROHINGYA REPATRIATION Tripartite meeting on January 19

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A tripartite meeting between Bangladesh, China and Myanmar will take place in the capital on January 19 with Dhaka seeking quick start of Rohingya repatriation that has not been possible in more than three years since the refugee influx.

This will be second such meeting between the three countries. Earlier, they held a foreign minister-level meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2019.

Ambassadors of China and Myanmar in Dhaka and an official of Bangladesh foreign ministry are expected to lead their respective delegations at the meeting, said a foreign ministry official, seeking anonymity.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said, "We are hopeful that China will play a vital role here. What we want is quick start of repatriation of the Rohingyas."

He also mentioned that Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Tuesday held a meeting with Myanmar high-ups in Naypyidaw where he sought to expedite the repatriation of Rohingya refugees from camps in Bangladesh.

China, a major investor in Myanmar, plays a crucial role in peace negotiations between Myanmar's army and ethnic armed groups. China is also a major trade and development partner of Bangladesh.

Two attempts to repatriate the refugees to their homeland ended in failure after around 750,000 Rohingyas took shelter in Bangladesh to escape a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State in August 2017.

Rohingyas say there is no guarantee of safety, citizenship and basic rights in Rakhine where many Rohingyas were killed, women raped and their houses burnt -- for which

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2